

Advancing Indian Community A Work In Progress – Najib

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31/01/2018

KUALA SELANGOR, Jan 31 (Bernama) -- A key agenda of the Barisan Nasional government to improve the standard of living of and to advance the Indian community in the country is a work in progress, Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak said today.

The Prime Minister said this could not be attained in a day or two because it involved not only physical development but also changes to the structure of the life of the community.

"Changing the attitude and values as well as strengthening the foundation of the Indian community is a work in progress. I agree with MIC president Datuk Seri Dr S. Subramaniam who said in his speech that the Indians will advance more if they can strengthen unity among themselves."

"This is a challenge that we face but I can assure you that with BN leading the government, there is hope for us. What we need is your support and trust so that the BN government can give you the best."

"We are not engaging in empty talk or 'vetti pecchu' in Tamil, but we are talking the truth or 'nijjam'," he said when addressing worshippers and others at the Thaipusam celebration at the Sri Subramaniam Swamy Temple here.

Besides Dr Subramaniam, Urban Well-being, Housing and Local Government Minister Tan Sri Noh Omar and Kuala Selangor MP Datuk Seri Dr Irmohizam Ibrahim were present at the event.

Najib said the agenda of the BN government in improving the standard of living of the Indian community was translated through the Malaysian Indian Blueprint that was launched in April last year.

He said he had also announced an RM50-million allocation for the Socioeconomic Development of the Indian Community (SEDIC) Unit, an RM50-million allocation for the National Entrepreneurial Group Economic Fund (TEKUN) and an RM50-million allocation for the maintenance and repair of Tamil schools.

He also said that the government had also announced new initiatives whereby Permodalan Nasional Berhad would make a special distribution of RM1.5 billion additional units of the Amanah Saham 1Malaysia for the Indian community, limited to 30,000 units per investor.

In February, I will launch a special investment scheme for the B40 households which will increase the savings of 100,000 B40 Indian households, especially those below the poverty line.

Najib said he understood that the Indians wanted quality education for their children and economic opportunities as well as the settlement of their citizenship woes and such.

"I pledge that the BN government will safeguard the right to freedom of religion and respect for other faiths, Najib said to applause from the estimated 5,000 people who were present at the temple," he said.

Najib explained his presence at the Sri Subramaniam Swamy Temple in Kuala Selangor for the Thaipusam celebration, saying he wanted to take the opportunity to meet the local people.

"I also want to see the progress in this area because the BN government emphasises fair, equitable and inclusive development," he said.

He also said that the government would provide a matching allocation for the development of the temple if the temple committee managed to raise a certain amount of funds.

Temple chairman T. Morgana Sundram said RM3 million was needed to develop the temple further and that the committee can raise RM1.5 million.

"I challenged him to raise the RM1.5 million and said the government will match that amount in allocation," he said.

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