

Najib : National reconciliation not just to 'appease' rakyat

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KUALA LUMPUR: Prime Minister Najib Tun Razak said the Barisan Nasional coalition was doing all it can to build bridges with Pakatan Rakyat in the name of national reconciliation, including meeting with the Menteri Besar of opposition-led states.

“The government is trying its best to form good relations with all quarters, including states led by opposition parties,” Najib said today in a written parliamentary reply to a question on national reconciliation from Abdul Hadi Awang (Marang-BN).

“For example, the federal government has met with the Menteri Besar and leaders of Kelantan, to pave the way for cooperation in our efforts to develop that state,” wrote Najib.

Najib said that the government had also witnessed the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the federal and Selangor state governments, which finally put an end to the opposition state’s water woes.

“In fact, more recently, the government officiated the second bridge in Penang, which was later announced as the Abdul Halim Mu’adzam Shah Bridge. This initiative was started by the federal government, even though Penang is ruled by the Opposition,” he pointed out.

Najib’s reply comes in the wake of Opposition Leader Anwar Ibrahim’s **recent rejection** of the national reconciliation, on grounds that the government had allegedly dragged its feet on the matter.

Anwar had declared on Saturday that Pakatan Rakyat would wage a “new battle” against BN, which began today with all 89 opposition MP’s boycotting today’s Parliament sitting.

Ironically, due to the boycott, the opposition MP’s were today unable to grill Najib on his national reconciliation plan.

Too much politicking

According to Najib, the country had remained peaceful for 56 years, and racial and religious tensions had only begun to rise after the May 5 general election last year.

“Since the 13th general election, as a result of politicking and negative perceptions spread by certain quarters, the good relations the government had established is beginning to strain.

“Because of that, we need the national reconciliation plan. The national reconciliation plan is the government’s initiative to improve inter-racial ties. It is not just an appeasement,” Najib stressed.

He explained that the plan was based on four main pillars: social, politics, government and

international relations.

On the policy level, he said the government had formed the National Unity Consultative Council (NUCC) to focus on laws and policies that could promote national harmony, develop the nation and inter-cultural understanding and bring about national integration.

“The second stage is the social grass root movement. Among programmes included is the launch of the Unity Squad on March 9, 2014... It will include voluntary programmes such as gotong-royong, disaster relief and provide aid to those in need.

“Beside that, the government is committed and open in holding dialogues, engagements and discussions involving a variety of groups, communities and associations to strengthen ties among the rakyat as well as tolerance and patriotism for the country,” said Najib.

The prime minister said it was clear from his explanation that the BN government was magnanimous and “walked the talk”.

“We must rise above party politics, set aside differing ideologies and do our best for the rakyat by setting nation-building as our main agenda,” urged Najib.

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