

Najib: We'll resolve stateless Indian issue

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Prime minister says 20,000 to 25,000 Indians born before 1957 had not been granted citizenship.

KUALA LUMPUR: Najib Razak today said Putrajaya is determined to resolve citizenship issues facing local Indians via a blueprint for the community but said it will require a "little bit more time".

The prime minister said while a majority of such cases had been sorted out, a joint initiative by the MIC and a home ministry task force will see to the remaining cases.

According to the blueprint, which was launched earlier today, a special approval system under the ministry will be set up to help Indians born before 1957 gain citizenship.

"We can't deny them the right to citizenship as we promised them."

Najib went on to reveal that between 20,000 and 25,000 Indians born before 1957 had not been granted citizenship.

Prior to this, there were claims, including by the opposition that some 300,000 Indians were not granted citizenship. The government had denied these claims.

The issue cropped up again after it was reported that controversial Indian preacher Zakir Naik had been granted permanent residence.

MIC later urged the government to help stateless Indians in Malaysia instead.

According to past reports, the problem stems from incomplete documents which prevented the applicants from gaining citizenship.

Earlier, MIC president Dr S Subramaniam expressed hope that the blueprint would resolve the matter once and for all.

Apart from citizenship, the 10-year Indian blueprint plan also includes special assistance to increase admission of Indians into higher education institutions and raising the participation of Indians in the public service by at least 7% at all grade levels by 2016.

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