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'Group to optimise govt projects'

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REDUCING WASTAGE: It will look into delays and review processes, says Najib

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PRIME Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak will head a small working group to look into optimising government projects.

He announced the formation of the group yesterday, saying it would look into delayed projects, review the processes involved and rectify weaknesses.

"We must look into our ability to implement and execute (projects), while reviewing our weaknesses or red tape," he said at the Prime Minister's Department's first monthly meeting of the year at Dataran Putra here yesterday.

Najib said the department's Implementation Coordination Unit

would identify areas the government should focus on, while the working group would include Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi and Chief Secretary to the Government Tan Sri Dr Ali Hamsa.

"I suggested the formation of the group so that we can sit together and review delayed projects. The relevant ministries and agencies will be called. If it (project delays) is because of troublesome processes, we will review them."

He said reducing wastage would be the group's emphasis so that the people's wellbeing was taken care of.

Najib said the public understood that the government could not control external factors, such as plunging world oil prices, which had affected the economy, but it was im-

portant for the government to focus on the people and "people economy", as these were areas that could strengthen the nation.

He said the working group was in line with the government's move to recalibrate the 2016 Budget and optimise spending.

He reminded civil servants to optimise their spending in outlining a challenging year ahead.

He said world oil prices had plunged from US\$100 to US\$33 (RM438 to RM144); the United States dollar had strengthened because of the US Federal Reserve's move to normalise its interest rate; and major economies, such as China, were shrinking.

"All must understand that it is not our mistakes and weaknesses, but factors outside our control."

Najib said the drop in oil prices had a major impact on Malaysia as an oil-producing nation.

He said it was necessary to adjust the 2016 Budget tabled in October

last year, as it had been based on the assumption that oil prices would be around US\$48 per barrel.

He said civil servants should think outside the box to boost productivity.

"By thinking creatively and being innovative, civil servants will increase productivity at ministries, agencies and departments, while benefiting the country."

He said optimising spending did not mean the government was implementing austerity measures, but was about reaping the most results from money spent.

He said old issues should not be brought up in the new year, as the nation needed to move on.

"Let us move on. Our agenda is big, and it is for the country and wellbeing of the people. We must strengthen the unity we have and carry on with nation building."

Reminding the public that the country's slogan was 1Malaysia, Najib said everyone must cooperate to

resolve sensitive issues before they jeopardised the security and good relationship enjoyed by people of all races.

He recapped the nation's achievements last year, among them, serving as Asean chair and hosting the 27th Asean Summit and Related Summits.

He said Malaysia achieved an economic growth of 5.1 per cent in the first nine months of last year, while maintaining a low inflation rate.

The country advanced two spots to place 18th out of 144 countries in the Global Competitiveness Report 2015-2016 by the World Economic Forum last year, while remaining the highest ranked among developing Asian countries.

On public safety, Najib commended the police and armed forces on a job well done.

He said even though Malaysia had not seen terror attacks, the government prioritised national safety at all times.