

## **BR1M just cough lozenge for sore state of financial leaks**

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ADUN SPEAKS Even as the fuel hike was announced by the Domestic Trade, Cooperatives and Consumerism Ministry two days ago, the ministry also disclosed that the BN government would increase the Bantuan Rakyat 1Malaysia (BR1M) cash aid to cushion the impact of the fuel hike, as part of the 2015 Budget next Friday.

However, let me quote the recent speech by Sultan Nazrin Shah of Perak (right) at the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission's 47th anniversary event: Putrajaya must stop being in denial about wealth inequality and realise that hardship and poverty are also fuelling corruption.

He said the situation is a disease that needs serious treatment; it can't be cured by taking a Strepsil.

Yes, BR1M is just another Strepsil which hopes to cure a serious social illness – that of wealth inequality.

What is needed is not an immediate short-term balm but an intensive treatment through a structured, comprehensive and holistic social policy.

The Najib administration should stop the cash handouts, not because the programme is causing dependency among its low-income recipients who have not shown gratitude for such aid, as claimed by former Prime Minister Dr. Mahathir Mohamad.

It should be stopped because it's purely politically motivated and lacking in economic wisdom or ideological motivation.

BR1M is a populist move to gain immediate political support. Our Prime Minister's approval rating increases every time BR1M is given to the people.

Goodies from patrons

According to the answer given by the Sabah chief minister in the first state assembly sitting in April this year, 485,285 people have received BR1M 2014 amounting to RM249,544,400.

The breakdown of recipient statistics in the answer is according to the parliamentary and state seats, whereas my question is for the distribution according to division or district.

But why is a different aggregate needed?

Whenever BR1M is handed out, the YBs or his/her representative shakes hands with

recipients, smiling and posing.

These goodies are none other than financial aid gifted by the mighty and kind patrons.

BR1M would not be enough to offset the fuel hike for the poor, given the fact that eligibility is for the bottom 60 percent of the country, those whose household income is less than RM4,000.

The same people will soon be taxed by the Goods and Services Tax (GST) which will be implemented starting April next year.

The BR1M amount is minimal and the GST is designed to tax those who cannot afford to be taxed.

Losing economic direction

With the combination of fuel hike, GST at 6 percent, lower commodity prices, and higher interest rate after BLR adjustments, do you think our disposable income to be spent for shopping will increase after receiving BR1M's RM650 for one year?

The current situation is terrible. Eighty percent of households earn less than RM5,000 a month, and of this, 40 percent earns less than RM2,000 a month.

The Najib administration is totally losing its economic direction.

Fuel hike with BR1M to cushion the impact demonstrates the leadership's lack of genuine ideas to improve governance.

BN is instead focusing to cover up the waste of taxpayer's money. Fuel hike is not necessary if the billions lost from leakages and corruption is addressed.

Eventually, all of us will have to pay for the consequences of BN's own financial weaknesses and the country's chronic deficit.