

**Najib urges banks to back government schemes**  
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KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 9 — The Najib administration asked the banking industry today to help finance its initiatives to “develop and transform” the country.

Datuk Seri Najib Razak said that financial institutions should show “courage” and support new enterprises including Putrajaya’s housing schemes that offer 100 per cent financing for prospective buyers.

“I do hope (all banks) will complement and support whatever initiatives that the government will launch... for example, My First Home, PR1MA and other schemes including promoting green technology and spurring innovation,” the prime minister said at the launching of Maybank’s new corporate logo.

He called on banks not to limit themselves to “giving out loans that are totally secure” but to “have the courage to venture and support new enterprises that are not only exciting but promote innovation because it is one of the ways we can transform Malaysia.”

Najib’s Economic Transformation Programme (ETP), which aims to double per capita income by 2020, has banked heavily on privately-funded initiatives to achieve a six per cent annual economic growth.

The Barisan Nasional (BN) chief has also launched the two schemes for first-time buyers of low-cost homes and mid-range houses in an effort to reduce the burden faced by the younger generation facing soaring real estate prices.

But bank employees have been up in arms against the administration, questioning Najib’s leadership in a statement yesterday. About 50 National Union of Banking Employees (NUBE) members also picketed outside the Maybank headquarters as Najib arrived this evening.

The 50-year-old union is representing some 5,000 Maybank workers who have been locked in a dispute with Malaysia’s largest bank since June 2009 over bonus claims and the issue over the legality of an in-house union for non-executive personnel.

The NUBE, which has 30,000 members, alleged that Najib, who is also finance minister, had failed to resolve issues affecting workers in the banking sector, in particular those in Maybank, since it was brought to his attention last year.

NUBE secretary-general J. Solomon attributed Najib’s sliding approval rating among the clerical staff to the widening income gap, oppression of workers and the increasing inflation rate.

“Maybank is boldly and brutally violating international standards of human rights, making a mockery of Malaysian laws, and making wider an already huge income divide,” he said, and warned the union will go on a roadshow after Najib’s prolonged silence over its pay dispute with the bank.

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