

**Female Labour Force Participation Must Be Improved, Says Najib
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KUALA LUMPUR, May 28 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak said female labour force participation, which currently is at 47 percent, must be improved to ensure robust and sustainable growth in the country.

The Prime Minister said more jobs aligned to women's needs should be offered to encourage their participation in the workforce such as through home-based, part-time or flexible working hours.

"Women are still not equally represented in the labour force. The Malaysian economy saw exceptional growth at 5.6 percent last year.

"But female labour participation must be improved if we want to continue to see robust and sustainable growth," he said when delivering his keynote address at the 3rd Global Conference on Women Deliver 2013, here Tuesday.

Also present were Patron of Women Deliver 2013, who is also the Prime Minister's wife, Datin Seri Rosmah Mansor, President of Women Deliver Jill Sheffield and Women, Family and Community Development Minister Datuk Rohani Abdul Karim.

Najib noted that the government had put in place policies to encourage the shift, with reforms under the Economic Transformation Programme (ETP) that reinforced the need to attract, increase and retain women employees in the workforce.

"We have several overarching targets for women in the workforce such as increasing female labour participation rate to 55 per cent, and increasing the number of women working on public-listed company boards to 30 per cent," he said.

More than 3,000 delegates, including policymakers, advocates and world leaders representing over 150 countries, are attending the three-day conference beginning Tuesday.

Malaysia is the first Asian country to be given the honour to host the global conference previously held in London and Washington D.C. The event is touted as the largest global conference of the decade to focus on the health and well-being of girls and women. It is organised by Women Deliver which has its headquarters in New York.

Elaborating, Najib said the National Institute for the Empowerment of Women ran a women directors training programme to realise the targets set with regard to women in the workforce.

He pointed out that to date, more than 300 women had been trained and ready to take up positions on corporate boards.

Najib explained that the government supported skills programmes and entrepreneurship opportunities for low-income earners.

The prime minister also said the government was looking to build a holistic social support system to contribute to work-life balance, offering childcare and elder care solutions, among

others.

"These policies are not merely add-ons, they are essential precursors to genuinely sustainable economic growth.

"Furthermore, if we want to see equally sustainable democracy, it's clear that we need to increase women's political participation," Najib said. Najib said he was encouraged by the active and visible role taken by some women in national politics but believed it was incumbent upon them to find out why women were under-represented in Malaysia's political discourse.

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