

**National Unity Only Meaningful Without Marginalisation Of People – Najib
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KOTA KINABALU, Sept 16 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak said today national unity in the country will only become truly meaningful if there is no marginalisation of people.

As such, he said, the government had to adopt an inclusive approach in development and economic growth and ensure that the fruits of success were widely shared.

"As stated in the 11th Malaysia Plan (2016-2020), the federal government is committed to ensuring that everyone, regardless of gender, ethnicity, socio-economic status and geographic location, can live in a truly harmonious and progressive society that bears the mark of an inclusive nation with an advanced economy.

"This is why the government has placed, and will continue to place, great importance on development in Sabah. Since the establishment of the Sabah Development Corridor in 2008, RM127 billion in committed investments have been generated; and I am sure this is just the beginning of how Sabah is going to progress further and play an important part in the economic transformation of Malaysia," he said.

Najib said this in his keynote address at the National Integration Seminar jointly organised by the Department of National Unity and Integration and Asian Strategy & Leadership Institute (ASLI) here.

Also present at the ceremony were Sabah Chief Minister Datuk Seri Musa Aman, Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Tan Sri Joseph Kurup and federal and state ministers.

Najib said that in a state like Sabah, where over 60 per cent of the land was hilly and mountainous and where much of the population lived in the rural areas, infrastructure was key.

Therefore, he said, under the 10th Malaysia Plan, the government promised to address the plight of those who were still living without electricity and he added that he was glad to report that 98.2 per cent of the rural areas now had electricity, up from 92.5 per cent in 2010.

On a pledge to improve transportation facilities in Sabah, Najib said over 4,000 kilometres of roads had either been upgraded or newly constructed in the state. The rail link between Kota Kinabalu and Tenom had also been upgraded.

He said the nearly 1,700-kilometre-long Pan Borneo Highway under construction would boost connectivity between Sabah and Sarawak and with the two states' regional neighbours, Brunei Darussalam and Indonesia, opening up the area for communication and economic opportunities.

"But we are aware that for many still, just attending the local clinic or school can be a major journey. We need to give equal priority to linking villages to one another, as well as to the nearest towns, so that the benefits of development are available to all.

"In order to help with this, as of June 2014, my government had allocated over RM1.7 billion to Sabah, to be used for transportation and logistics," he said.

On the subject of schools, he said the government acknowledged the vital need for education and was building an inclusive society and ensuring that opportunities were available for all.

In Sabah, he said, at the moment, the primary sector was underserved and that was why construction was already underway for 288 new pre-schools, and 3,500 new pre-school teachers and childcare providers would be trained by 2017.

Najib said that to strengthen the tertiary sector in Sabah, more institutions were poised to set up branch campuses at the Sandakan Education Hub so that the advantages of higher education were open to more school leavers.

Furthermore, this would help Sabah to achieve the objective of attaining a 15 per cent increase in its skilled workforce by 2020 under the 11th Malaysia Plan.

Najib said job opportunities had been created and local industry supported through the establishment of the Sipitang Oil and Gas Industrial Park and the Sabah Ammonia Urea (Samur) project and, at the same time, health care facilities in Sabah had been improved.

The government had allocated about RM660 million in the 2015 budget to enhance security in the Eastern Sabah Security Zone, with two new camps and over 1,200 new army personnel, he said.

"Let me assure you: the voices of Sabahans have never been stronger in the Federal Government and the Barisan Nasional. But that is not why we are placing so much emphasis on Sabah. Nor is that why I have asked the Chief Secretary to the Government, Tan Sri Dr Ali Hamsa, to look into streamlining duplication in decision-making between the state and federal levels, in order to further empower Sabah's self-governance.

"We are taking these actions because they are right, because of the importance we place on inclusivity, and because we recognise that in a democratic federal system, the rights of states to take their own decisions must be respected," Najib said.

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