

**PM: Don't blame gov't for price hikes**

**MalaysiaKini.com**

**Jan 10, 2014**

Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak has urged the people not to blame the government for the hikes in prices of goods and services, claiming that it is beyond the state's control.

Instead, he was reported by the New Straits Times today as inviting the rakyat to consider what the government has done prior to the spate of price increases, before laying blame.

"Whenever there are price hikes, people will start pointing fingers at the government. We must be rational and assess the government based on its track record.

"The increase in the prices of goods is determined by external factors, not the government's doing," he is quoted as saying after chairing the National Green Technology and Climate Change Council in Putrajaya yesterday.

Najib said the government between 2008 and 2013 paid RM1.1 billion in compensation to highway concessionaires to delay toll charge hikes.

It will have to pay an additional RM404 million in compensation this year if the scheduled hike is delayed again.

However, the government will only decide on this after it studies the matter.

The Works Ministry said last year highway tolls will go up by between 50sen and RM2 on Jan 1, but this was suspended following an outcry from consumers who are already facing numerous other price hikes for goods and services.

Pakatan Rakyat has also called on the government to use its clout to renegotiate the concession agreements that compel compensation in lieu of toll hikes, since many of the highway concessionaires are government-linked companies.

The opposition coalition also argued that the government has provided grants and land at discounted prices to concessionaires to build the highways, and it can use these facts to renegotiate the agreements.

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