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PM: Let the culture of innovation flourish

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KUALA LUMPUR: Innovation is key to Malaysia's success and the right ecosystem must be in place to encourage creative thinking, says Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak.

The Prime Minister said for the culture of innovation to flourish, schools and parents should allow students to expand their innovative and creative thinking.

Speaking at the Sime Darby Young Innovators Challenge (YIC) 2016 awards ceremony, he said failure ironically was something celebrated in the Silicon Valley because it was the path to eventual success.

"Failure is not a death sentence even if you are declared a bankrupt. It should not be the end of the world," he said.

Najib said companies like Sime Darby had created the right ecosystem by encouraging innovation and rewarding people who produced outstanding work.

He cited the company's genome select oil palm project, which is able to increase yield by 15% annually, as an example.

The innovation was significant because there's no more land for oil palm and the only way forward was to increase yield, he added.

He said changes can be productive, creative or disruptive.

"However, we cannot afford to stand still. We need to innovate as only nations that can innovate will succeed," he added.

He pointed out that the maxim "Innovate or Stagnate" was true, adding that "the nation that is able to innovate is a nation that will stay ahead of the competition."

Najib described the YIC programme, titled "Fighting Poverty Through Innovation", as something which could improve lives.



All smiles: Najib taking a 360° panoramic selfie with award recipients in Kuala Lumpur.

The winners of the YIC 2016 were four students who developed an app to reduce food wastage by bridging charities with hypermarkets which had excess food.

Joseph Chung, 14, Ezra Adrian Robert and Ivan Avannus, both 15, and Allegra Chan, 16, took home a trophy, a MacBook Air each and the RM10,000 grand prize. Ezra is from Sabah while the rest are from Sarawak.

Earlier during a separate event in Serdang, Najib announced that 1,263 supervisors from

the Community Development Department (Kemas) would be promoted on July 1.

He called on Kemas to upgrade its competency in line with the advancement of teaching methods in the era of globalisation and fast-paced information technology.

Speaking at the 2016 Kemas Educators Day here, Najib said Kemas needed to be restructured so that it could be a dynamic institution that can enhance the professionalism of its educators.