

Najib wrong to fish for votes, says Mafrel
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Deputy Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak has come under criticism for vote-buying practice by allocating RM3.7 million for Felda Tun Ghafar Baba Hutan Percha settlers in Machap yesterday.

Najib announced the windfall in the run-up to the Machap by-election due on Thursday to the settlers at a carnival-like event called 'An Evening with Najib', complete with red tents, a stage and a music band.

"Ada ubi ada batas, ada budi boleh balas. Kalau nak balas, balas pada April 12 dan undilah Barisan Nasional," he said to a thunderous applause.

(One should repay or return favours when the time is right and the favour should be repaid by voting BN on April 12).

From the total amount, RM3 million would be to upgrade the water pipes, RM600,000 for the construction of a multipurpose hall and RM100,000 to repair the mosque.

He was in the by-election hotspot for the second time to campaign for BN's candidate Lai Meng Chong, 56, who was also present.

In an immediate reaction, election watchdog Mafrel today described Najib's financial reward as a clear breach of the Election Commission's code of ethics.

"He has asked for votes directly during the event. He should have set an example (for others to follow the code of ethics)," Mafrel chairperson Abdul Malek Hussin said when contacted.

Malek also said Najib could be investigated under Section 10 of the Election Offences Act 1954 for giving the cash handouts to the voters.

"But action can only be taken against him if somebody lodges a police report first so investigations can then take place," he said.

According to the Section 10(a) of the Act, it is an offence amounting to bribery to give, lend, offer or promise any money or valuable consideration to any elector or voter.

The punishment includes imprisonment for a term not exceeding one year and a fine not exceeding RM2000.

'Make BN your choice'

Abdul Malek stressed that elections are in essence a competition of political vision and not a competition to corrupt people to win votes.

"You cannot bribe people to vote for you. When they get elected, they will have to give their corrupt cronies tenders.

"What you get is low quality construction of offices, school labs and roads because these contractors go unchecked," he warned.

Cash prizes between RM300 to RM100 were also given to individual Felda settlers in Machap for outstanding performances in the field of rubber tapping and palm oil harvesting at the function yesterday.

Various Felda areas were also winners of RM500 to RM1,000 for being the cheeriest kampung and the cleanest block.

Najib also urged the settlers to vote wisely for a candidate who was capable of championing their cause and ensure a better future for them.

And he added that BN had proven to be a powerful weapon that could be used to improve the people's livelihood.

The by-election will see Lai in a straight fight with DAP's Liou Chen Kuang, a 33-year-old businessman.

The state seat fell vacant following the death of the three-term incumbent Poh Ah Tiam, from BN, on March 15.

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