

Chinese, Indian NGOs hold frank talks with PM
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By Susan Loone

Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak was posed with "frank and honest" questions today during a separate meetings with Chinese and Indian NGOs in Penang.

najib in penang usm dialogue 220412Both meetings were held at Universiti Sains Malaysia campus this afternoon, but journalists were asked to leave before the dialogue sessions were started.

Accompanied by MIC president G Palanivel, the session with Indian NGOs began with Najib presenting mock keys for nine families who were evicted from Kampung Buah Pala in 2009.

Each family will receive two double storey houses.

Najib was later garlanded with flowers but this was followed by receiving stacks of memorandums from the NGOs which a litany of complaints.

najib in penang usm dialogue 220412But for the 500-odd participants it was all cheers when they shouted in support of Najib whenever prompted by the emcee.

One visibly disgruntled man said he was unhappy that he was denied entry to the event. The 82-year-old said he had intended to hand a letter to the premier over statelessness of his children.

"I am very disappointed. I just wanted the prime minister to hear my problems," he said.

During the closed-door dialogue later, it was learned that Najib had pledged RM2 million for the Penang Indian Association's building fund.

Too short a session

Meanwhile, the session with Chinese NGOs took place with less fanfare.

According to participants who attended the dialogue, nine participants raised issues ranging from rising fuel prices, Chinese vernacular schools, an alleged land grab by the Penang state government and the effectiveness of the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC).

najib in penang usm dialogue 220412"We were thank for the session, but wished we had more time. There are many issues that needs to be raised," said one participant, who is a Gerakan member.

Another participant told Malaysiakini that said that he felt uncomfortable when he was surrounded by a few ushers for the event when he raised a question about the MACC.

The session was organised by former Bukit Gelugor PKR chief Lim Boo Chang who put the number of participants at between 2,500 to 3,000.

Most journalists were in agreement that there were at most 1,000 people in the half-full Syed Putra Hall.

MCA vice-president Dr Ng Yen Yen, who is also Penang MCA chief, was among the VIP participants of this event.

'New-found enthusiasm in BN'

During a brief press conference later, Najib said he appreciated the "new-found enthusiasm" with the state BN leadership.

He added that he had met about 5,000 supporters from Nibong Tebal to Penang and all of them showed "high commitment" towards the coalition's struggles.

On the meetings with the NGOs, Najib said the groups were "open to engagement with the BN and especially with me".

najib in penang usm dialogue 220412He added that the group expressed their views although it does not mean that all their problems can be solved by the government.

"However I got the picture of what is important to them and we will try to respond according to their role and effectiveness," he added.

On Penang Chief Minister Lim Guan Eng's "blame-game" towards the BN for all the wrongs in the state, Najib said the BN must communicate what it has done for the people.

He added that almost all of Penang success in terms of infrastructural development and investment were the efforts of the previous BN administration.

"When we present this to the people, they will realise who has delivered all this," he added.

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