

**Government Continues To Focus Priorities Of People Under 11th Malaysia Plan - Najib
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PUTRAJAYA, May 12 (Bernama) -- The priorities of the people especially with regard to the cost of living, education, security, public transportation and rural infrastructure remain the focus of the 11th Malaysia Plan (11MP), says Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak.

Najib, who is scheduled to table the 11MP in the Dewan Rakyat on May 21, said that there would be a special focus on technical and vocational education and training.

"Our ambition, which will be reinforced by the Education Blue Print, is to produce well-rounded and balanced graduates who meet the needs of industry.

"I'm in fact looking at models in technical and vocational education and training in other countries including Europe which have successful track records in recent years," Najib said at the Business Leaders Dialogue Session at the Prime Minister's Office, in Putrajaya, Tuesday.

He said a 'People's Economy' was not complete without the support of the private sector in raising incomes, generating employment opportunities and facilitating career advancement and development.

"As we look ahead of the 11th Malaysian Plan, which will take us through the next five years, Malaysia's economic fundamentals are strong and our national transformation agenda puts Malaysia on track to achieve Vision 2020," he said.

Sharing with the business leaders on the economic fundamentals, Najib was confident that Malaysia's outlook was fully justified, with the Gross Domestic Product remaining strong and expected to record between 4.5 per cent to 5.5 per cent this year.

"This is a healthy rate which exceeds many of our regional peers, and is testimony to the resilience of our economy. Its diversification was vital and necessary, and that has been one of our key reforms," he noted.

Najib again expressed his intention to gradually reduce corporate tax to boost Malaysia's competitiveness and this would require the country to expand its income base from different sources including the Goods and Services Tax (GST).

"It will take time to fade down, but I am confident that once we iron out initial problems and abuses, it will be seen as a necessary step.

"Those who suggest otherwise and attempt to stir up disaffection on this issue (such as GST) are the ones being irresponsible. No one should play politics with an issue so vital to our country's future," he said.

On the dialogue, Najib said he valued the dialogue with the nation's most eminent business leaders and looking forward to work together to make the most of home-grown talents in Malaysia.

"I look forward to hear from you on how we can work together, government and employers, in particular on how to minimise youth unemployment, raise female labour participation, invest in upskilling employees and raise incomes.

"We look to you as captains of industry not to remain silent. Share the facts. Speak of the success of your businesses and your ambitious growth. It is for us as leaders to motivate and inspire our people and the economy as a whole," he said.

On the third dialogue, a follow-up from previous dialogues in April and August last year, Najib said several leaders had shared valuable suggestions on greater collaboration between the industry and academia, that includes an initiative for CEOs to lecture at public universities.

"Tan Sri Tony Fernandes (Airasia Chief Executive Officer) is one of those who had volunteered and I am sure that others will follow his example, and also ensure that your companies will become more involved in partnerships with colleges and universities," he said.

Another business player also suggested to the government to issue guidelines to employers to help them establish childcare centres in the workplace above the second floor, and promote female participation in the workforce.

On the new Expatriate Service Centre, Najib said it would be operational as of next month, run jointly by TalentCorp and the Immigration Department.

Earlier, Minister at the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Seri Abdul Wahid Omar shared the country's economic status with 25 top business leaders at the dialogue session.

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