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Najib: Empowering Bumis a national agenda

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KUCHING: Political power must remain in the proper and deserving hands for the Bumiputera agenda to continue, said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak yesterday.

Najib, who was speaking at the launch of the Hikmah Exchange commercial centre here, said maintaining political power was a prerequisite to empowering the Bumiputeras, who make up 68 per cent of the country's population.

"Many of the current development projects rely on political power. Hopefully, on Saturday, this power stays in the proper and deserving hands. When it is in the proper hands, projects such as the Pan-Borneo Highway and Hikmah Exchange will be completed, and the Bumiputera Empowerment Agenda will continue and Sarawak and Sabah will prosper."

He said empowering the Bumiputeras was a national agenda and the government had always stood for fairness as it wanted the Bumiputeras to have a bigger slice of commercial ownership.

"The Bumiputeras, who make up



Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak being briefed by **Barisan Nasional** candidate for Satok, **Datuk Abang Johari Openg** (left), after launching the **Hikmah Exchange** commercial centre in Kuching yesterday. Pic by Khairull Azry Bidin

68 per cent of the population, stake a claim on 30 per cent of listed corporate wealth. The number of commercial and office buildings, malls and other properties owned by Bumiputeras is still low."

To boost Bumiputera ownership of commercial properties in

Sarawak, Najib said, Yayasan Amanah Hartanah Bumiputera would offer its assistance to Yayasan Hartanah Bumiputera Sarawak and provide funds to the state property trust.

He said Amanah Hartanah Bumiputera, which has RM3 billion in

unit trust funds, was a platform that could be emulated by the Sarawak property trust.

"Yayasan Hartanah Bumiputera Sarawak can follow this method and we are prepared to help and gradually increase our assistance to enable the Bumiputeras to own assets which provide good returns."

He said the government's carved out policies had enabled deserving Bumiputera companies to be involved in 46 per cent of the Mass Rapid Transit (MRT) project, 42 per cent of Permodalan Nasional Berhad's Warisan Merdeka tower project and contracts worth RM8 billion under the Pan-Borneo Highway.

"Opportunities are not given to friends or cronies but the best Bumiputera companies. This is a way for domestic companies to succeed in the regional and global fronts.

"The government intends to develop Bumiputeras together with other races. The Barisan Nasional government believes in balanced and inclusive development towards social justice."