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Journalist	Azura Abas	AdValue	RM 17,546
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Prime Minister **Datuk Seri Najib Razak** (front row, centre), Minister in the Prime Minister's Department **Datuk Seri Jamil Khir Baharom** (on Najib's right) and Domestic Trade, Cooperative and Consumerism Minister **Datuk Seri Hassan Malek** (on Najib's left) with village heads, imam and village security and development committee heads at **Tuanku Mizan Zainal Abidin Mosque** in Putrajaya yesterday. Pic by Mohd Fadli Hamzah

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Pray for nation, PM tells pilgrims

AZURA ABAS

HARMONY: Peace, prosperity vital for Muslims to perform religious duties

THE nation's peace and prosperity are crucial to ensure Muslims can perform their religious duties without fear, said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak.

He also urged pilgrims to pray for the country's wellbeing.

"Pray for Malaysia so that it will continue to progress successfully as a Muslim nation that will be looked upon highly by others.

"We cannot take peace and harmony lightly. The way we manage the country and the implementation of transformation programmes have allowed Malaysia's economy to flourish," he said.

Najib was speaking to some 1,000 village heads, imam and village security and development committee (JKKK) heads, selected to perform their haj under the 1MDB

Foundation special programme this year, at Tuanku Mizan Zainal Abidin Mosque here yesterday.

Present were Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Seri Jamil Khir Baharom, Domestic Trade, Cooperative and Consumerism Minister Datuk Seri Hassan Malek, 1MDB chairman Tan Sri Lodin Wok Kamarudin and Tabung Haji chairman Datuk Seri Abdul Azeez Abdul Rahim.

The pilgrims, including two Tok Batin and eight pondok teachers, received their offer letters yesterday. Apart from the sponsorship, they also received RM1,000, sarong and a box of dates each.

Najib said it had always been his wish to see village heads and imam perform their haj.

"Once we have covered everyone, maybe we can consider sending the *bilal* (muezzin) and *tok siak* (mosque caretakers) next."

The foundation has sent 2,311 people to perform their haj under the special programme since its inception in 2011.

Najib said the special pro-

gramme was his administration's way of appreciating the roles of imam, village and JKKK heads.

Tok Batin Abdul Rani Abdullah from Kampung Meranti in Pekan said he had never dreamt that one day he could perform his haj.

The 54-year-old will be the first from his Orang Asli village, which has about 60 families, to perform the fifth tenet of Islam.

Ismail Awang Kecek, a teacher from Sekolah Pondok Al-Khairiah Banggol Stol, Kelantan, said he was grateful to be chosen as he had missed the first opportunity to perform haj in 1995.

"I had to use my savings to pay for my child's education in Egypt.

"I didn't have enough money then and I still don't have enough now, until I was picked.

"I am so grateful," said the 67-year-old father of 12 children.

After performing zohor prayers, Najib launched a national-level Ramadhan al-Mubarak programme to distribute zam-zam water and dates to mosques nationwide, organised by Umno Welfare Bureau.