

M'sia gunning for just, sustainable society - PM
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Prime Minister Najib Razak said Malaysia is seeking to mould a just and sustainable society where all Malaysians will stand to gain from it.

This, he said, was among the objectives as the country eyed becoming a high-income economy and eventually one of the top 20 leading nations of the world by 2050.

"However, in this mission, we will not forsake our values. We seek a just, inclusive and sustainable society in which no Malaysian is left behind," he said when opening the ninth session of the World Urban Forum (WUF9) in Kuala Lumpur today.

With the theme "Cities 2030, Cities for All: Implementing the New Urban Agenda", the Feb 7-13 event draws the participation of delegations from some 193 countries.

In his speech at the high-profile gathering hosted by Malaysia together with UN Habitat, Najib listed, among others, measures taken by his administration to ensure that Malaysian city dwellers enjoyed a good quality of life that was sustainable for future generations.

Najib noted this was why the government had been investing in public transport such as the Mass Rapid Transit (MRT) lines in the Klang Valley, and the Rapid Transit System linking Johor Bahru in southern Peninsular Malaysia and neighbouring Singapore.

"This was an area that was neglected in the past as too much emphasis was placed on the car industry. But our cities need to be liveable. And they need to be sustainable too," he said, mentioning the River of Life project aimed at cleaning and beautifying the Klang and Gombak rivers as well.

He also alluded to efforts to create 1Malaysia Youth Cities in Tanjung Malim in Perak, Tuaran in Sabah and Lundu in Sarawak for which the government had allocated RM100 million.

This initiative, he said, would bring about a comprehensive ecosystem for youths to develop their employability, skills and entrepreneurial edge – all while enjoying recreational facilities, affordable housing, transportation and environmental harmony.

Najib shared with his audience the World Economic Forum's latest report in which Malaysia emerged first among all Asian emerging economies for inclusiveness.

Najib said this was evident through the government's extensive range of programmes to provide hundreds of thousands of affordable houses, assistance to low-income earners, very cheap medical care through 1Malaysia clinics, exemptions to Goods and Services Tax for essential food items, training courses and initiatives, and incentives for businesses especially small and medium enterprises.

He said as highlighted in the New Urban Agenda adopted at Quito, Ecuador in 2016, the world's urban population was expected to almost double by 2050, with cities hosting close to 70 percent of the globe's population.

"This growth will be concentrated mainly in Asia and Africa, with Asia projected to have more than half of the world's megacities," Najib said, adding that Malaysia's experience reflected those trends.

Malaysia's urbanisation rate, he said, was expected to exceed 85 percent by 2050 compared with over 75 percent today and under 30 percent in the 1970s.

In managing the challenges of such a massive urban transformation, he said Malaysia was helped by strong economic fundamentals, with his government's Economic Transformation Programme in place since 2010 having delivered 2.26 million jobs, over one million of which were high-income jobs.

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