

## **No economic growth without 'infra-rakyat' development – Najib**

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KANGAR, March 13 (Bernama) -- The economy of the country will not grow if 'infra-rakyat' (infrastructure for the people) is not well implemented, said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak.

He said that when the economy continued to grow well, the government would be able to implement not just the infra-rakyat but also provide employment for the people and various subsidies for the needy.

"If the economy does not grow, we cannot provide employment opportunities to the thousands of our children graduating annually from the public institutions of higher learning such as Universiti Malaysia Perlis (UniMAP).

"If the economy does not grow, how can we provide the subsidies in the education and health sectors and meet the expenditure for all public servants?" he said when speaking at the official opening of the Perlis Urban Transformation Centre here.

Najib, who is on a one-day visit to Perlis, was accompanied by his wife, Datin Seri Rosmah Mansor. They were welcomed by Perlis Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Azlan Man; Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Seri Shahidan Kassim; Treasury secretary-general Tan Sri Mohd Irwan Serigar Abdullah and thousands of people.

Referring to the national debt, Najib, who is also the Finance Minister, said it was at a manageable level and that the money had been spent on infrastructure development for the benefit and well-being of the people.

There might be talk that the national debt is too huge but the fact remained that the opposite was true, he said.

"This is because we have capped it at 55 per cent of our Gross Domestic Product. Our national debt is only at 50.8 per cent of GDP. Singapore, Japan and Italy have much bigger debts.

"But that's not the gauge because it is more important that we have the ability to repay. Ninety-eight per cent of our debt is in ringgit but we have the ability to repay, he said to the applause of the audience at the UTC complex.

Najib also announced that 500 units of houses would be built soon under the Kangar People's Housing Programme at a cost of RM78 million to help the people who could not afford to own a house.

He said the three parliamentary constituencies in Perlis, namely Kangar, Padang Besar and Arau, already had or would have these housing units besides other development projects that had been approved but had yet to be announced.

The projects included the Timah Tasoh Water Treatment Plan to supply 40 million litres of water per day (costing RM41 million); non-revenue water treatment project for the whole of Perlis (RM50 million); a sluice gate in the Perlis River (RM50 million); Beseriah Integrated Public Terminal (RM30 million), Padang Besar 'Bazar Ria' market (RM10 million) and Kangar Bazar Ria market (RM10 million).

These are the economic stimulus projects for Perlis. Hopefully, they will stimulate something when the time comes, he said with a smile, referring to the next general election.

Najib also braved the hot weather to tour the UTC complex and chatted with the civil servants and private sector employees working there.

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