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**ECONOMIC SABOTAGE**

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# PM: Those who run down country will also hurt ordinary Malaysians

**KUALA LUMPUR:** Belittling Malaysia could affect perceptions abroad and cause ordinary Malaysians to suffer instead of politicians.

Prime Minister Datuk Najib Razak, describing this act as an economic sabotage, said the government's opponents in the country often preferred avoiding facts.

"They (the opposition) create false propaganda — like the idea that this is a state on the verge of bankruptcy — some of which sadly gains traction internationally.

"This running down of Malaysia is nothing less than economic sabotage for selfish and personal political gain," he said at the Global Transformation Forum 2017 here yesterday.

Najib said this kind of "fake news" — that Malaysia is a failed state — almost wrecked the deal between Saudi Aramco and Petronas.

The joint venture, he said, would not just establish new engines of growth and push the nation to a new frontier in technology and economic development, but also create up to 60,000 new jobs.

"The US\$7 billion (RM31 billion) that Aramco agreed to invest in the Petronas Pengerang Integrated Complex (PIC) in Johor shows the confidence of the

Saudi-owned oil company in Malaysia," he said.

Najib took a jibe at a "former leader" who many would not expect to have "told lies about his own country".

Although he did not name the leader, it was understood that he was referring to former premier Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

"When he tells people that Malaysia is facing bankruptcy, some believe him. In fact, he knows he is telling lies."

Countless measures, Najib said, had been put in place to ensure the country's continued transformation into an innovative, knowledge-based economy, with sustainability and inclusivity at its core.

"One of which is that outsiders look at Malaysia, and they see a place they'd like to do business — and increasingly so," he said.

"Would they be doing that if, as some of our opposition politicians claimed, Malaysia was a failed state?"

"We are working for a nation (which is) at ease with others and is proud of its unique and vibrant diversity — because I am not just concerned about GDP (gross domestic product) or headline figures, but also public happiness and the well-being of each and every household," he added.