

PM: Tax relief for firms holding family day events

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VITAL UNIT: Incentive is part of initiatives to strengthen the family, says Najib

PEKAN: THE government will give tax exemption to private companies that organise family day events for their staff, in efforts to strengthen the family institution.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak, announcing this yesterday, said the incentive was part of initiatives under the Gerakan 1Malaysia Utamakan Keluarga (Family First 1Malaysia Movement) to strengthen ties between employers and their employees, improve productivity and create happy families.

"We must always give priority to our families and the government has introduced various initiatives to strengthen the family institution, which is the most important unit in the community," he said when launching the 1Malaysia Family Month 2012 national-level celebrations here.

Among other initiatives under the movement, Najib said, the government had implemented the National Family Policy, introduced maternity and paternity leave, provided subsidies for childcare services, encouraged the set-up of more childcare centres at workplaces and launched the first house ownership campaign for the people.

"I also hope that Family Month can be made an annual event," said Najib, who had mooted the idea for the celebrations under the National Blue Ocean Strategy.

Najib, who is also women, family and community development minister, said the government was striving to improve the country's family well-being index, which currently stood at 7.55 on a scale of 10.

Instead of stressing only on a high per-capita income towards becoming a developed nation, he said Malaysia preferred a more holistic approach which also gave importance to family well-being.

"We may have high incomes but we will not be happy if there is internal bickering in our family or the crime index is high, or if we are always caught in traffic jams.

"That is why we want to improve the family well-being index from B+ to A soon," he said at the event which was attended by more than 10,000 people.

Also present were the prime minister's wife, Datin Seri Rosmah Mansor, and Pahang Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Adnan Yaakob.

Earlier when launching the "Astro Kasih Knowledge Zone" at the Sultanah Hajjah Kalsom Children's Home in Penor, near here, Najib said the government had reviewed the guidelines to set up new childcare centres (taska) to ensure that more such facilities could be opened nationwide.

He said taska operators who met the minimum standard set by the Welfare Department would no longer be required to get the approval of technical agencies.

Previously, childcare centre operators were required to get the approval of the local authorities and technical agencies before registering with the Welfare Department.

Najib said some 372 centres had benefited from the new guidelines.

At present, there are 1,767 childcare centres in the country, which handle a total of 53,000 children.

Najib, who is Pekan member of parliament, said the government had also approved a RM10 million allocation to help interested parties open about 1,000 new taska.

He also lauded the effort by Astro in setting up the "Astro Kasih Knowledge Zone", which provided reading materials at 24 child welfare homes nationwide.

Present were Astro Malaysia Holdings chairman Tun Zaki Tun Azmi and Deputy Women, Family and Community Development Minister Datuk Heng Seai Kie.

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