

**Malaysian Pilgrims Expected To Use Metro Line This Year – PM
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KUALA LUMPUR, June 21 (Bernama) -- Malaysian pilgrims this season are expected to use Metro Line, the electric train service connecting Arafah, Muzdalifah and Mina, when performing the Haj in the Holy Land. Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak said Prasarana Malaysia Bhd (Prasarana) would be handling the operations of the service this year. Normally, prior to this, the pilgrims used buses to the destinations. The 18-km Metro Line service will facilitate the pilgrims and reduce travelling time. "If we perform the Haj this season, we will board the Metro, its operator is Prasarana which secured a RM800 million contract...Muslims from Malaysia are handling the Metro Line," he said. Najib said this in his speech before launching the national-level Ramadan Al-Mubarak programme organised by UMNO's Welfare Bureau at the National Mosque here Sunday. Also present were his wife Datin Seri Rosmah Mansor, UMNO secretary-general Datuk Seri Tengku Adnan Tengku Mansor and UMNO Welfare Bureau chairman Umno Datuk Azeez Abdul Rahim.

Najib, who visited Saudi Arabia recently, also had a look at the operations of the train service. The Prime Minister said consultations and discussions between the two countries were still ongoing over an increase in haj quota for Malaysia. "As we are well aware the haj quota is limited. If a person makes an application today, it is not impossible he only gets his turn to perform the haj 71 years later. "As such, we are always negotiating and requesting the help of Saudi Arabia. We hope we are lucky (for an increased quota)," he said.

Najib clarified that as such it is important to foster good Malaysia-Saudi Arabia relations in numerous contexts including the pilgrimage in the interest of both nations. According to Najib, the cordial ties between the two countries could also be seen when Saudi Arabia allowed Malaysia to use their airspace in flying back Malaysian students from Yemen and Egypt, prior to this. It is reported that the Malaysia's haj quota this year is 22,230 pilgrims. The Prime Minister, who is also UMNO president, then handed over dates, zam zam water and Baju Melayu clothes to be disseminated to mosques nationwide. According to Najib, this was a continuous commitment of the party in upholding ties among Muslims especially during Ramadan. – BERNAMA

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