

**Government Appreciates Writers' Role Towards Achieving High Income Status –  
Najib  
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PUTRAJAYA, July 3 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak said the government was very appreciative of the role played by writers in the country's journey to achieve a high income status.

He said, a country's progress and development could not just be gauged through per capita income, economic growth rate or its exports, but it should also be based on the creativity and innovation of its people, as reflected in their literary works.

"We will always give enough room for writers. We will help them, especially the young people, to develop their talent," he said at the launch of 30 book titles published by the National Institute of Translation and Books (ITBM) at Seri Perdana here Tuesday.

Najib said local writers should expand their 'tasawur' (imagination) by venturing into the outside world to acquire knowledge which could be shared with others in the country.

He said they should also learn from eminent figures of modernisation, like Jamaluddin al-Afghani, on his travels to many countries.

"Through his travels, al-Afghani demonstrates to the people the way to deal with modernisation through thinking rationally and independently," he added.

He said, while other countries, including Muslim countries, faced political conflicts, Malaysians were still blessed with peace and freedom to think and carry out their intellectual and educational activities.

"We should learn how Baghdad, Cordoba, Qairuwan, Bashrah and Kufah, during the glory days of Islam, were like an ocean of knowledge, but due to the carelessness of their people, the knowledge disappeared, and the Islamic city shifted elsewhere," he added.

Najib said, such an incident should not be allowed to happen in the country, but if everyone were to fold their arms and allow the slander to win against the truth, it would not be surprising to see the people cry over something that they had lost.

The prime minister recalled a function where he was invited to open the Malaysian National Writers Association (Pena) golden jubilee celebrations last December.

Najib said he wanted all books published by ITBM, with the cooperation of Pena and Percetakan Nasional Berhad (PNMB), to be published within three to six months after they received the manuscripts from the writers.

"I said that I wanted it to be made the Key Performance Index (KPI) which should be carried out by ITBM, as part of its new responsibility after being given the additional mandate to publish original works, besides doing the translation," he added.

Najib said ITBM succeeded in meeting the KPI by publishing 30 book titles.

The books include an anthology by Rahimidin Zahari and Shamsudin Othman, with the title, "Pengakuan Penyair", a novel "Perempuan Nan Bercinta" by Faisal Tehrani, "Biar Puisi Menjadi Peluru" a collection of poems by Saifullizan Yahaya and "Memoir Seorang Juruhebah" by Zainal Abas.

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