

**Najib Wants Plantation Industry To Be Restructured**  
**Bernama**  
**April 16, 2012**

BESTARI JAYA, April 16 (Bernama) -- The plantation industry, especially the palm oil sector, needs to be restructured to make it more efficient, competitive and increase the participation of local workers.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak said of the over 450,000 workers in the palm oil sector, only 83,000 were locals and the majority foreigners.

He said the palm oil industry, one of the key contributors to the national economy with an acreage of 4.9 million hectares, produced 19 million tonnes of oil palm and earned RM80 billion in exports last year.

"I am aware of the matter. In the plantation industry, the welfare of the workers has been neglected compared to other sectors," he said in his address at the launch of the housing and management complex at Tennamaram Estate owned by Sime Darby Plantation Sdn Bhd here, Monday.

Najib said he could not accept that the workers in the plantation sector received below-poverty income and faced with social problems, considering that workers in other sectors were better off.

He said in the middle of last year, he has told Sime Darby Bhd, one of the government-owned companies, to increase the salary of the plantation workers by as much as RM200 to ensure that they stayed above poverty line.

"Sime was initially worried following the instruction from the government. However, after the increase in the salary, productivity rose by 10.7 per cent compared with the previous year.

"Following Sime's decision to increase the salary, the welfare of the workers has been taken care of and the company has benefited from the increase in productivity," he said.

Najib said other companies could also emulate Sime's efforts to ensure that the workers, who were the backbone of the company, received fair wages and not just the owners getting lucrative returns.

He said Sime has provided better housing for the workers, including the provision of ASTRO satellite television.

"The workers would not miss the Tamil or Bollywood movies every Saturday. This project is a model for other corporates to emulate," he said.

The prime minister said if the rakyat wanted to enjoy more benefits and assistance the economy needed to grow.

The efforts to take care of the rakyat could be seen and no one could deny that the conditions now were better than before, he said.

Earlier, Najib said the government has allocated RM2.6 million to provide clean water for Sungai Tinggi and Mary estates which were located here.

He thanked Selangor Tan Sri Abdul Khalid Ibrahim for his presence at the function.

Meanwhile, Sime chairman, Tun Musa Hitam, said the housing and management complex was like a mini town with housing for workers and management staff, sports and recreational facilities, places of worship and commercial areas.

---BERNAMA

Copyright © 2012 BERNAMA

Source: <http://www.bernama.com/bernama/v6/bm/newsindex.php?id=659477>