

**Najib: Rise and deliver**  
**New Straits Times**  
**22 November 2012**  
**By Ajitpal Singh**

**AFF CUP: Prime minister tells players to forget poor results and focus on championship**

PRIME Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak has told the national squad to forget their recent troubles and focus on giving 100 per cent in the AFF Cup which kicks off on Sunday.

Najib took time off from his busy schedule to visit the squad led by K. Rajagobal at Wisma FAM in Kelana Jaya yesterday, spending 30 minutes with them.

Malaysia will open their Group B campaign against Singapore on Sunday.

It is hoped that Najib's first ever training ground visit will encourage the players to perform better in the tournament following a series of poor results in friendly matches.

"It is always a privilege to wear the national jersey and those who get this chance are special.

"A Prime Minister and a footballer have similarities. When we succeed, everyone praises you but when we fail, our critics come down hard on us," Najib told the players.

"We must learn to bounce back from failures and when we are successful, we must push harder for greater achievements."

Najib told the squad to give 100 per cent commitment during the AFF Cup.

"I am here representing the government to motivate and support you. Forget about the results against Bangladesh and Hong Kong ...start afresh and focus on the AFF Cup. Malaysians will definitely give their undivided support to all of you.

"I am aware that footballers now draw high salaries but the government will give something if you do well in the tournament," he added.

After the prime minister's motivational words, national captain Safiq Rahim presented him the newly designed national jersey bearing Najib's name to him before pledging that the team will do their best to retain the AFF Cup.

Najib also gave his full backing to Rajagobal, who has come under severe criticism, ahead of the tournament.

Rajagobal said Najib's first ever visit to the training ground had given his players confidence.

"We are honoured to have him here. For a prime minister to come all the way and motivate us shows that he cares about us. He is confident that we will do well and I hope this will motivate my players further," said Rajagobal.

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Source: <http://www.nst.com.my/sports/soccer/najib-rise-and-deliver-1.174956>