

Najib: Return Selangor to Barisan and Batu Caves grounds will be safe
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KUALA LUMPUR: Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak has promised that Barisan Nasional will stop the controversial 29-storey condominium project in Batu Caves if the coalition regains power in Selangor.

The Prime Minister said this was because Batu Caves "is a revered and respected site" among the Hindu community worldwide.

He said this assurance would be part of efforts to protect the site, adding that the Batu Caves temple complex should be preserved to protect it against elements that could threaten it.

"I give you my assurance that if Barisan Nasional takes over Selangor, we will cancel this project," he said.

"We do not want development in the surrounding area to pose a threat to this place," he said at the MIC Deepavali open house at the complex yesterday.

The Prime Minister said Barisan was a government that would keep its word and fulfils its promises to the people, adding that the coalition would do so if it won in Selangor.

It was reported that Batu Caves would face the risk of caving in if a condominium project, located a mere 120m away from the iconic Lord Murugan statue, was to proceed.

The proposed serviced residences project by Dolomite Industries was temporarily stopped following orders from the state government to conduct soil testing.

MIC president Datuk Seri G. Palanivel said the Indian community welcomed the Prime Minister's pledge.

Palanivel, who is Minister in the Prime Minister's Department, said the Selangor Government should immediately cancel the project, which apparently would endanger the fragile nature of the limestone hills.

Najib also said the iconic complex was set to gain global recognition.

"The significance of Batu Caves was discussed by the Cabinet and it was decided that the Information, Communications and Culture Ministry will submit an application to Unesco for it to be consider as a World Heritage Site (WHS)."

Information, Communications and Culture Minister Datuk Seri Dr Rais Yatim welcomed Najib's announcement, describing it as "timely".

At present, Malaysia is home to four WHS: the Mulu National Park in Sarawak, Kinabalu National Park in Sabah and the cities of Georgetown and Malacca.

Located at a 400 million-year-old limestone hill, Batu Caves is home to a series of caves and the famed 272-step Hindu temple dedicated to Lord Murugan.

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