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'BR1M was Bank Negara idea'

Scheme mooted to help the poor cope with rising cost of living, says Najib

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JOHOR BARU: The Malaysia People's Aid (BR1M) was suggested by Bank Negara and is aimed at helping those from the lower income group who make up about 40% of Malaysians, said Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak.

Dispelling talk from naysayers that the handout had made Malaysians lazy, he said BR1M was meant to help the recipients cope with the rising cost of living.

He said BR1M was neither politically motivated nor a form of vote-buying.

Those eligible would receive the money regardless of their political indination, he said at the groundbreaking ceremony of phase two of Melana Indah People's Housing Project (PPR) in Taman Perling here yesterday.

Also present were Johor Menteri Besar Datuk Mohamed Khaled Nordin, Urban Wellbeing, Housing and Local Government Minister Datuk Abdul Rahman Dahalan, Defence Minister Datuk Seri Hishammuddin Tun Hussein and Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Dr Wee Ka Siong.

Najib said that he, as the "captain of Malaysian vessel", would continue steering it and not bow down to pressure to resign.

He commended Johor Barisan Nasional leaders for their unwavering support, adding that Johor would remain the bastion for Umno in the next general election.



Home sweet home: Najib chatting with the owner of one of the newly launched Melana Indah flats, Hassan Mohammed @ Hashim, 49. Sitting on his lap is two-year-old Mohamed Waiz Hafiz Shawal. Looking on are (from left) Abdul Rahman and Mohamed Khaled.

"The Johor Way is unique as the leaders are united. I'm proud to say that 50% of the blood flowing in my body is Johor blood," said Najib, referring to his mother Toh Puan Rahah Noah who is a Johorean.

He also said the Government would explain to the people on how it had spent the money collected from the Goods and Services Tax (GST) at the tabling of Budget 2016 later.

Earlier in Klang, Najib said the RM42bil that

was borrowed by 1 Malaysia Development Berhad (1MDB) had not disappeared as alleged.

He said the money could be accounted for in the market value of the prime land in the Tun Razak Exchange (TRX) and Bandar Malaysia development plans.

"Go and have a look at what is there. The Tun Razak Exchange has 70 acres (28.3ha) and Bandar Malaysia had 500 acres (202.3ha).

"Five hundred acres in the centre of Kuala

Lumpur I regard it as a goldmine. If I were a wealthy man I would buy there anytime because I know of its value in the next 20 years," Najib said in his speech at a special gathering of Selangor Umno and Barisan members.

Najib also refuted allegations that Lembaga Tabung Haji (LTH) had bailed out 1MDB with its purchase of land in the TRX project.

"Tabung Haji did not take over 1MDB's debts. They just bought land at RM2,700 (per sq feet) which is below market price," he said.

He said LTH wanted to develop the land and this would benefit its depositors who were the beneficiaries. He also said the 1MDB files were currently with the Auditor-General.

"We will disclose details as soon as the Auditor-General has finished investigations," he said, adding that the report would be ready next month.

Najib also said every prime minister had his own challenges including during the tenure of Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

"Umno was outlawed and there were fights resulting in two teams in the party, Team A and Team B.

"During that period, Dr Mahathir won with a very slim majority, which means about 50% of Umno delegates had rejected him, but he continued to lead the party," said Najib, adding that he would follow the same path and continue to lead the party and the country because the people supported him.

"Only the party and the rakyat, and not just one individual, can determine the country's leadership," he added.