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BRAINSTORM SESSION

'I WANT ALL TO BELIEVE IN MALAYSIA'

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Najib takes note of questions posed by country's young

KUALA LUMPUR

HUNDREDS of young Malaysians brainstormed with the prime minister last night, in the first of a series of many more similar sessions, on how the country is to progress towards 2050.

In an informal setting last night, 500 young leaders from across the country who flanked Datuk Seri Najib Razak, to discuss core issues, critical in driving Malaysia towards attaining its 2050 National Transformation (TN50) plan.

Najib took note of questions posed by the different segments of the country's young, and provided glimpses of how everyone would pool together to address them to bring about a progressive nation.

Serious discussions during the dialogue were punctuated by light moments, including when Najib shared with his audience how in his 41 years in politics, last night was the most nervous he had ever been.

"I've never done it in this format before, all mic-ed up like this," he quipped, but said in summation, the session had been a success, to loud applause.

Najib ended the session by saying that he wanted everyone to believe in Malaysia.

Earlier, during the session, Najib touched on a variety of topics con-



Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak speaking to one of the young attendees at the dialogue. PIC BY SHAHRIL BADRI

cerning youth.

DIGITAL ECONOMY

Key to the country's economy, Najib said this sector would power and invigorate the country's economic engine.

He said the setting up of a digital economic hub would see the country transformed in many ways.

"We have to look at new types of jobs. What do we want?"

"We want data scientists and data professionals," he said, adding that

the government would focus more on the digital economy.

This, he said, was because it was the only sector that could give the country a double-digit growth.

EDUCATION

Malaysia, Najib said, needed a system that focused on training skills and creativity, which were adaptable to new job creation.

"The education system needs to be flexible and cater to jobs that are not even in existence yet, and fill the job

demand of the generation today," he said.

UNITY

Najib acceded that this was a challenging issue that could not be resolved overnight.

"There is still a gap in unity among Malaysians, despite them living in harmony.

"Our level of civic consciousness is not strong enough. We live in harmony but we are still 'compartmentalised'. It is not an ideal situation, but

it is something we can live with."

He agreed with a participant that Malaysia needed to strengthen its core values, and the different races must move beyond "tolerating" each other.

"We can see moments of unity, especially when our athletes perform on the world stage. The question now is how do we get to the next level," Najib asked his audience.

PROSPECTS IN THE CIVIL SERVICE

The government, he said, was open to the idea of introducing "fast lanes" for young public servants to move up the ranks.

"Those who possess strong qualities and (are) highly ethical stand to be promoted on merit, not just on seniority. This way, young public servants can play bigger roles in their fields," he said.

ENVIRONMENT

Najib agreed with a member of the audience that reducing carbon footprint via various measures, including through taxation, was an idea worth exploring.

RURAL MALAYSIA AND THE INCOME GAP

"We must do away with the rural-urban divide through education and social mobility.

"It is unacceptable for the rich to have more wealth than half of the population's combined wealth."

Najib said the "best equaliser" to disparity was education, and the accessibility afforded by the Pan-Borneo Highway can hopefully facilitate this in Sabah and Sarawak.