

**Najib dangles discount cards, insurance and other goodies to woo single mothers**  
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**By Syed Jaymal Zahiid**

KUALA LUMPUR, April 18 – Datuk Seri Najib Razak pledged today to help single mothers cope with higher cost of living through policies that will be implemented if his Barisan Nasional (BN) coalition is re-elected at the May 5 polls.

The offers include a life insurance scheme, discount cards applicable at 1Malaysia grocery stores and free legal service for divorcee, key issues for the demographic which forms close to one-tenth of Malaysia's electorate.

The BN chairman said the pledges reflected the coalition's appreciation for their support.

"Single mothers are BN's vote bank. That is why we have decided to hold this special meeting with single mothers.

"They are a segment of society that we help to protect," he told 6,000 single mothers at a special meeting session under the Juwita programme, an agency representing the constituents.

Political analysts and observers have said women, including those working at home and are counted among undecided voters, will be crucial in determining the results of the 13th general election.

To tap their support, BN has previously pledged to increase the number of women in decision-making positions, and offered incentives to those working from homes, especially single mothers.

The opposition Pakatan Rakyat (PR) is also battling to court women voters and has in its election manifesto offered cash payments and childcare incentives for women, promising to raise the socio-economic status of the key voter demographic should the pact win federal power.

This includes setting up a Housewives Savings Fund and disbursement of RM600 in annual cash payments yearly to housewives nationwide, while childcare incentives worth RM1,000 will be given annually to those with children aged 12 years and below.

It also promised to set up a local maid agency to help households reduce their dependency on foreign domestic workers.

Najib (picture) reminded women voters, especially single mothers, of BN's contribution towards their well-being and urged them against voting the opposition into power.

The caretaker prime minister claimed PR will not implement its promises, citing the alleged failure by the Selangor government to fulfil its pledge to give single mothers cash aid after the state fell into the federal opposition's hands in 2008.

"If PR cannot do this, we will give you that money if BN is given the mandate to rule Selangor," said Najib.

One-tenth of the 850,000 single mothers nationwide comes from Selangor, the country's

industrial capital. Almost all of them are registered voters.

BN has issued its own manifesto it calls "akujanji" or pledge where it outlines its plan to boost Malaysia's development with women playing a pivotal role.

He said unlike PR, BN's approach to addressing women's problems were holistic and long-term solutions – provide women with skills and employment instead of cash aid.

Najib will lead his coalition into what will be its toughest elections although pundits believe it still has the edge over its rivals.

Election 2013 will officially begin on Saturday after nomination. Campaign period will go on for 15 days before Malaysia decides on May 5.

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