

Chinese support growing

ENGAGING COMMUNITY: Najib hopes govt programmes will win over fence-sitters

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PRIME Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak is optimistic that the support of Chinese voters for the Barisan Nasional government is on the rise. Speaking on the Mandarin programme *Chat Time with... Najib*, broadcast live on ntv7 yesterday, he said while the support of the Chinese was low compared with that of the Malays and Indians, the recent engagement pro-

grammes by the government were getting good response from the community.

What was supposed to be a 60-minute interview went on for 90 minutes instead, with Najib addressing a wide range of issues concerning public interest.

This was his first appearance in a Chinese programme on a TV station owned by Media Prima Bhd.

He told the hosts, Owen Yap and Lee Siad Huey, that he hoped the engagement programmes would help win over the community, in particular the fence-sitters.

Asked about his popularity following his

many engagement programmes with the Chinese, he quipped: "*Tak kenal maka tak cinta* (if you do not know someone, you would not like the person).

"Following my many engagements with the Chinese community, I now understand their attitude, hopes and aspirations about the government."

On efforts to improve the education system in the country, Najib said it had become more flexible, with equal opportunity given to all schools, including vernacular schools.

"For example, a piece of land in Bandar
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Prime Minister Datuk Seri **Najib Razak** being interviewed by Owen Yap and Lee Siad Huey on '*Chat Time with... Najib*' on ntv7 yesterday.

Najib: Young people realise we are caring govt

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Sungai Long, which was supposed to be given to a national school, was given to a Chinese school instead because 90 per cent of the population there are Chinese."

Najib also challenged the notion that young Malaysians were with the opposition, saying that they were beginning to warm up to the government.

"They now realise that we are truly a caring government. Through our constant engagement with them, many educational opportunities have opened up to them, with government aid such as book vouchers and 90 per cent subsidy for uni-

versity students."

Najib, who fielded questions on the Lynas rare earth project in Gebeng, Pahang, assured the public that the government would always place priority on the health and safety of the people.

He said the supervision of any safety standards for the project must be carried out by a body considered "credible" in the eyes of the public.

The people responsible for monitoring this project will see to it that the standards are always stringent, to give confidence to the people.

"We must also give assurance to them on the implementation side."

The project has received some objections due to safety concerns, par-

ticularly on radiation, despite assurances from the International Atomic Energy Agency that Lynas has complied with its standards.

Asked whether the government would consider imposing the standards by the Europe Committee on Radiation Risk which stressed the effects of thorium retention in the human body, Najib said as far as the government was concerned, the interests of the people came first and their health and safety must be a top priority.

"We won't compromise on that."

On a recent report by the government on the 11 per cent drop in the country's crime rate, Najib said the statistics were given the vote of

approval by international observers.

He said the observers had also described Malaysia as a very peaceful country and expressed hope for a further drop in the crime rate by the end of the year.

On another matter, Najib gave an assurance that building owners in Jalan Sultan in the city would not be affected by the construction of the MY Rapid Transit.

"We will not acquire their land, but we just want to get their permission to go underground to build the MRT."

Asked about his 36-year political journey, Najib said it was most challenging, particularly with the drastic change in the political environment.

"With the onset of globalisation, even the tools of engagement with the people have changed. I am now on Facebook, Twitter and blogs to interact with my supporters."

Asked on the things that gave him the greatest satisfaction, Najib said it was the opportunity to help people such as providing affordable housing, microcredit loans for entrepreneurs and helping the needy.

On what saddened him most, he said: "When people make false accusations and resort to gutter politics."

"I hope when the election comes, people will see who has the agenda for the country and the ability to deliver."