

As polls loom, Najib touches base with undergrads
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SHAH ALAM, March 22 — Datuk Seri Najib Razak attempted last night to rally support from within the student community, trumpeting Barisan Nasional's (BN) promises of better employment prospects and greater academic freedom.

The prime minister, flanked by an army of government officials, told a crowd of some 10,000 undergraduates at a function here that his administration believes in planning ahead to ensure brighter futures for them.

Playing to the enthusiastic gallery, Najib (picture) promised a host of opportunities, including keeping to his pledge to create at least 3.3 million jobs by 2020.

"The government will do its best for the younger generation. I always ask myself, 'what are the needs of our undergraduates?'" he said when launching Yayasan Sukarelawan Siswa, a student volunteer programme, at Universiti Teknologi Mara (UiTM).

But amid the cheers and enthusiastic chanting from the crowd, Najib stressed that the only way the government could keep such promises was by winning the next general election.

He appeared to exude confidence, however, when he thundered, "one student may have taken down my flag, but thousands more are willing to raise it" — a direct reference to student activist Adam Adli, who made headlines last year for lowering a banner bearing Najib's likeness outside the Umno headquarters in Kuala Lumpur.

He told the cheering crowd that it was due to his and his administration's "confidence" and "trust" in the student base that the government had decided to look into lifting the ban on student politics.

"We trust undergraduates, which is why we are considering amending AUKU (Universities and University Colleges Act). I believe that they can think for themselves.

"I want to give them freedom, but a freedom with responsibility," he said.

With the proposed amendment, Najib noted that students would soon be allowed to attend political ceramahs and become active members of political parties.

"But when in campus, please concentrate on your studies," he said.

Najib also urged the crowd not to be too easily swayed by the opposition's "sweet promises".

He said it was BN's transformation policies and long-term plans that would guarantee opportunities for their future.

"They (the opposition) can promise you the sun, the moon and even the galaxy but it is the

government that delivers," he said.

"Real change is taking place in Malaysia. This is not political rhetoric... This is reality."

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