

Najib Advises Women To Seize Opportunities For Greater Progress
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KUALA LUMPUR, March 7 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak today advised women in the country to seize the various opportunities made available by the government to make greater progress.

"Since independence the government has recognised the role of women which is why programmes for women have always been part of our socio-economic development plans," he said.

Najib said this in his latest entry titled "Progress Of Women, Progress Of Malaysia" in his blog www.1Malaysia.com in conjunction with International Women's Day tomorrow.

He said he hoped young Malaysian women would seek inspiration from generations of successful Malaysians who had trailblazed the path for them.

The prime minister said among them were the late Tun Dr Fatimah Hashim, Tan Sri Dr Devaki Krishnan, Profesor Datuk Dr Mazlan Othman, Judy Cheng-Hopkins, the late Datuk Seri Tra Zehnder, Datuk Agnes Shim, Datuk Nicol David and Datuk Michelle Yeoh.

Najib noted that not only was the country seeing almost as many women holding jobs as men, but the nature of those jobs was equally encouraging.

"The Grant Thornton International Business Report last year ranked Malaysia joint-9th in the world for the number of senior management positions held by women - an impressive 31 per cent.

"Even in government, we have several women in top positions in the Securities Commission, Ministry of International Trade and Industry, and the Central Bank, shaping economic and financial policies of the country," he said.

Even in the education sector, he said, there had been a remarkable growth for women.

"Did you know that in 1959 only one out of every 10 local undergraduates were women? Today, more than six out of ten first-class degree holders are women. In fact, we are now faced with the challenge of increasing enrolment and retention rates of boys instead," said Najib. The prime minister said in Malaysia's journey to become a high-income fully developed nation, the country had also successfully closed the gender gap in economic development.

He said the government aimed to increase participation of Malaysian women in the workforce from 46.1 per cent now to 55 per cent by 2015.

"I believe that the future will be even brighter for you. The 10th Malaysian Plan has outlined key programmes focusing on increasing women's participation in the workforce and the number of women in key decision-making positions, improving provision of support for widows, single mothers and those with lower incomes, and eliminating all forms of

discrimination against women," he said.

He also welcomed ideas on improving women's development in Malaysia.

"After all, Vision 2020 is a collective effort and the success of all Malaysians is guided by the inclusive principles of 1Malaysia," added Najib.

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