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Najib urges media to verify facts

'SEEK THE TRUTH':

Perception formed by inaccurate news difficult to change, says PM

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MEDIA practitioners have been urged to chase the truth and verify facts rather than fight to be the first in reporting and make the truth secondary.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak said news disseminated was fast without its accuracy being verified in a race to make it go viral and form perception. He said this became a problem when it was inaccurate as it would be difficult to change.

"People chase news to become the first to disseminate news to make it go viral and form perception, and not verify facts and accuracy. Accuracy becomes secondary.

"Once perception is formed, it is very difficult to remove," he said at a breaking-of-fast event hosted by Kumpulan Media Karangraf here yesterday.

Najib cited the example of rumours of 40,000 Bangladesh nationals who the opposition said would be brought into the country to vote for Barisan Nasional during the last general election.

"We could not rectify this until the end, resulting in those who have features like Bangladesh nationals getting chased on voting day.

"Just imagine, one jumbo jet can carry 400 people and to bring in 40,000 people, 100 jumbo jets must land at the Kuala Lumpur International Airport.

"Nobody thought about this, but the news became viral and BN suffered damage."

More recently, he said, a day before the Permatang Pauh by-election, news broke out that Tabung Haji money was used to bail out IMalaysia Development

(IMDB) Bhd when it was, in fact, a commercial transaction that netted **Tabung Haji RM170 million.**

"All the *makcik* and *pakcik* (uncles and aunties) in the village were very angry when they heard about this.

"We will not use the people's money to bail IMDB but when the truth came out, the opposition asked **Tabung Haji** not to sell the land because Tabung Haji will

make a profit, but the damage has been done.

"Just like how media practitioners lose circulation, we lose votes.

"If they claim we lose billions of ringgit, where is the evidence? Where is the truth? Seek the truth, that is all I ask."

Present were the prime minister's wife Datin Seri Rosmah Mansor, Communications and Multimedia Minister Datuk Ahmad Shabery Cheek, Karangraf Media Group chairman Datuk Dr Husamuddin Yaacob, Media Prima Bhd independent non-executive chairman Tan Sri Johan Jaaffar, Media Prima Bhd group managing director Datuk Seri Amrin Awaluddin, Media Prima Bhd group managing editor (news and current affairs) Datuk Mohd Ashraf Abdullah, New Straits Times Press chief executive officer Datuk Mohammad Azlan Abdullah, NSTP group managing editor Datuk Abdul Jalil Hamid, *New Straits Times* group editor Mustapha Kamil Mohd Janor and NST deputy group editor Yushaimi Maulud Yahaya.