

PM's Dept: RM5m carrot in SibU not a crime
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The Prime Minister's Department has said that Premier Najib Abdul Razak's infamous RM5 million incentive for SibU voters to support BN during the May 2010 by-election was not in violation of any laws.

In a written reply to SibU MP Wong Ho Leng, the department said this was because the incentive, in the form of a RM5 million flood mitigation project, was not for a particular individual.

"Based on previous court judgments, it was found that incentives such as project approvals and promises to build basic infrastructure made during election campaigns is not a form of bribery or inducement because it is in the public interest and not for individual interest," read the reply.

The reply reads that Chapter III of the Election Offences Act 1954 stipulates that it is an offence to provide bribes before, during and after an election.

It said that whether the granting or approving of government projects during a campaign period, based on the law, was a question of facts.

"If there are any complaints made by anyone, the facts would be investigated by the authorities and it needs to be proven in court by those who made the allegation," it said.

But were complaints probed?

Wong had asked the department whether an investigation had been conducted on Najib's infamous speech on May 15, 2010 on the eve of polling.

This question was not answered in the curt three-paragraph reply.

During his speech at Rejang Park, Najib said he wanted to "deal" with the voters and should they elect BN's Robert Lau into Parliament, the cheque for the RM5 million project would be signed on Monday.

Flooding in SibU, the third biggest city in Sarawak, is a perennial problem.

"I want to make a deal with you. Boleh tidak? Can we have a deal? Can we have an understanding or not? You sure? Okay. The understanding is quite simple. You help me, I help you," he said. [See video here]

In the end, Wong won the contest by a 398 majority in his third attempt since 2004, bolstered by a sizeable swing in votes from the Rejang Park area.

The opposition has long lamented that BN would abuse government machinery during election campaigns and basic infrastructure projects should not be used as an election carrot.