

# 'NEW LAW TO BETTER PROTECT KIDS'

Najib urges all lawmakers to support bill

SYED UMAR ARIFF  
KUALA LUMPUR  
news@nst.com.my

**A** NEW bill aimed at tackling sex crimes against children will be tabled in the parliamentary session soon, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak said.

He said the Child Sexual Offences Bill 2017 was mooted after an extensive study by a special government task force, headed by Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Seri Azalina Othman Said.

Formed in August last year, the team comprised representatives from ministries, government agencies and non-governmental organisations to look into issues relating to sex crimes. Papers on the bill would be presented to the cabinet before a tabling at the Dewan Rakyat.

"As a responsible government, it is only right that we come up with a law specifically to deal with sex crimes against children effectively, comprehensively and holistically.

"Hence, a new law covering sex crimes against children that are not covered in present laws, such as child grooming and child pornography, will be tabled at the



Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak and other attendees standing to attention at the singing of the national anthem, at the launch of a seminar in Kuala Lumpur yesterday. With him are his wife Datin Seri Rosmah Mansor, (from left) Communications and Multimedia Minister Datuk Seri Salleh Said Keruak, Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi, former Indonesian president Megawati Soekarnoputri, Women, Family and Community Development Minister Datuk Seri Rohani Abdul Karim and Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Seri Azalina Othman Said. PIC BY SAIRIEN NAFIS

ongoing parliamentary session to be made into law," Najib said at the launch of the "Stop It! Child Sex Crimes" seminar yesterday.

Najib also called on lawmakers from both sides of the political divide to unanimously support the bill and pass it into law.

"It should be our collective responsibility, regardless of political ideologies. Such laws should not be opposed by any political party.

"This is for our children's future."

Najib cited statistics by the Welfare Department, which recorded 5,779 sexual abuse cases against children from 2010 to 2015, with an average of 963 cases annually.

"In the period between 2015 and 2016 alone, the police recorded 2,759 rape cases, incest (412), outraging modesty (1,423) and unnatural sex (422). All of them

involved victims under 18.

"Such cases should not have happened. We should not let children remain as victims and be exploited by such predators."

Najib also announced a proposal to establish a special court to preside over cases relating to sex crimes against children expeditiously and efficiently.

"This is so that justice is not only seen to be done, but is done swiftly. It is the wish of the gov-

ernment to stamp out such heinous crimes."

He also urged religious experts to continue reminding the people of their responsibilities to protect children under their care.

"We must remember that children are God's gift to us. I call upon our ulama to continue reminding the people of their responsibilities, and our obligation towards the religion.

"I believe that if we continue to stress such matters in forums and sermons, there will be greater awareness among the people."

Earlier, Najib's wife, Datin Seri Rosmah Mansor, who is the patron of the seminar, said sex crimes were on the increase, with 12,025 cases recorded since October last year.

"However, that number is just a fraction of a larger figure. Many did not come forward to lodge reports due to taboo or fear of tarnishing their family's image."

Present at the two-day seminar were former Indonesian president Megawati Soekarnoputri, who was accompanied by Indonesian Coordinating Minister for Human Development and Culture Puan Maharani and Indonesian Health Minister Nila Djuwita Anfasa Moeleek.

Others include Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi and Women, Family and Community Development Minister Datuk Seri Rohani Abdul Karim.