

PM laments tearing hair over 'most difficult budget'

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Amid falling oil revenue, Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak said the upcoming budget will be among the most difficult he has ever tabled.

He said the government received RM26 billion in dividends from Petronas this year, but the national oil company is seeking to slash that amount to a mere RM9 billion next year.

"I said cannot. We have to negotiate this. Can you imagine: From RM26 billion down to RM9 billion, which means a RM15 billion deficit. Where am I going to find RM15 billion?"

"Everywhere I go, people ask for more projects [...] But no one tells me: 'Datuk Seri, I asked for this school and this road, but you can increase government revenue from somewhere.' Nobody says that," Najib (photo) lamented at the Gerakan National Delegates' Conference today.

He stressed that as revenues come down, he is left with few options except to either raise revenues or cut back on expenses.

Malaysia cannot simply borrow money to implement projects, he added, as it would result in higher debt and lead Malaysia to becoming a failed state.

He added that only one in ten Malaysians pays taxes, and yet Malaysians enjoy benefits such as affordable public healthcare, free primary and secondary schooling, and highly subsidised university education.

Najib said it was fortunate that Malaysia implemented GST in April, because otherwise the government would have to raise other taxes.

"Of course it is easy for people to say that the government is not sensitive to the people, but you must realise that something has to give.

"You cannot just ask to have this free; don't raise this, don't raise that, but if your revenue goes down, what choices do you have?" he said, five days ahead of tabling his seventh budget in the Dewan Rakyat.

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