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Newspaper	New Straits Times
Date	11/8/2011

Easing people's burden

PM: Govt to map out Budget 2012 strategies to tackle rising cost of living

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KUALA LUMPUR: Budget 2012 will focus on tackling the rising cost of living, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak said yesterday.

He acknowledged that the global increase in prices had begun to affect the majority of the population to varying degrees, but promised that the government would find ways to slow its effects.

"We will devise the best strategies to ease the rakyat's burden while managing the country's economic development," he wrote on www.1malaysia.com.my.

These strategies, he said, included plans to expand people-focused initiatives such as the 1Malaysia Clinic, Kedai Rakyat 1Malaysia and, most recently, the 1Malaysia Rakyat Menu, a programme encouraging food vendors to offer a package menu with a maximum price of RM2 for breakfast and RM4 for lunch at participating restaurants.

"The government will continue to provide subsidies for daily travel, meals and health bills."

Najib said that while many Malaysians were feeling the pinch, many were unaware that prices were rising dramatically throughout the world because of a combination of fac-

tors, affecting poor and developing countries the most.

These factors included the rise in prices of fuel and food in 2007 and 2008 as well as unpredictable weather conditions as a result of climate change, leading to poor crops and a shortage of essential produce such as wheat and sugar.

Najib said production shortfalls in major exporting countries such as Russia, Canada and Australia led to lower exports, causing panic buying in the market and forcing prices up.

"Malaysians must face the fact that world prices are unlikely to return to the levels of

five years ago."

He said the cabinet had agreed to make tackling the rising cost of living the seventh National Key Result Area (NKRA) on July 27, exactly two years after six NKRA were identified as the core of the Government Transformation Programme to improve the government delivery system and address the needs of the people.

The six NKRA are reducing crime, fighting corruption, expanding access to quality and affordable education, raising living standards of low-income households, improving basic rural infrastructure and improving urban public transportation.