

## **Islamic institution reps express support for Najib**

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Seven representatives of the Islamic institutions today expressed support and appreciation to Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak for the government's continuous efforts in upholding religious institutions in the country.

The representatives, who were from the country's government aided religious schools (SABK), Pondok, Tahfiz, religious class and Fardu Ain (Kafa) class teachers, imam, bilal and siak handed over a memorandum to Najib at his office in Perdana Putra Complex in Putrajaya.

Najib received the memorandum from the imam of the Jamiur Rahmah Mosque in Kampung Limau Manis, Sepang, Noor Azli Abdul Hamid.

Also present were Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Jamil Khir Baharom and Department of Islamic Development Malaysia (Jakim) director-general Othman Mustapha.

The memorandum, which was signed by the seven representatives of the religious institutions, stated that the government under Najib's administration remained committed in upholding Islam as the religion of the federation.

The memorandum also stated that the government's policies guided by the values of Islam such as the Malaysian Syariah Index to empower religious institutions from the bottom level to the top proved its sincerity.

It said the 2017 budget proved the government's efforts in defending and upholding religious institutions by increasing the existing budget and giving new budget allocation to the country's SABK, pondok, tahfiz, Kafa teachers, imam, bilal and siak.

"All parties need to recognise, express support and appreciation for all the efforts by the government in upholding the religious institutions in the country.

"The attempts by certain parties to try to fish in troubled waters by creating a negative perception and question the government's budget allocation to the Islamic institutions must be opposed vehemently," it said.

Meanwhile, Noor Azli said the handing over of the memorandum aimed at expressing appreciation and support for the government's commitment in providing infrastructure and allocation, particularly in the 2017 Budget, to carry out programmes based on moral values.

"The prime minister also said (to us) that the government's efforts are continuing to uphold the eminence of Islam in this country," he told reporters.

Kuala Lumpur Tahfiz Al-Quran Institutions Association (Pinta) chairperson Ustaz Mohd

Zahid Mahmood said the RM30 million allocation to coordinate the tahfiz education through the National Tahfiz Education Policy showed that the government was committed to uphold the tahfiz institutions.

"It is my hope that the policy will become the platform to help tahfiz schools across the country, including the government, private and rakyat ones. Thank you very much for this huge allocation for tahfiz institutions," he said.

Najib, who is also finance minister, when tabling the 2017 Budget on Oct 21, announced that the government agreed to increase the allowance of about 15,000 imams under Jakim from RM750 to RM850 per month.

The prime minister said RM500 would be given in a one-off payment to about 16,000 bilal and siak throughout the country to appreciate their services in managing mosques while the allowance of about 33,000 Kafa teachers would be increased from RM800 to RM900 a month.

- *Bernama*

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