

Chaos erupts as BR1M vouchers run out
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A BR1M distribution ceremony in Jinjang Utara turned chaotic yesterday after a larger than expected crowd swarmed BN leaders as they handed them out to a unruly crowd.

NONE People shoved, pushed and elbowed each other while others invaded the stage as an annoyed Batu division Umno deputy chief Ramlan Salleh warned: "If you come onto the stage you will not get your voucher."

"Don't rush, don't rush, please queue up, we have enough vouchers for everyone," he shouted.

Earlier, Deputy Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin had addressed local residents at the PPR Beringin Apartment field before a symbolic BR1M distribution ceremony for a number of local residents.

Batu division BN leaders later took over the task with the departure of Muhyiddin at around 6pm, but were overwhelmed by the crowd.

'3,500 vouchers not enough'

Frustration simmered when the BR1M vouchers were snapped up in less than 30 minutes, leaving some 300 empty handed despite the around 3,500 vouchers that had been prepared.

"I'm sorry we ran out of vouchers, we did not do this on purpose. Please be patient, we have sent someone to collect more BR1M vouchers, they will arrive shortly.

"I know some of you are complaining that we keep saying five minutes more..." empathised the emcee, with the frustrated crowd hitting back with: "Correct!".

To the relief of the remaining 300 people, the additional vouchers arrived at 7pm. And the distribution was carried out in orderly fashion this time.

Despite the frustration at the organiser's lack of foresight, the crowd was generally pleased with the vouchers which can be exchanged for RM500 in cash with the government.

"It's not a large amount, but at least it can help me cover the expenses for my school-going children," said 40-year-old Abdul Razak Ramli, a father of three.

'Senior citizens annoyed at waiting'

BR1M, added Abdul Razak, was among several other assistance that his family has received from the government and so will continue supporting BN.

"It's better if they do this every year," he quipped.

Meanwhile, 42-year-old Yap Peng San dismissed the faux pas in voucher estimation as a "minor matter", saying the voucher hand out was a good move by the government.

Asked if he would support BN because of the voucher, Yap replied: "I've always supported BN except for the last general election. This time, I'll need to see first. It's not about whether we like the government or not, it's about reform."

Alfonso Christopher, 70, was visibly annoyed at the lack of vouchers, saying sarcastically: "I've already waited for five hours, what's another two hours?"

However, the senior citizen who has to support himself and his wife said the money will help his family, even if it is in a small way.

Bushwhacked by large turnout

Later, Gerakan Youth secretary-general Dominic Lau who had distributed the vouchers on behalf of Gerakan Batu division explained that organisers had underestimated the crowd.

"This time it was a bit out of control, we've have done a few sessions previously, everything was orderly... pity the old folks, they told me they've been here since 1pm, next time priority will be given to senior citizens."

Lau said that organisers had invited a large crowd for a chance to meet the deputy prime minister but had not expected so many to turn up.

"We informed them to collect the vouchers... it is raining and all this, we did not expect the crowd, but it is really encouraging."

The event today was preceded by a heavy downpour and the muddy fields aggravated the situation.

However, Lau said out of six sessions to date, which began last month, this was an anomaly and promised that future sessions will be carried out in orderly fashion.

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