

Najib: Gov't developing long-term plan on car prices

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Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak tonight said he understood that Malaysians wanted better choices when buying a vehicle and assured that the government was looking into the matter.

"I do realise that people want better choices. We are still studying the matter and probably at some point in time, we'll find a long term solution that will eventually achieve that," he said during his hour-long online chat session on Google Hangout.

Najib was responding to a question on whether the government had any plans of slashing excise tax to reduce car prices.

The government has increasingly faced pressure to respond to car prices after Pakatan Rakyat launched a campaign pledging it would phase out excise taxes on vehicles if it comes into power.

The move, if implemented, is expected to slash car prices by at least 60 percent.

However, Najib said the matter was complex and has to be closely looked at.

"First of all, if you reduce excise duty (it) doesn't mean the entire amount will result in reduction of prices. Number two, there is limitation for the government because it is RM7 billion in revenue a year.

"The second hand market will also collapse and we need to take into account not only of Proton but those that are dependent on Proton for their survival," he said.

'Middle class not sidelined'

Responding to another question on whether the middle class had been left out in Budget 2013, Najib said this was not true.

"No. We have given a one percent reduction in personal tax, that we targeted for the middle class. We have also prepared housing programmes that is also for the middle class.

"We do not sideline the middle class, we give what we can afford to give to them," he said.

Asked on the government's effort on crime-busting in next year's budget, Najib said it is well detailed but zoomed in on a "personal favourite" measure - motorcycle patrols.

"I thought about this myself. I have spoken to the inspector-general of police and said I want this to take off as soon as possible so I can see at night the police are on motorcycles

all over the neighbourhood, so people can feel secure.

"This is just one of it in the budget, there are many others including giving incentive to the private sector to buy CCTVs. The focus is not only on the police but also society," he said.

Second virtual engagement

Najib's online engagement tonight, dubbed "Tanya Najib" (Ask Najib) is the second since January, where he had answered questions on Twitter.

However, Najib took to Google Hangout this time, which was streamed via Youtube, where he engaged in live chat with other netizens aside taking questions from Facebook and Twitter.

"I'm excited... we are using a method that we have not used before, through Google Hangout, and tonight we make history.

"Millions of people can watch and listen to what I have to say, this would not be possible through the conventional way. This is a landmark step and I hope I can do this again in future," Najib said when responding on his thoughts on the chat session.

Najib is the second politician in Malaysia to use Google Hangout for online engagement.

Opposition leader Anwar Ibrahim had in August conducted a similar one-hour session with netizens.

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