

Najib: What vested interest in NS?
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Deputy Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak has denied the allegation that the government is reluctant to suspend the problem-ridden National Service (NS) training scheme because it has 'personal interests' in this.

Najib, who is also defence minister, was referring to a point raised by Parliamentary Opposition Leader Lim Kit Siang, who had also asked the ministry to reveal details of all contracts awarded under the scheme.

In the ministerial winding-up on points raised on the defence ministry during the motion of thanks on the Royal address, Najib said there is no truth in the claim that the government gains from awarding contracts to 'cronies'.

"There are two kinds of contracts under NS. One is the equipment contract which deals with supply of all equipment used in the camps, and the other deals with matters like catering, uniforms, transportation and laundry," he told the Dewan Rakyat today.

"All these contracts are given after open tenders are called, and based on the lowest bid and best offer from contractors."

Najib further said contracts are also given for consultation services, like contracts for insurance, character-building training for trainees and to place advertisements in the print and broadcast media.

Clearly dissatisfied with the explanation, Lim (DAP-Ipoh Timur) told Najib to give notice in future if he intends to address important matters, so that MPs would have adequate time to prepare.

"This is unfair. Next time, at least give advance notice. I know that for Barisan Nasional (BN) everything is fair, even unfairness is fair for BN," said Lim.

"This is not reflective of integrity if a deputy prime minister or the government."

He pointed out that contracts awarded under the NS programme are not cheap, as they can easily amount to RM700 million to RM800 million.

Najib replied that the Machap by-election on April 12 will settle the question of whether or not the government is perceived to be unfair or if its integrity is in question.

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