

PM: BR1M not political ploy but Bank Negara's idea
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Prime Minister Najib Razak denied the 1Malaysia People's Aid (BR1M) was a political ploy to attract voters saying the idea originated not from him, but Bank Negara.

"This was not my proposal, it was proposed by the fiscal committee and Bank Negara to help 40 percent of the people, not to buy votes or for political purposes, but to help the people," he said according to Bernama.

Najib, who is also Finance Minister said this in his speech at a ceremony to hand over the Melana Indah Phase 1 People's Housing Project (PPR), Johor Bahru today.

"I want to ask how many of you who have received BR1M, has it made you lazy?

"Do you want BR1M to continue? Whoever doesn't want BR1M can leave," he said to cheers from the roughly 15,000 at the event.

He was reportedly responding to his predecessor Dr Mahathir Mohamad's criticism over the annual cash handout.

BR1M is one of the issues in Mahathir's arsenal since the long-serving PM declared war on the PM in his blog postings since last month.

The PM said the cash handout to the lower income group was not aimed to make people lazy but it is a social network of the people and the government's way to transfer the country's short-term wealth to the people.

The former PM in his many criticisms have said the handouts were a burden on federal reserves and a form of vote buying, among others.

Apart from BR1M, Mahathir has also relentlessly attacked Najib on the 1Malaysia Development Berhad (1MDB) scandal, the crooked bridge and the murder of Mongolian national Altantuya Shaariibuu.

In his most vicious attacks yet, Mahathir last month called on Najib to step down lest he drags Umno down with him.

'Don't use BR1M to buy cigarettes'

Najib said the BR1M should not be misused for buying cigarettes for instance but to be used to buy basic household items like milk, rice and others.

"We increase oil (price because) we want to reduce subsidies. When the price of oil is low, who profit? The people will profit but there are leakages, so when we are giving BR1M, we

give to the right group and there are no leakages," he said.

Najib said the government would improve the implementation of the Goods and Services Tax (GST) from time to time.

He said the benefits of the tax would be seen especially through the increasing revenue in the 11th Malaysia Plan (RMK11) and so on.

"If the revenue increases, I will table in the national Budget so that the people will know the results.

"Already 160 countries have implemented it. Without GST, many people will avoid paying taxes, so let us not hear inciting statements from various parties," he said.

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