

## **Federal Government Has Started Discussions On Devolution Of Powers With Sarawak Government - PM**

**Bernama**

**Aug 10, 2015**

KUCHING, Aug 10 (Bernama) -- The federal government has initiated discussions with the Sarawak on further empowering several Sarawak's state government departments, said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak.

He said this would involve reducing the powers of certain federal departments.

The discussions, he said, were a follow up to his instructions to the Chief Secretary to the Government Tan Sri Dr Ali Hamsa to start negotiating with Sarawak State Secretary Tan Sri Mohamad Morshidi Abdul Ghani on the matter recently.

According to Najib, the results of the negotiations would be announced by himself and Sarawak Chief Minister Tan Sri Adenan Satem, when finalised.

"A lot of overlapping (of powers) can be avoided, many resources can be saved if we can streamline powers between the departments concerned in the federal government and the Sarawak government," he said when launching the month-long National Day celebrations and flying the Jalur Gemilang (national flag) campaign at Padang Merdeka here tonight.

He said it was fortunate for the people of Sarawak to have a state government which was aligned with the central government, because much more progress could be expected as a result of this close relationship.

Najib said that when the people of Sarawak decided to be free and together form Malaysia in 1963, they clearly understood the importance of being part of a 'big family'.

He said that by belonging to a large family, it meant the entire force of the federal government would be used to defend the interests and security of the people of Sarawak.

That was why, he said, when some people called for the secession of Sarawak from Malaysia, he regarded it as something absurd.

"I agree with the words of the Chief Minister just now that 'it is stupid talk', because the decision by Sarawak to become independent with Malaysia has given great benefits to the entire community (in Sarawak)," he said.

The prime minister, along with the chief minister and other ministers left after the flag raising ceremony, but more than 10,000 visitors stayed on in Padang Merdeka to enjoy the other events prepared for the occasion.

Stage events are expected to last until midnight, and will end with a fireworks show.

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