

Take care of us, we'll take care of you, PM tells village chiefs

MalaysiaKini.com

Dec 3rd, 2015

Alyaa Azhar

Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak has promised village chiefs nationwide that the government will take care of them if they took care of the government.

The pledge was made during an event with Village Security and Development Committees (JKKK) at PWTC in Kuala Lumpur.

This was reminiscent of his famous, "You help me, I help you" speech during the Sibuluan by-election in 2010.

In his speech today, Najib said no matter how loud the village chiefs shouted and cheered in the hall, their support would only be proven during the general election.

"That will be the final say whether the government today will receive the mandate to administer the country.

"If you love the government, if you want us to take care of you, please take care of us too, so that we can take care of you," he said to loud cheers and laughter.

Najib said the government will give a RM10 million allocation for the existing programme to improve the performance of village chiefs.

"I agree that the programme to train village chiefs should be continued.

"Therefore, the government will increase the allocation so that the programme can be continued," he said.

The programme was an initiative of the Rural and Regional Development Ministry which was implemented two years ago.

Meanwhile, Najib said village chiefs are the "ears and the eyes" of the government in villages.

He pointed out how village chiefs can act as the middlemen between the government and the rakyat, especially those who live in rural areas.

"Anything that the government wants to convey to the rakyat, you are the middlemen so that the rakyat will understand the government's policies.

"If you want the government to understand the plight of the people, then you must be the eyes, tongues, and ears of the government," he said.

If the rakyat are burdened by the high cost of living, Najib said this should be conveyed to the government so that more agrobazaars, 1Malaysia Grocery Stores (KR1M) and 1Malaysia Clinics (K1M) would be provided.

Najib also touched on the issue of mandatory retirement age of village chiefs.

He pointed out that there were polemics on whether the mandatory retirement age should be maintained or whether it should be extended according to one's qualifications.

"If you want it to be extended, we have to be fair: it shouldn't be given case by case.

"I want to suggest that we extend the mandatory retirement age for village chiefs from 65 to 69," he said to cheers of "agree!" from the over 5,000 village chiefs.

"Take care of us and... I will take care of you because I know you will continue to take care of the current government," he added.

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