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Najib: Door open to discuss MA63

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BIGGER AGENDA: PM says rights of Sabahans must be upheld, rejects talk of state separating from Malaysia

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PRIME Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak has assured Sabahans that the door is open for discussion on the fulfilment of aspirations under the Malaysia Agreement 1963 (MA63) to ensure that Sabah's rights were honoured.

The document was one of the motions presented during the United Pasokmomogun Kadazandusun Murut Organisation (Upko) Convention 2016 here, where the party pushed for a review of what had been achieved so far with regard to the MA63.

"The MA63 is part of our nation's constitution, so if there is some error in its interpretation, the door is open for us to discuss it in the Barisan Nasional (BN) family.

"I do not wish to take (away) the rights of Sabahans, I want the rights of Sabah folk to be upheld.

"But don't talk about leaving Malaysia. Because we have a bigger agenda, we do not want to be a second-rate, mediocre country.

"We want Malaysia to be among the best nations," Najib told the more than 1,700 delegates when he launched the convention at the Sabah Cultural Centre yesterday.

During the Liberal Democratic Party's (LDP) 27th conference, which Najib launched yesterday, its president, Datuk Teo Chee Kang, also asked for the MA63 to be reviewed

and to discuss issues related to the devolution of powers from the Federal Government to the state government.

"In a big family, we can have differences in opinion, but that does not mean there is an intention to leave the family as our happiness depends on us staying together," added Najib.

"I want to see Sabah progress further and its development to be in balance with that of the peninsula.

"There will always be problems and challenges in a party, but as the Westerners say 'always remember the big picture'... So, let's not spend too much time focusing on trivial matters.

"We, as leaders, must be committed to our struggle to bring our supporters to a higher level."

Speaking at the LDP conference later, Najib reminded BN component party leaders to not take the people for granted with the arrival of new opposition parties in Sabah.

Referring to Parti Warisan Sabah, led by former Umno vice-president Datuk Seri Mohd Shafie Apdal, and Parti Harapan Rakyat Sabah, led by former state PKR chairman Datuk Seri Lajim Ukin, he said the new parties that emerged overnight could not be better than BN.

He urged BN component party leaders in Sabah not to be discouraged by "misleading political manoeuvres", but to focus on bringing change to the people.

He assured delegates that the concept of power sharing would con-

tinue to be a guiding principle in BN.

"Being an open-minded prime minister, I will continue to listen to and decide what is best for the people of Sabah."

To bring benefit to the state and its people, he said, the state and federal governments must remain strong to be able to work together. Najib announced an allocation of RM1 million for the Kadazandusun Chamber of Commerce and Industry in response to a request from Upko acting president Datuk Seri Madius Tangau, who is also science, technology and innovation minister.

On Upko's request for more state seats, Najib said: "There is no use having more seats if you can't win, but if you can, we will consider it.

"Upko can request... I believe, later, Parti Bersatu Sabah and other parties will also make requests. So, the decision must be based on what is best for BN, as we need to form a strong government."

Madius had said Upko was eyeing four of the 13 new state seats under the redelineation exercise, in addition to the existing four parliamentary and six state seats given to the party in the last general election.

Nonetheless, he said, the party would comply with the BN spirit and concept of consensus to sit down and discuss with other partners in the ruling coalition.

He said the party maintained the belief that no BN component party should contest in more than half of the total seats in the general election.