

## **Najib meets Muslim groups to defuse tension over 'Allah' and other issues**

**Malaysian Insider**

**Jan 30, 2014**

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The prime minister today met with the leaders of 40 Muslim groups to explain that he had kept silent on the "Allah" issue because he did not want to add fuel to the fire, said the organiser of the meeting, Dr Asyraf Wajdi Dusuki.

Dr Asyraf, who is the president of the Islamic Dakwah Foundation Malaysia, said Datuk Seri Najib Razak had a fruitful 40-minute closed-door discussion with the leaders of the Muslim NGOs.

"He wanted to engage the NGOs because he wanted to know what were the thoughts and fears of the grassroots," Dr Asyraf told reporters at the prime minister's office in Putrajaya today.

He described the engagement by Najib as a frank and open discussion, with the two main topics discussed being the rising cost of living and the "Allah" issue.

"Najib told the leaders that a perception battle was being waged in cyberspace through the social media and other Internet platforms," said Dr Asyraf, who is also an Umno Supreme Council member.

"The general perception was that Putrajaya was not firm in handling the various issues which the rakyat was fretting about, especially the high cost of living.

"The prime minister explained to the NGO leaders about Putrajaya's stand on these matters and the actions which had been taken.

"Najib clarified a lot of points and issues, pointing out that the perception war was littered by half-truths, baseless allegations and fabrications.

"He stressed that he was a leader for all Malaysians and not merely a single race. He (Najib) explained that he had kept silent about the 'Allah' issue because he did not want to worsen the situation."

One of the Muslim NGO leaders wanted to know what was Putrajaya doing about wholesalers and retailers who had increased their prices unreasonably.

"Profiteering is one of the issues the rakyat is concerned about as retailers seem to be increasing their prices without any control by Putrajaya."

Najib again explained to the Muslim NGOs what Putrajaya was doing about profiteering and uncontrolled price increases.

At a press conference earlier, Najib told reporters that he had met the NGOs in an attempt to defuse the tension and calm matters down.

"We are trying to find a solution for all parties," Najib told reporters, adding that discussions also centred on finding an understanding for all parties and the direction which Malaysia was headed.

"We cannot allow these issues to divide the country. We can have our differences but we cannot divide a nation," Najib said." – January 30, 2014.

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Source: <http://www.themalaysianinsider.com/malaysia/article/najib-meets-muslim-groups-to-defuse-tensions-over-allah-and-other-issues>