

Putrajaya doles out RM1.4b to the underprivileged
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PUTRAJAYA, Aug 24 — Datuk Seri Najib Razak announced today a RM1.4 billion welfare allocation to around 500,000 underprivileged recipients including senior citizens, the disabled and widows of army and police personnel.

The allocation, to be disbursed monthly under the Women, Family and Community Development Ministry's newly-launched initiative called Program Kebajikan Rakyat 1 Malaysia (KAR1SMA), was increased by RM200 million from last year's RM1.2 billion for 424,000 identified recipients.

Najib (picture) said the increase in aid to the needy is in line with one of the main pillars of his administration's philosophy which is to uphold social justice.

"The underprivileged represent a large group and without intervention, they will remain a marginalised and we would have failed to uphold social justice.

"Today, now that we have changed the direction and focus of the government through the Government Transformation Programme (GTP), we have identified that a large part of our community consist of the marginalised and they need help so they can become independent... not always depending on the government but independent," he said during his speech at the launch.

Najib added that despite the global economic crisis, Malaysia still remains in the position to not only offer but increase financial aid to the underprivileged.

"In some countries, they have had to slash their pensioner funds and cut back on welfare aid.

"So I hope now that those receiving aid will be inspired with new hope, skills and spirit, enabling them to contribute to their futures and that of the country," he said.

Of the RM1.4 billion allocation, RM332 million will go to the disabled, RM290 million to underprivileged children, RM455 to senior citizens, RM4.1 million to about 2,000 widowed spouses of police and army personnel, and RM303 million to fund community-based programmes.

Women, Family and Community Development Minister Senator Datuk Seri Shahrizat Abdul Jalil said the "widow" category was added to last year's allocation as a bid to show appreciation to the armed forces and their contributions.

She said the funds will be disbursed monthly to the various target groups, with each person receiving between RM100 and a maximum of RM450.

"This is a substantive amount and it is ongoing. Under the administration, our focus is largely on the underprivileged, the lower income groups and so on," she said.

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