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# Dr M taken to task over remarks

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**TAMPARULI:** It was unbecoming of Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad to equate the 1Malaysia People's Aid (BR1M) with corruption, United Pasokmomogun Kadazandusun Murut Organisation (Upko) acting president Datuk Seri Wilfred Madius Tangau said.

"It is clear from the beginning that BR1M is a welfare programme for the people," Tangau said, adding that the former prime minister's view was irrelevant.

"Just like when the government provided welfare aid in the form of subsidies, the (BR1M) programme is implemented with the target of focusing on the low-income earners," he said at the Upko Christmas open house here yesterday.

Dr Mahathir, who is Parti Pribumi Bersatu Malaysia chairman, had recently claimed that BR1M, introduced five years ago, was a form of corruption, against the law and a crime.

In Ipoh, Perak Health, Public Transport, Non-Islamic Affairs, National Integration and New Villages Committee chairman Datuk Dr Mah Hang Soon said BR1M was a pro-

gramme for the needy.

"BR1M is our way of handing out financial aid to the needy. It is not a bribe as the recipients are eligible to obtain such help from the government," he said.

"We can see that many other countries have their own ways of giving assistance to their people. For example, in Europe, some governments provide monthly food coupons, while Singapore gives out year-end bonuses. Maybe BR1M does not help cover most expenses, but it does help lighten the burden."

Dr Mahathir's recent remarks on BR1M had taken everyone by surprise, even the opposition.

On Tuesday, PKR president Datuk Seri Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail dismissed Dr Mahathir's remarks, stressing that BR1M was not a bribe and the people had the right to receive monetary aid from the government.

In Kuala Lumpur, former Special Committee on Corruption chairman Tan Sri Abu Zahar Ujang said BR1M proved that the government adhered to the principle of responsibility in helping the people, espe-

cially the low-income group.

He said the assistance was distributed fairly to those eligible, including those who did not support the government.

"If BR1M is a form of corruption, it will be given only to those who support the government.

"However, the government does not practise favouritism and gives it out to the target group regardless of religion, ethnicity and political affiliation," he said.

He said Dr Mahathir should be clear with the definition of corruption, namely an act that would damage one's morale and given to gain something.

"This is in contrast with BR1M. Even though the amount given was limited and did not solve the overall problem of household expenses, it could reduce the people's burden.

"We respect him (Dr Mahathir), but his views should be appropriate. Do not come out with statements that will trouble the people."

Abu Zahar said BR1M was not a "tool" to win votes because it was given every year and not just during elections.