

**Interior Areas To Continue To Be Assisted, Says Najib
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PUTRAJAYA, Nov 22 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak said it is the government's intention to continue to provide assistance to the interior areas which are in dire need of government aid.

He said such efforts were part of the Rural Transformation Programme that was being propagated by the government.

"Hopefully, through such efforts we can achieve social justice and a more inclusive development. Regardless of where we are located in the country, the people will certainly enjoy development and their welfare will be looked after.

"The RM100 aid have already been received by students. Insyallah, the RM500 cash will be received by those earning less than RM3,000 per household," he said at a ceremony for Ba'Kelalan and Bario village heads and community leaders at the Seri Perdana, here today.

Also present were Defence Minister Datuk Seri Dr Zahid Hamidi and Member of Parliament for Lawas Datuk Henry Sum Agong.

The visit led by Henry was to convey the gratitude and appreciation of the people of Ba'Kelalan and Bario to the government for resolving the problem which had long been faced by them concerning the construction of new roads.

Najib said he took pride in the fact that the project to build the roads in Ba'Kelalan and Bario had been completed under the 'Jiwa Murni' project which had been adapted and handled by the Defence Ministry, aimed at providing facilities and convenience to the rakyat.

He said the project was a new development concept which had never been carried out previously which could be completed quickly and had saved cost from RM250 million earlier to RM52 million.

"What attracts me and the government most is that the project, under the old thinking, would need to wait for quite some time as the allocation needed was substantial, but it could be completed very quickly after we had taken the decision.

"One of the principles that I uphold together with my colleagues in the government is that when we make a pledge, we will fulfill our promise to the people," he said.

Najib said that under the 'Jiwa Murni' project, construction of the roads would be completed by the Malaysian Armed Forces (ATM) which would be provided with the building materials, equipment and so on with the allocation channeled through the Implementation Coordination Unit (ICU).

He said the impact from the project was most significant which included reducing the journey time from Lawas to Ba'Kelalan from three days two nights previously to only three hours due to the very poor condition of the road.

"The positive effects included the reduction in the price of Coca Cola from RM3 previously to RM2 per can, the price of LPG from RM60 to RM45 per cylinder.

The price of cement too had dropped as well as bus fares.

"There are other advantages, some people (local residents) have built bungalows and many tourists from outside came because new roads have been built," he said.

As such, Najib hoped the government's move would open up a new era for the Ba'Kelalan and Bario areas.

He also hoped that the Jiwa Murni project, which had been adapted, would be extended to other areas to enable more people to enjoy the benefits of development carried out by the government.

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