

## **Tugu Negara Park - are we paying for Najib's whims and ego?**

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COMMENT According to media reports, Malaysian taxpayers will soon have to foot the bill for the [RM650 million](#) man-made "mini tropical" forest that will soon ring the National Monument (Tugu Negara).

The bulk of the money, some RM500 million, will reportedly come from Finance Ministry holding company Khazanah Nasional, which is government-owned and funded with public funds.

And all this because Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak wants it to be so that, just as Hyde Park is synonymous with London and Central Park is synonymous with New York, he would have it that Tugu Negara Park be synonymous with Kuala Lumpur.

Najib might argue that the park's end purpose is for the rakyat's recreational use. But at a time when we are cutting millions from health and education spending, is it prudent to spend such an astronomical amount on a park, monumental or not?

I doubt the rakyat, having to work harder for every sen and maybe even holding more jobs to make do, would have much time nor inclination for recreation.

And are we then to have well-manicured, publicly funded gardens when our schools, universities and hospitals continue to degrade from lack of funds and maintenance?

What more when, as pointed out by critics of the plan, it is mooted during the time when our economy is not as stellar as it being touted, and when living costs are rising like a gaggle of sky rockets.

### **To assuage Najib's personal ambition**

Should we all tighten our belts and cut our food rations, deny our children access to quality education and neglect our national healthcare establishments, just so that Najib can have the mini-tropical forest that he asked us to imagine around the National Monument?

Are we, the rakyat, to pay through our nose, or whatever bodily orifice, just to assuage Najib's personal ambition?

Are we then paying just to assuage Najib's whims and ego?

We can imagine whatever kind of park as he would ask us for, tropical or otherwise, but one can neither eat imagination nor subsist on a diet of recreational visits to parks.

And whatever the health benefits of walks around the park or otherwise, RM650 million would have served us better in the forms of well-equipped schools and hospitals.

Najib should perhaps have used the RM2.6 billion, which he admitted was banked into his personal bank account, to pay for the park, instead of making it our burden.

After all the mysterious Arab 'princely' donor had told him that the money is his to do as he pleases, as it is not a bribe but a gift of the most profound sincerity.

I am sure the 'prince' wouldn't mind.

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