

We'll not surrender, vows Najib
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Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak said surrender is not an option, despite "facing a raft of hurdles and attacks".

"As a transparent government, I as the prime minister and the head of the leadership, with the honourable deputy prime minister and supported by the minister as wells as members of the administration, would never for a moment budge or surrender.

"Instead, we would remain steadfast and continue our struggle, charting a million new paths for the people and nation," he said to applause.

He also invoked his Bugis heritage, to say that the ancient Bugis seafarers never raised the white flag.

"The Bugis way is that, a vessel taken to sea cannot abandon its journey.

"Even if a tidal wave hits, breaking the rudder and tearing the sail, and even if a thousand vessels are swallowed by the ocean, it is more honourable to stay and fight than to turn back home," he said.

He said this in his speech during the unveiling of the annual reports for the Government Transformation Programme (GTP) and Economic Transformation Programme (ETP), aired on TV1.

Though he did not mention who was attacking his administration, his statement appeared to be directed at Dr Mahathir Mohamad (left).

The former premier is now Najib's number one critic and has openly called for his resignation.

Najib also said his administration is willing to listen to criticism and welcomes views as well as pointers from all quarters.

However, he argued that the criticism and pointers must be constructive, not "wild allegations".

"Only with constructive criticism can we correct the shortcomings or weaknesses. Otherwise, the development of the nation would be interrupted, (there would be) chaos and can complicate the situation as well as confuse the people," he added.

The prime minister also defended his Bantuan Rakyat 1Malaysia (BR1M) scheme, which Mahathir described as bribing voters.

"BR1M has become a widely-discussed topic now. So let me take this opportunity to correct the inaccurate assumptions of certain quarters.

"Anyone can say what they like and think, but for individuals like Puan Dayah, BR1M has alleviated her burden with regard to the cost of sending her children to school," he added.

Dayah Mamut, 41, from Betong, Sarawak is a single mother who works as a school security guard and has four children aged between 11 and 20.

Dayah and two of her children (above) were at Angkasapuri in Kuala Lumpur for Najib's speech and received applause from the audience.

BR1M around the world

She was not the only member of the audience whose stories Najib had told to highlight the government's success.

Also present was Clarissa Balicao who now owns her own beauty salon in Kota Marudu, Sabah after undergoing training under the 1Azam poverty eradication program, and a student from a high-performance school, Nor Izzati Sabrina from Ipoh.

In his speech, Najib also reiterated that BR1M is a targeted subsidy program in the form a cash and is carried out in various names and guises in other countries.

Indonesia, for example, paid out 700 billion rupiah (RM200 million) to 3.2 million households to help with the cost of living amid its 2013 fuel subsidy rationalisation program, he said.

In the UK, aid is provided in the form of food stamps for the poor to buy food, he said.

"Clearly, BR1M is not something that is isolated or alien, but is the practice of many other countries as policy (to provide a) social safety net.

"Above all, it should be understood properly that BR1M is a transitional measure in the process of fiscal consolidation to ensure that we can truly help the very needy, compared to the bulk subsidy implemented before this," he said.