

PM: Do not settle for mediocrity
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By Masami Mustaza

KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysia's success and achievements to date have been brought about by its people and their diligence, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak said yesterday.

Najib, who is also patron of the Merdeka Award, said the country's competitiveness had helped move Malaysia up the competitiveness ladder to rank 21st among 142 nations worldwide and second in Asean.

He said Malaysians could not, and must not compromise and settle for lower standards or mediocrity in the nation's quest for excellence.

"Malaysians must not be complacent but move forward with new technologies, ideas and discoveries.

"Change is only constant. There is no escaping this trend and we must strive to better ourselves and create an even better environment for future generations — our children and grandchildren," he said at the Merdeka Award presentation ceremony at the Petronas Philharmonic Hall, here, last night.

The government has allocated an initial fund of RM200 million for the establishment of MyVenture Creative Capital to encourage critical thinking and creative ideas.

For those who do not continue their schooling, skills training will be provided through the Strategic Action for Youth (SAY 1Malaysia).

Najib also announced the establishment of the Merdeka Award Grant for International Attachment, a newly instituted programme by the Merdeka Award.

It is designed to make it possible for qualified Malaysians, between the ages of 22 and 35, to engage in short-term collaborative projects or programmes at a selected, internationally-recognised host institution.

One grant will be offered next year and two each in subsequent years in selected disciplines of education, arts, sports, community and social work, environment, health as well as science and technology.

With this initiative, the organisers aim to identify and honour outstanding young post-Merdeka Malaysians who exemplify the spirit of Merdeka.

It is also for those who, in their respective areas of expertise demonstrate a commitment to excellence, contribute to the betterment of society and the nation's development.

The recipients of the 2011 Merdeka Award are Datuk Dr Kenneth Yeang, in the environment category, for outstanding contribution to the development of design methods for ecological design and planning of the built environment; and joint recipients in the category of outstanding scholastic achievement, Professor Datuk Dr Goh Khean Lee, for outstanding contribution in elevating the study and practice of gastroenterology and hepatology in Malaysia to global standards, and Professor Dr Mak Joon Wah, for outstanding fundamental and applied research in parasitology and parasitic diseases, public health and pathology.

They were conferred the Merdeka Award for their outstanding and lasting contributions to the nation and the people of Malaysia in their respective fields.

The Merdeka Award recipients were awarded with a certificate, a trophy and RM500,000 each.

Also present were Datin Seri Rosmah Mansor and Datuk Shamsul Azhar Abbas, chairman of the Merdeka Award Board of Trustees.

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