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|------|----------------|---------|--------|
| DATE | 19 / 06 / 2014 | SECTION | NATION |
| PAGE | 4 | COLUMN | |

Mosque muezzins and caretakers eligible for haj sponsorship

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PUTRAJAYA: The *bilal* (the designated muezzin at the mosque who recites the *azan*) and the *tok siak* (mosque caretaker) will be considered in future as recipients of the Prime Minister-1Malaysia Development Berhad (1MDB) Foundation

haj sponsorship programme.

At present, only the imam (person who leads the congregation) and chairmen of village security and development committees (JKKK) are considered for the programme.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak announced this after presenting letters of offer to 1,000 recipients for the upcoming haj sea-

son at the Tuanku Mizan Zainal Abidin Mosque here yesterday.

Apart from the sponsorship, they each received RM1,000, sarongs and a box of dates.

At the event, the Prime Minister also launched a Ramadan programme to distribute dates and *zam zam* water to mosques nationwide.

In his speech, Najib said the haj

sponsorship was a show of appreciation to the contributions of the imam and JKKK chairmen to national development.

"You have contributed much. Imams and village heads have a big role in our society," he said.

"*Insha Allah* (God willing), maybe we can sponsor the *bilal* and *tok siak* in the future to perform the fifth pil-

lar of Islam," the prime minister said.

He advised the prospective pilgrims to be well-mannered and disciplined while in Mecca and Medina for their pilgrimage.

"Protect the country's good name and don't forget to pray for Malaysia to remain peaceful and prosperous," he added.