

**PM Launches RM1.4 Billion 1Malaysia Welfare Programme
Bernama
August 24, 2011**

PUTRAJAYA, Aug 24 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak today launched the RM1.4-billion 1Malaysia People's Welfare Programme or KAR1SMA to assist about 500,000 recipients of welfare aid.

Najib, who is also the finance minister, said at the launch that the aid would be given monthly under the programme to people in the target group comprising senior citizens, disabled persons, single mothers and widows of soldiers and policemen.

This was to ensure that the group did not remain marginalised and isolated in society, he said.

"In the present world economic crisis, we find that the economy of certain countries has even contracted; some countries have slashed the pensions of retirees and reduced welfare aid.

"However, praise be to God, we in Malaysia are not only able to carry on with the (welfare) programmes but also provide higher allocations for the needy," he said when launching the programme at his office.

Also present at the launch were Deputy Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin, Women, Family and Community Development Minister Datuk Seri Shahrizat Abdul Jalil and Chief Secretary to the Government Tan Sri Mohd Sidek Hassan.

The allocation covered aid for children (RM290 million), the disabled (RM332 million) and senior citizens (RM455 million) and funding of social programmes at the community level (RM303 million).

A new category has been introduced under the programme for aid to eligible widows of soldiers and policemen, involving a sum of RM4.1 million.

Najib said the government decided that it was necessary to assist this group because it was of primary importance to uphold social justice, one of the pillars of the 1Malaysia concept.

"The disabled, senior citizens, single mothers and widows of soldiers and policemen make up a huge group in our society, and will remain marginalised and isolated unless there is government intervention through an organised programme.

Najib expressed the hope that the programme would be executed effectively.

The prime minister said the branding of the programme as KAR1SMA injected more enthusiasm into welfare work.

"The acronym has made welfare work glamorous. We will be more enthusiastic in extending aid to the needy," he said.

Najib congratulated the Women, Family and Community Development Ministry for rejuvenating the programme and expanding the target group so that none of the needy was

denied assistance from the nation's development and prosperity.

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