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'BR1M a social security net'

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NECESSITY: It's to help lower-income group cope with rising cost of living, says PM

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PRIME Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak said the Malaysia People's Aid (BR1M) functioned as a social security net that had helped to ease the burden of the lower income group.

He said BR1M was not a means that made the people lazy or become dependent, but helped the people to cope with the rising cost of living.

"We will continue to help the people, especially to cope with the rising cost of living. Among the initiatives is BR1M. Tun Dr Mahathir (Mohamad) said BR1M had made the people lazy and disagreed with it. But BR1M does not make us lazy. It's a social security net which helps the less fortunate. It channels the country's wealth to the people," he said to a crowd of 15,000 people who attended the launch of the first phase of the Melana Indah People's Housing Project (PPR) and the upcoming Sungai Melana II PPR here.

Najib was referring to a statement from the former prime minister ahead of the tabling of the Budget back in October 2013. Dr Mahathir had said BR1M had caused the poor to be dependent on the government and insinuated that it would make the people lazy.

Najib said the people still required the cash aid and that it was not his decision to implement BR1M as it



Prime Minister **Datuk Seri Najib Razak** chatting with a family after launching the first phase of the Melana Indah People's Housing Project in Johor Baru yesterday. Pic by Mohd Azren Jamaludin

had been decided by a Fiscal Committee.

"The committee decided that there was a necessity to help the bottom 40 per cent of the people who will benefit from BR1M. It is not for political purposes, but to help the people."

He said the rate for BR1M had been increased through the years in line with the implementation of the Goods and Services Tax (GST).

"BR1M was increased from RM650 to RM950, taking into consideration the increased revenue from GST."

Najib said BR1M was also a more targeted form of aid that reached those who needed help.

"With petrol subsidies, we are un-

able to reach the targeted group, and the higher-income group also enjoy the subsidies, including foreigners."

On another matter, Najib said the government was prepared to consider improving GST.

"We must look into the policy again. When it comes to its implementation, there may be a need to improve. I am prepared to consider matters on its implementation."

He said the government would be transparent and that revenue from GST would be presented in the tabling of the budget.

"I want GST to be from the people, and (returned) to the people. If we increase our (government's) rev-

enue, I will table it in the next budget and reveal how we used the increased revenue."

Najib said GST helped the country's tax system as not everyone paid taxes. He urged the people to avoid listening to those who criticised the tax without proper knowledge of it.

"Let us not listen to those who only criticise and incite confusion because the 165 countries implementing GST cannot be wrong."

Present at the launch were Johor Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Mohamed Khaled Nordin, Defence Minister Datuk Seri Hishammuddin Hussein and Urban Wellbeing, Housing and Local Government Minister Datuk Abdul Rahman Dahlan.