

**A transformation 'Budget by the Rakyat' for the Rakyat?
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PETALING JAYA- At 4pm Friday, the Prime Minister, who is also the Finance Minister, will present Budget 2011 in Parliament. Transformation will be the key message in his speech.

Najib Abdul Razak has called it "A Budget by The Rakyat" because it will for the first time incorporate the views of Malaysians who have sent their comments to his blog.

His blog, www.1malaysia.com.my, was flooded with over 1,000 comments in just under two weeks after he called on the public to express their wishes for the upcoming Budget.

Expectations are high. There is speculation of a possible toll rate revamp and moves to stop property market speculators to ensure that genuine buyers get a chance to own houses.

The Budget 2011 would set the pace for the transformation of Malaysia into a developed and high-income economy by the year 2020, according to Najib.

He is expected to outline various measures to improve the rakyat's lives, especially those in the lower income group.

Skills training to help boost the salary bracket of the lowly-paid workers are among the measures being outlined.

Najib said he had forwarded a significant portion of the people's comments and ideas on the Budget to the Finance Ministry for further study.

"I have personally read these comments. Some of you who have contributed comments to my blog, will be able to recognise your ideas, or a hybrid of those ideas in the Budget.

"The goal of this Budget is to set the pace for the transformation of Malaysia into a developed and high-income economy by 2020.

"Simply by participating in the exercise, you have contributed to the process of transforming our nation. Thank you for your input," he said in his blog.

Najib said the feedback of the rakyat showed that employment was the most frequently discussed topic, with some calling for the implementation of a minimum wage policy.

"Another popular topic was taxes and subsidies while the youth requested increased tax rebates for young families or ways to provide financial assistance in managing the rising cost of living."

Education, he said, was the third most popular subject, with many being concerned about the quality and rising cost of education.

"There were also comments asking for more allocation to upgrade Internet and broadband service across the country.

"I also noted a number of suggestions to address issues unique to Sabah and Sarawak," he said.

He said other requests were for increased incentives and programmes for the disadvantaged, control on the price of consumer goods and increased development in rural areas to attract commercial opportunities for youth.

Incentives for green technology development, increased allocations for national security and programmes to address illegal immigrants, and others were also discussed, Najib said.

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