

**Special grant for 1M'sia youth programmes**  
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The government has agreed to create a special grant to assist and support the implementation of programmes related to the 1Malaysia concept organised by youths.

Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak said approval for the grant would be speeded up which was expected to enable more youths to be involved in the 1Malaysia programmes.

"Most of the suggestions are solid suggestions which the government can take up in due course.

"But one of the things that I am attracted to immediately is to create a special fund to support 1Malaysia programmes conducted by youths.

"We will launch them soon so that more and more young people could get involved with the 1Malaysia programmes," he said when responding to a question at a dialogue session, in conjunction with the BN Youth Lab in Kuala Lumpur today.

Also present were Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Koh Tsu Koon, Federal Territories and Urban Wellbeing Minister Raja Nong Chik Raja Zainal Abidin, Youth and Sports Minister Ahmad Shabery Cheek, his deputy Razali Ibrahim, Deputy Education Minister Wee Ka Siong and BN Youth chairperson Khairy Jamaluddin.

The final report of the BN Youth Lab tabled by Khairy, among others, suggested that the 1Malaysia grant be created to assist in the implementation of projects or programmes that encouraged or promoted inter-racial relations and the 1Malaysia principle.

Najib said the government would find the best mechanism to introduce the grant.

"Probably, we can include (the creation of the grant) in the budget speech to be tabled at the next budget or probably in the 10th Malaysia Plan implementation because it is an ongoing plan," he said.

Najib said although not all the suggestions submitted by the lab could be accepted and implemented, what was more important was that the government had heard the voice of the young people in the country.

Also raised at the dialogue session was the issue on the minimum wage for local workers, where according to the Prime Minister, discussions were being held with the employers to consider the suggestions.

Direct BN membership

However, the implementation of the minimum wage would only be implemented based on the job sector, he said.

On the call for students to be allowed to be involved in politics, Najib said he was still open to suggestions although the Cabinet, in principle, was not in favour of it.

"I'm still thinking about the matter and am open to debate on the issue to enable a better decision to be made," he said.

Responding to another question, the prime minister said the BN was considering the suggestion to allow direct membership into the BN, which showed the willingness of the party to change.

On the final report of the BN Youth Lab, Najib said the government was prepared to consider the suggestions submitted.

The BN Youth Lab, which was mooted by the prime minister himself in February, was an effort to find a meeting point between the BN government and the youths in the country besides understanding the aspiration, problems and suggestions of the younger generation towards generating government policies that were youth-friendly.

The final Lab report today was divided into four main sectors namely the economy, quality of life, education as well as solidarity and democracy.

Among the suggestions made was the call on the government to introduce a minimum wage policy that was not less than RM1,000 a month for full-time workers, building a data base to assist the young generation who are in the 'transition' phase such as being dismissed from work, suffering serious illness or financial crisis.

In the education sector, it was suggested that the government launched a rebranding campaign for teachers as a selected profession and allowing greater freedom in the selection of subjects in schools.

To encourage the process of inter-racial integration, it was suggested that the government provided incentives such as tax exemption to companies that recruited workers of various races and tax exemption to restaurants that had obtained the 'halal' certification.

In ensuring that a democratic process was practiced, the BN Youth Lab proposed that a maximum of two years be fixed for detention under the Internal Security Act (ISA).

It also proposed that university students be allowed to be active in politics by giving permission to them to become members or hold positions in political parties.

- Bernama

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