

Najib's birthday wish is continued national growth

MIRI: For his 57th birthday today, Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak pray and wish for the country to continue prospering.

The Prime Minister said the Government hoped to carry on with its efforts to ensure peace and harmony for the people and country.

Najib had a pleasant birthday surprise when he went to Long Banga in the interiors of Baram yesterday, as the Orang Ulu community there had presented him with a cake.

He said the warm welcome was a good sign that the local communities in Sarawak placed very high hopes on the present Government.

"I was deeply touched, especially by the welcome I received in Long Banga and Pekan Bekenu in Sibuti.

"In both these places, the people turned out in huge numbers to greet me," he said when launching Petronas' Touch of Hope community out-reach programme at Desa Senadin here.

Najib also called on the private sector to complement the national effort to eradicate hardcore poverty.

"If we leave it to market forces to determine the distribution of wealth, we will have groups which are well-off; groups with moderate income as well as the poor and hardcore poor.

"Positive intervention is needed for a more equitable society. This should not be done by the Government alone as the private sector also has a role to play in distributing the nation's wealth fairly," he said.

Under the Petronas programme, 5,000 hardcore poor families across Malaysia will each receive monthly food aid of RM80 for two years.

The families were selected based on several criteria, including a monthly income of less than RM440 and having school-going children, said Petronas chief executive Datuk Shamsul Azhar Abbas.

Meanwhile, 100 schoolchildren from poor families here will each receive financial aid of RM450 (primary school) and RM600 (second-



Financial help: Najib with the 50 schoolchildren from Bekenu who received the aid under the 1Malaysia Development Berhad programme for students in Sarawak's rural areas. — Bernama

ary school); to be provided by 1Malaysia Development Berhad (1MDB).

Najib presented the aid to 50 children at Long Banga and 50 others in Bekenu.

He also presented the company's RM200,000 contribution to construct two units of rumah arau or halfway-houses at Sekolah Kebangsaan (SK) Tegageng in Subis and SK Kuala Kebulu in Sebauh.