

Mega projects back on track thanks to steady growth

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KUALA LUMPUR: The government is proceeding with high-impact projects and others under the Ninth Malaysia Plan as its fiscal position has improved, Datuk Seri Najib Razak said.

The deputy prime minister said yesterday that projects such as the West Coast Highway and railway double-tracking would be revived in keeping with steady economic growth.

"The projects had been postponed because we needed to achieve a better debt servicing ratio. Now the situation is more comfortable and we can spend to move the economy," he said after chairing the Umno supreme council meeting here.

Najib said the government was able to increase expenditure after having narrowed the budget deficit.

"Previously, the deficit was at 5.6 per cent, and now we have lowered it to 3.5 per cent."

Najib said government programmes, especially those meant to raise the quality of life of the people, had shown progress. He said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi was expected to launch a new system for land development on April 13.

On the Machap by-election, Najib, who is Umno deputy president, said the party election machinery would work hard to ensure the Barisan Nasional retained the state seat next month.

"Although it is an MCA seat, Umno will go all out to ensure that BN is able to get a much better result."

Najib said Malacca Chief Minister Datuk Seri Mohd Ali Rustam briefed the supreme council on the preparations for the by-election.

At the meeting, Najib said the council decided to re-admit Datuk Askalani Abdul Rahim, a former Sabah minister of youth, culture and sports, who was expelled from Umno for joining Parti Barisan Rakyat Sabah Bersekutu and standing against a BN candidate in the state election of March 1999.

He lost the contest for the Sulabayan constituency to Mohamed Lan Allani by 962 votes.

The council also lifted the suspension of Tanah Merah Youth chief Ikmal Hisham Abdul Aziz.

The Umno disciplinary board suspended Ikmal Hisham's membership for three years after he was found guilty of money politics at a branch meeting of the Tanah Merah division in Kelantan in 2004.