

**PM: Centres for the elderly soon**

**New Straits Times**

**18 October 2012**

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**A FEATURE AT NEW HOUSING PROJECTS: Community halls for senior citizens to interact with younger generation**

KUALA LUMPUR: NEW housing projects will have community centres for senior citizens soon.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak said such facilities would enable the elderly to participate in social and recreational activities, and interact with other community members.

"Housing developers should consider setting up such centres on a wider scale for the local community, just like the requirement to provide preschool facilities," he told about 500 guests comprising occupants of welfare homes nationwide and pensioners at the National Senior Citizens Day celebration in Seri Kembangan yesterday.

Najib, who is also the women, family and community development minister, said the ministry would utilise 45 halls under the ministry as activity centres for senior citizens.

He added that this was to ensure senior citizens continued to be productive and feel appreciated.

"The development and success of our nation is of course due to the hard work and contributions of our senior citizens.

"They are an important asset to the nation for their invaluable experiences and on behalf of the nation, I thank all senior citizens for their sacrifices and hard work in building this nation."

He also stressed that the responsibility of caring for senior citizens should not only rest on the government but also the community.

"Although the government provides various benefits for senior citizens, it is the younger generation's love and contribution towards them that is more important."

Najib added in ensuring that senior citizens continued to contribute to the nation, the government had adopted several approaches, which included raising the retirement age for civil servants from 58 to 60 beginning this year.

He said the government also formulated the Minimum Retirement Age Act 2012 to set the minimum retirement age for private sector employees.

"This is part of the country's preparation and plans to face the challenges of becoming an ageing nation.

"However, based on the projection, Malaysia is expected to reach the status of an old nation only by the year 2030 when 15 per cent of the population are senior citizens."

This year's Senior Citizens Day was celebrated on a grand scale with the theme "Productive Senior Citizens Chart The Future".

Seven senior citizens who had contributed to the development of the nation and the community were also recognised and given a certificate of appreciation.

Among them were "Queen of the Tracks" Datuk Rajamani Mailvaganam and first Malaysia woman Olympian Annie Choong.

The event was also attended by the prime minister's wife, Datin Seri Rosmah Mansor and Deputy Women, Family and Community Development Minister Datuk Heng Sei Kie.

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Source: <http://www.nst.com.my/nation/general/pm-centres-for-the-elderly-soon-1.158666>