

**Najib urges Petronas staff to back BN, announces RM1,000 handout**  
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**By Syed Jaymal Zahiid**

KUALA LUMPUR, April 2 — Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak announced today a “token of appreciation” of RM1,000 each to staff of the national oil company Petronas ahead of elections expected soon.

Najib, who is also finance minister tasked to oversee Petronas, said the cash gift was Putrajaya’s appreciation for the company’s contribution to the economy.

“The board and management have recommended a small gesture to bring cheer to the staff.

“Finally, I decided to accept the recommendation. A RM1,000 token will be given to all staff as a gesture of our appreciation, so spend it wisely,” he told some 4,000 Petronas employees at a town hall meeting at the Kuala Lumpur Conventional Centre here.

Earlier in his speech, Najib urged Petronas employees to continue backing the ruling Barisan Nasional (BN) coalition, the founder of the national oil firm whose contribution to its success is crucial.

He warned against voting the opposition into power, accusing the Pakatan Rakyat pact as enemies of Petronas since many of its proposals, including increasing state oil royalties and keeping fuel prices low, went against the interests of the company.

Najib said Petronas and BN have shared a long and beneficial relationship since its formation in the early 1970s and that putting power into an untested government could be detrimental to the firm.

“So when the time comes, I hope you decide wisely,” he said.

Today’s cash gift follows several other handouts dished out to key constituents under government programmes such as the popular 1 Malaysia People’s Aid (BR1M) and increased allocations for loans targeted towards Bumiputera businesses.

Najib will be seeking his own mandate at Election 2013 where he will face an uphill battle to restore BN’s two-thirds parliamentary majority.

BN lost its customary supermajority and five states in the last national polls.

The dismal performance led to the removal of Najib’s predecessor Tun Abdullah Ahmad Badawi and his subsequent appointment as prime minister on April 3, 2009.

Tomorrow will mark his fourth year as the country’s sixth prime minister.

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