

**Malaysians Have The Kampung Close To Heart - Najib  
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KUALA LUMPUR, Aug 27 (Bernama) -- As the nation moves towards becoming a high-income nation, Malaysians should never abandon that one place they call their "kampung halaman" or hometown, no matter how modernised it has become, said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak.

In his latest posting on his 1Malaysia blogsite as millions of Malaysians embark on the annual 'balik kampung' exodus to celebrate Hari Raya Aidilfitri, he said this phenomenon was an apprehension that despite having a comfortable livelihood in the city, there was always that need for Malaysians to return to their roots in the kampung.

"While many of the younger generation were born and raised in cities, the balik kampung culture has been so strongly embedded in our society that even this generation identifies the kampung as part and parcel of their life," he wrote.

In the posting titled 'Our Kampung Heritage', Najib hoped Malaysians had a safe journey back to their kampung to celebrate Aidilfitri, and that Malaysians of other faiths would join their Muslim friends in the festivities.

He observed there was no denying that there were some who had permanently adopted the city as their hometown and no longer had a kampung to go back to.

Najib said this was quite evident in Kuala Lumpur, which was no longer the strangely deserted city on Aidilfitri as it was in the 80s. "Kuala Lumpur is now their hometown," he noted.

"My family and I'll be spending the first few days of Aidilfitri in Putrajaya and Kuala Lumpur, as I've done in years past. Nonetheless, I'm also thankful to have many reasons to return to my hometown in Pekan, and not just for Aidilfitri celebrations," he said.

The kampung was also experiencing socio-economic changes, he wrote, noting that in October last year, the government launched the Rural Development Master Plan to address the challenges and issues faced by rural communities and village folk, and transform the rural areas of the nation.

"The plan aims to increase economic and entrepreneurial opportunities for the rakyat residing in rural areas, yet without sacrificing the environment as well as the valued traditions and cultures that stemmed from this environment," he said.

He said, as more and more rural areas underwent the transformation of development each day, the unique connotation of a kampung remained as an important element in both our cultural and economic framework.

Najib cited the example of cottage industries which were still an important section of Malaysia's economy, producing local products such as batik, songket and food products such as dodol and keropok.

"These products are no longer necessarily manufactured in a traditional kampung set-up but are now mostly manufactured with advanced machinery assistance in industrialised workshops and factories.

"Despite so, these products continue to possess the indelible charm of the kampung lifestyle, and will continue to be created within the sphere and structure of a kampung that we know," Najib said.

Referring to Malaysia's second prime minister Tun Razak Hussein, he said: "My late father was a strong champion of economic development in rural areas in his time, particularly in his role as Minister of Rural Development."

Najib said under the ministry, roads and bridges were built to increase land connectivity; schools, clinics, community halls were constructed; a network of water and electricity supply began to spread, and modern agricultural processes were introduced.

He noted that these days, programmes such as the annual Karnival Usahawan Desa continued to help improve the economic welfare of village entrepreneurs by offering assistance and guidance to realise the market potential of their products, including to overseas markets.

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