

Najib announces RM20 mil donation to Kg Baru mosque
Malaysiakini.com
February 5, 2011

Prime Minister Najib Razak today announced an allocation of RM20 million from the 1Malaysia Development Board to pay for the renovation of the Kampung Baru Mosque.

"I am saddened to see skyscrapers grow all around the area, like mushrooms after the rain.

"Yet conditions in Kampung Baru are almost like a squatter settlement. It's status is not that of a squatter area, but it seems like one," said Najib, expressing his concern.

As such, the prime minister announced the allocation for the development of what is termed an 'iconic' mosque as the first step to developing the largely Malay area.

For the rest of Kampung Baru, Najib said, the government was looking into converting the land titles into commercial titles so that the land could fetch a higher price.

Kampung Baru residents will not have to move out

However, he said, any development of Kampung Baru would not require the residents to leave the area.

"The people of Kampung Baru will not have to move, that is a prerequisite of any development in the area," he said.

It is not clear how converting the residential land to commercial will help Kampung Baru residents retain their homes if the land, especially once it is converted, can be sold at a much higher price.

Najib said the matter would be looked into by the soon-to-be-formed Kampung Baru Development Authority.

"This a government body, not a commercial entity. It will have Kampung Baru residents elected to its board to ensure transparency and to look after the interests of the villagers," he said, adding that no third party would be allowed to benefit from any development there.

"Only the people of Kampung Baru shall reap the benefits of this development," he said.

It is also unclear how the RM20 million from the 1MDB will help to foster national unity, which is the crux of the 1Malaysia campaign, especially with such exclusivity being given to developments in the Malay Muslim majority area.

The re-development of Kampung Baru, in the commercial heart of Kuala Lumpur, has long been the subject of battles between the government, developers and dissatisfied residents.

Najib said government-linked companies such as Permodalan Nasional Berhad and Lembaga Tabung Haji will be involved in the development. The Kampung Baru Corporation Bill will be tabled in Parliament in March to pave the way for the re-development.

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