

Govt wants more to have high-speed Net access

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■ By Hamidah Atan
news@nst.com.my

PUTRAJAYA: The government has embarked on expanding high-speed broadband use to improve business competitiveness and public service delivery.

At present, Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak said the broadband penetration rate stood at 12 per cent for households, or 5.5 million, in the country.

By 2010, the government hopes that 50 per cent of households would have fast Internet access.

"This is our target. We realise that the expansion of broadband penetration can serve as a catalyst for economic growth in terms of gross domestic product (GDP). There are estimates that it could grow by up to four per cent a year."

Najib, speaking after chairing a Cabinet Committee on the National Broadband Implementation Plan meeting, said that high-speed broadband could bring not only changes to the way of doing business but also improve the public delivery system.

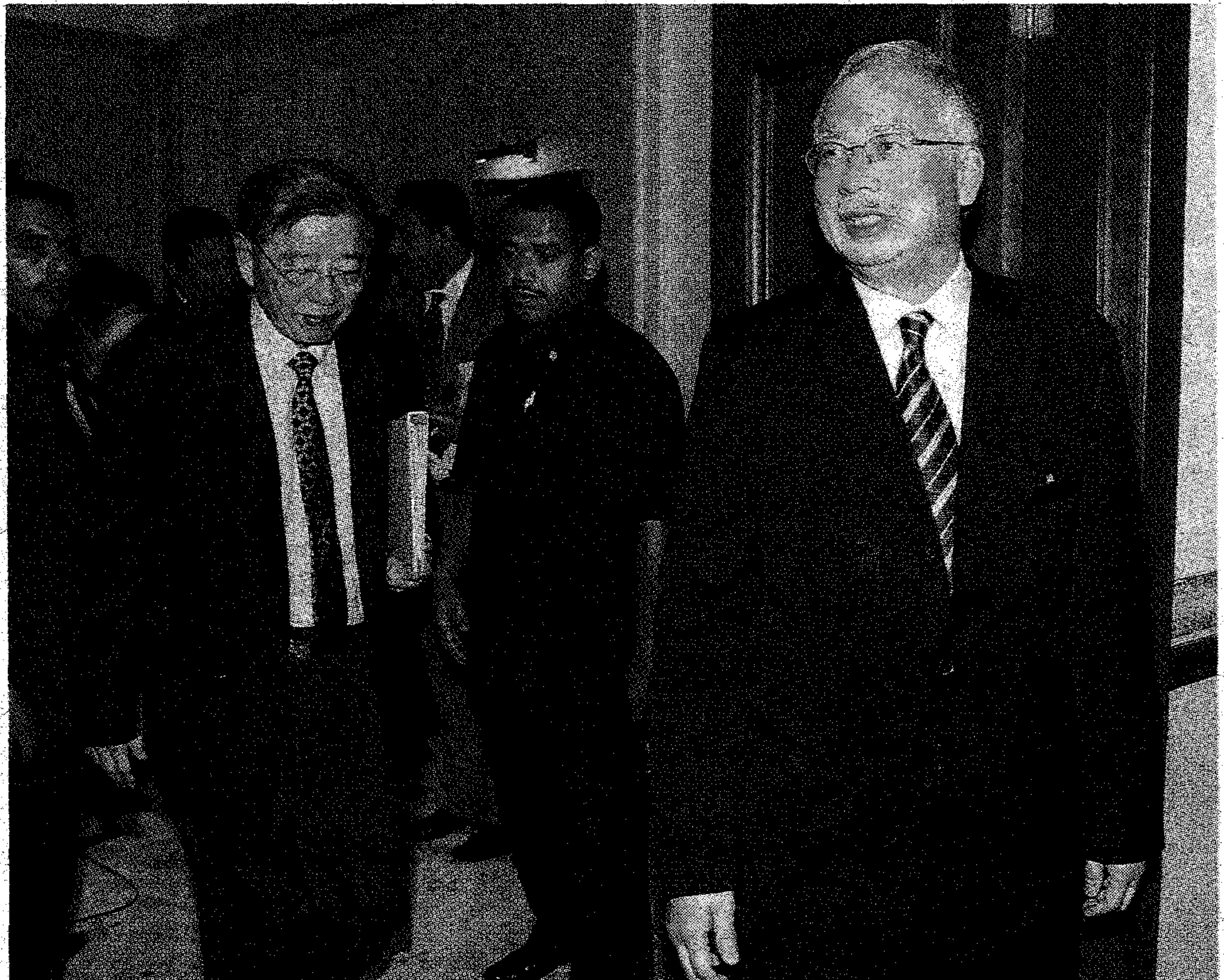
"The government will study in detail other aspects relating to expansion of penetration as this involves a substantial investment.

"The way forward must be based on partnership between the public and private sectors.

"We will continue to discuss with Telekom Malaysia and other interested parties on how to move forward."

Under the national plan, several areas would be selected for broadband penetration.

"It is impossible to have all the areas covered 100 per cent as the



Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak (right) and Energy, Water and Communications Minister Datuk Seri Dr Lim Keng Yaik after attending the Cabinet Committee on the National Broadband Implementation Plan meeting yesterday.

cost will be very, very substantial. For the whole country, we need at least RM56 billion," said Najib.

Content development and demand would also be looked into.

"If we developed the supply side without considering the content, we will not be able to create de-

mand for high-speed connections."

At the moment, Najib said Malaysia was on the "lower side" in the international ranking for broadband penetration. "With our efforts, we are striving to be among the developed nations."

On speculation that the government would liberalise the ringgit further, Najib said he did not know anything about it.

"That is market talk, not the government's. I would have been alerted if there was any policy change."