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Development 'not only for urban folk'

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PM wants welfare of rural residents to be on par with those in cities

PEKAN: The national development programme in rural areas must continue to be on par with that carried out in the urban areas, says Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak.

He said Malaysia was one of the few countries in the world to also have development programmes in areas other than cities.

"As a government, we have never stopped looking for ways to safeguard the welfare of the people, especially those in the rural areas, including smallholders who are given proper attention and assistance.

"This is because farmers and rural communities are the core supporters of the Barisan Nasional government today.

"I feel that we must continue the rural agenda because we want fair development, not only between the urban and rural areas, but the ethnic and age groups as well," he said.

He was speaking at the presentation of dividends to smallholders by the Rubber Industry Smallholders Development

Authority (Risda) yesterday.

Najib said development programmes were equally distributed across every part of the country and were not only concentrated in urban areas.

"Although the level of development may not be the same, at least the gap between rural and urban areas is not that big these days," he added.

During the event, Najib announced RM106.8mil in dividends for participants of New Cluster Planting and Commercial Replanting schemes nationwide.

On the sale of Proton Holdings' shares to China's Zhejiang Geely Holdings, Najib said it was not viable to own a car manufacturer if it continued to lose money every year.

Earlier, at the closing of a conference on Islamic organisational leadership, Najib said Malaysia was widely respected as a moderate Islamic nation.

"At the recent Riyadh Summit, only the leaders of five countries were allowed to speak and Malaysia



Royal gift: Najib gesturing as he gives away dates to mosque and surau committee chairmen in his parliamentary constituency. The gift of dates from King Salman is a symbol of lasting friendship between Malaysia and Saudi Arabia. Sixty mosques and 166 surau in Pekan received dates, zam zam water and cash contributions. — Bernama

was one of them. I was given the opportunity to deliver the final speech," he said.

He also highlighted that Malay-

sia's haj quota has been increased following the recent visit by Saudi Arabia's King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud.

"We receive acceptance and respect because what we practise here is the best model of Islam – a moderate Islam," he said.