

**Najib Pledges to Tackle Issue on Rising Cost Of Living**  
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KUALA LUMPUR, Dec 12 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak has given his assurance that the government will tackle the issue on the rising cost of living which posed a problem to the people and was extensively debated at the 2015 UMNO General Assembly which concluded Saturday.

In his winding up speech at the assembly, Najib pointed out that the rising cost of living was due to factors beyond the government's control such as the decline in the world's oil price and the contraction of the Chinese economy as well as the 'legacy problem' factor .

Najib said he was directing the relevant ministry to monitor the rise in the prices of goods besides taking several approaches including raising the minimum wage to assist the people.

Commenting on the increase in the Express Rail Link (ERL) fare from RM35 to RM55 beginning next year, for example, he said it had to be done based on the long-term concession signed between the government and YTL in 1997.

"The agreement which I consider to be one-sided because the price is based on traffic projection and that the price increases every five years. When I became prime minister, I said, don't raise.

"The fare remained unchanged for 14 years but the compensation is RM2.9 billion. This is why we have had to increase the fare to RM55," he said.

On Dec 1, Express Rail Link Sdn Bhd had announced that effective Jan 1, 2016 the fare for a one-way trip between KL Sentral and KLIA/KLIA2 will be RM20 more after getting approval from the Land Public Transport Commission (SPAD).

Najib said part of the measures to address the transportation cost was by giving the 1Malaysia Student Discount Card holders, the disabled and the elderly a 30 per cent discount. The UMNO president said the fare for civil servants in Putrajaya who were using monthly passes for public transport would also be reduced, however he did not elaborate.

Najib said he had also directed Keretapi Tanah Melayu Berhad (KTMB) to give a 50 per cent discount to school students aged between 7 and 18, and university students with student cards in the near future. In addition, Najib also asked Domestic Trade, Cooperatives and Consumerism Minister Datuk Seri Hamzah Zainuddin to be more proactive in exercising enforcement and always go to the ground to control price increases.

"Carry out checks and increase enforcement on the ground. If the (campaign) price control of items during festive seasons needs to be extended, then extend it. Maintain goods prices and do not simply increase it," he said.

Regarding the increase in revenues, Najib said the government was also targeting the ratio of wages to the gross domestic product (GDP) to grow to 40 percent, compared to 32 percent at present, to help the people to contend with rising goods prices.

"We have increased the minimum wage of civil servants to RM1,200. But productivity should also be raised. We will look at pensions too," he said.

Elaborating on the uncontrolled outside factors due to the rising cost of living today, Najib said China's economic contraction and the significant drop in world oil prices would cause a loss of revenue amounting to RM30 billion next year.

"Imagine if we have this RM30 billion...we will do our best (to tackle rising cost of living problems)," he said.

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