

PM: We'll ensure sustainable city life

Rapid urban growth a challenge, says Najib



Strong foundations: Najib receiving a memento after opening the Ninth World Urban Forum in Kuala Lumpur. Looking on are Maimunah (left) and Noh Omar.

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KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysia faces challenges in managing the increasing pace of urbanisation but the Government will ensure that city residents continue to enjoy a good and sustainable quality of life, says Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak.

He said the rate of urbanisation was rapidly rising in the country, from 30% in the 1970s to more than 75% at present.

By 2050, the urbanisation rate is expected to exceed 85%, said the Prime Minister.

"As in many parts of the world, we face the challenges of successfully managing such a massive urban transformation.

"We must ensure that Malaysians living in our cities enjoy a good quality of life that is sustainable for future generations," he said at the launch of the Ninth World Urban Forum (WUF9).

Held every two years, the WUF is the largest United Nations conference on sustainable urban development and cities.

The WUF9, held from Feb 7 to 13, is attended by about 25,000 people from 193 countries.

Organised by the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), the theme for WUF9 is "Cities 2030, Cities for All: Implementing the New Urban Agenda".

The forum is being held for the second time in Asia with over 500 events, including

assemblies, high-level roundtable talks, dialogues and special sessions.

Cities which had hosted the forum before include Naples, Rio de Janeiro, Nanjing, Vancouver, Barcelona and Nairobi.

Others who were also present at the launch included UN-Habitat executive director Datuk Maimunah Mohd Sharif and Urban Wellbeing, Housing and Local Government Minister Tan Sri Noh Omar.

Najib congratulated Maimunah, the former Penang Island City Council Mayor on her appointment to the position which was announced in December.

"We are all proud that a Malaysian public official and a Malaysian woman has been elected to head such an esteemed organisation," said the Prime Minister.

Najib in his speech said that Malaysia was doing well to ensure inclusiveness despite its rapid progress and urbanisation.

He cited the World Economic Forum's latest report where Malaysia was ranked first among emerging Asian economies for inclusiveness.

Najib said the Government had put in place many measures to promote greater inclusiveness, including building affordable homes, helping low-income groups, ensuring access to affordable medical care and investing heavily in public transportation.

Najib said Malaysia's next aim was to become one of the top 20 leading nations of the world by the year 2050.