

**People's Choice Is What Matters, Says Najib
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From Nor Faridah Abd Rashid**

LONDON, May 15 (Bernama) -- Malaysians living in this city had their moment with Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak Monday evening, with many rushing to greet him and shake his hand after he had addressed them, mainly on their rights and responsibilities in a functioning democracy and the people's choice through elections.

Najib had said that in any democracy there would be those who voted for and against but that, at the end of the day, what mattered most was the choice of the people.

"The people of Malaysia would have that choice. We have proven. You don't need to have street demonstrations in Malaysia because, if you have them, inevitably there would be trouble, there would be clashes," he said in an apparent reference to the Bersih 3.0 demonstration in Kuala Lumpur last month.

The prime minister addressed some 1,500 Malaysians here who had braved the heavy London traffic to be present at the "Evening with the Prime Minister" held at a concert hall at the O2 Arena in Greenwich, East London.

Najib said that one has the right to support the government or the opposition but "you must operate within the rules of the law".

If you discard the rules of law, there would be anarchy in the country. We cannot afford anarchy. We can allow dissent, I can appreciate difference of opinions and views but I will not respect if you break the law in the country.

That is the only safeguard that we have for the future of Malaysians, he said.

The prime minister pointed out that it had been shown that 100,000 people could gather in a stadium, and do so peacefully, making apparent reference to the mass gathering held at the Bukit Jalil National Stadium in conjunction with Umno's 66th anniversary celebration.

That is the right way and, if Bersih wants to meet, we can give them the same stadium, and we will ensure peace and security. Nobody will be harmed and that is the right way for us as a nation that is mature. We believe in democracy, but democracy with responsibility.

Najib's speech, delivered in a very informal setting, was received with great enthusiasm by the Malaysians who had thronged the concert hall, some bringing along their children as well.

There were one or two boisterous people in the audience, which prompted the prime minister to remark that it is very unMalaysian and very rude to heckle", but the rest of the audience listened with rapt attention to his speech.

"I am proud of all Malaysians who are law-abiding and respectful of others and that is why you must speak up. You must speak up for those who abuse their positions. (If) you are a minority, don't impose your views on the majority," he stressed.

He said he believed that the way ahead was to behave sensibly, abide by the law and, when the time comes, there would be the chance to decide as Malaysians.

Najib, who informed the audience of the many significant changes that the government had made in terms of the economy, education and several security laws, emphasised that the government wanted to be a government that represented the feelings of the people of Malaysia.

We want to engage with the people of Malaysia. To do what is best for the people of Malaysia. And that is my commitment as the prime minister of Malaysia, he said drawing applause.

He reiterated that the era of "the government knows best is over". "We need to listen to the people, and this is what the government is doing, listening to the people."

Najib said the government was doing its level best to transform Malaysia into a truly developed nation by 2020 through the various economic transformation programmes and the government transformation programmes.

He said it was, in fact, a very important juncture in Malaysian history because this was the first time that it was embarking on a massive wholesale transformation of Malaysia, not only in economic terms but also in social and political terms, to reach the status of a fully developed nation in 2020.

We can do it and I believe that, as Malaysians, we are all committed towards this journey of becoming a developed nation. I hope all of you are willing to join me in this journey because the train has left the station and I want all Malaysians to be on board this train so that we have every reason and every chance to achieve our goal of being a fully developed nation," he said.

After the speech, Najib and his wife Datin Seri Rosmah Mansor mingled with the enthusiastic crowd which swarmed the couple, with some people posing for pictures and others wanting to shake hands with the prime minister who obligingly did so.

Also present at the event were Malaysia's High Commissioner to the United Kingdom, Datuk Seri Zakaria Sulong, who organised the event, and his wife Datin Seri Hazizah Ahmad.

Najib and Rosmah had arrived on Monday for a two-day working visit to the United Kingdom. The prime minister has been invited by The Prince of Wales, Prince Charles, for a reception in conjunction with the conferment of the Royal Charter Award to the Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies.

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