

Contribute to alma mater, Najib tells grads

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By Lydia Gomez

KUALA LUMPUR: University graduates should contribute to their alma mater and support its advancement, said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak.

He said the link between the alumni and their alma mater was symbiotic, and a strong relationship could propel universities further.

"The notion of wanting to give back to a university is a virtue we must encourage," he said in his speech at the Universiti Malaya Alumni fundraising dinner yesterday.

The dinner was organised to raise funds for the UM Alumni Foundation and to help in the construction of the RM11 million alumni clubhouse.

Work on the clubhouse began last year and is expected to be completed by March next year.

Najib said UM had produced many leaders, administrators, entrepreneurs and scientists who had helped in the country's development.

"The greatness of a university is not in its building design but is measured by the debates and discussions in its lecture halls, the vibrancy of its education and personality of its graduates.

"Malaysia is at a crossroads between a great or bleak future.

"We have to do something that is extraordinary so we are not caught in what is considered the middle-income trap.

"If we want to become a developed nation, we have to make extraordinary changes.

"Otherwise, we may stagnate as a nation and, of course, we do not want to receive the same fate as some European countries like Greece, Ireland and, now, Portugal."

Najib said the Government Transformation Programme, Economic Transformation Programme and other development efforts would not bring the expected outcome of turning the nation into a high-income economy if its human capital did not have the creativity and innovative spirit necessary to achieve it.

He added that local graduates should also be able to communicate well in English and other languages while maintaining their identity through Bahasa Malaysia.

"We have to be able to speak in English, especially when the world has become a global village.

"This does not mean that if we want to improve our English, we do not focus on Bahasa Malaysia."

The prime minister's wife and UM Alumni patron, Datin Seri Rosmah Mansor, in her

speech, said that the UM Alumni Foundation was a platform to help UM graduates financially.

At the dinner were Deputy Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin, his wife Puan Sri Noorainee Abdul Rahman, Yang Dipertua Negeri of Malacca Tun Mohd Khalil Yaakob and his wife, Toh Puan Zurina Kassim, UM Alumni president Datuk Noordin Abdul Razak and organising chairman Prof Emeritus Tan Sri Dr Augustine S.H. Ong.

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