

**PM: Women have special place here**  
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CHAMPION: 'We're way ahead in their cause'

KUALA LUMPUR: WOMEN in Malaysia are privileged as their contributions to the nation were recognised right from the start when the country achieved its independence, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak said yesterday.

Speaking at the 50th national Women's Day celebration, he added that Malaysian women were even more advanced than their counterparts in developed nations.

"Don't think that everything is better in the developed nations as we are always way ahead, especially in terms of women's rights.

"For example, in some developed countries, the men were allowed to vote before women but in Malaysia, women had the right to vote just like the men."

Najib also noted that Malaysian women were allowed to join any club unlike in the United States.

"For example, the Augusta National Club recently admitted two women to its club where women were banned in the past.

"As far as I know, every club in Malaysia accepts women as members. This is where we are different as we have acknowledged equal rights for women right from the start."

Najib also said women had contributed greatly to the nation even before independence.

"It was a woman's veil which was spread out to collect bangles and earrings from other women which were donated to fund Tunku Abdul Rahman's ticket to London in the journey towards the country's independence.

"Maybe my father's (Tun Abdul Razak) ticket, too, was sponsored by these women," he said to thunderous applause from the floor.

He said the government always placed importance in the development and programmes for women as evidenced in the 2013 Budget.

"We provide incentives like grants, double tax reductions and allowances to private early education centres so more can be built and women can go to work."

Najib, who is also finance minister, said women made up 65 per cent of those in tertiary education, but only about 47.9 per cent were in the workforce.

"It's a waste as we spend a lot of money sending women to university but they quit their jobs later. We want them to be able to have families and still work.

"All companies and departments should have in-house nurseries (taska) to enable this to happen."

Also present were his wife, Datin Seri Rosmah Mansor, and Deputy Women, Family and Community Development Minister Datuk Heng Seai Kie.

Several women who played key roles in women's rights movements and pre-independence movements, such as Professor Datuk Dr Fatimah Hamid Don, Datuk Rasammah Bhupalan and Puan Sri Sukumari Sekhar, were honoured during the event.

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