

**Perception of Foreigners That Penan Are Not Civilised Is Wrong – Najib  
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MIRI, April 30 (Bernama) -- The perception of foreigners that the Penan are uncivilised people is wrong because the community has not been left out of development by the Barisan Nasional government.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak said BN's inclusive policies are clear that no race or ethnic group is left out from the stream of modernisation.

"I was drawn to the assumption of Bruno Menser, the self-proclaimed champion of the Penan who claimed the Penan were nomads, wearing loincloths (cawat) and deprived of civilisation.

"That is not true because I saw how modern they are with my own eyes," said Najib in front of about 2,500 people at the Mareng Penan long house in Suai Niah, about 135km from Miri.

The 36-door longhouse is the first modern longhouse of the Penan community which has a population of about 18,000 throughout Sarawak.

"I have seen some clever Penan, fair complexion and some pursuing their studies at higher learning institutions and even at universities," said Najib.

The development is due to opportunities provided by BN as opposed to what is being offered by the opposition.

Penan communities were predominantly nomadic up until the 1950s. The period from 1950-to present has seen consistent programmes by the state government and foreign Christian missionaries to settle Penan into longhouse-based villages similar to those of Sarawak's other indigenous groups.

Najib also paid tribute to Sarawak Penan community chief Datuk Temenggung Hasan Sui who was present at the gathering with BN candidate for Kemena Datuk Dr Stephen Rundi Utom and BN Samalaju candidate Majang Renggi, since he was among the success stories of the Penan community.

The Prime Minister also announced a RM1 allocation to upgrade facilities at the Mareng Penan long house plus another RM200,000 to the Penan Community Association for the education of the Penan children.

Najib also presented offer letters under the Long House Loan Scheme for the 34-door Mareng Penan long house and 89-door Ngipa Tinggang in Sebauh, Bintulu.

Hasan Sui, a wealthy Penan, said the 18,000 odd Penan community in Sarawak will give their undivided support to Najib's leadership.

He believed the Prime Minister would continue to be attentive to the needs of the Penan community by providing clean water supply, electricity and roads.

Meanwhile, Rundi said the Prime Minister had always listened to the pulse of the people, including the Penan community and the people of Kemena, not only during the election period but all the time.

They can be considered as a native group or 'tribe' in their own right, with a language distinct from other neighbouring native groups such as the Kenyah, Kayan, Murut or Kelabit.

They have since settled in Miri, Baram, Limbang, Tutoh and Belaga regions.

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