

**PM says to continue BR1M if revenues rise**  
**The Malaysian Insider**  
**March 13 , 2012**  
**By Shannon Teoh**

KUALA LUMPUR, March 13 — Putrajaya would consider another round of cash handouts for low-income earners if government revenue increased this year, Datuk Seri Najib Razak told Parliament today.

The prime minister had announced the RM500 aid for households earning less than RM3,000 a month in his budget speech last October, saying it would help ease the burden from surging cost of living.

The unprecedented handouts for an estimated 5.3 million households would cost RM2.3 billion.

“We won’t reject if government revenue increases,” he said when answering a question on the Bantuan Rakyat 1 Malaysia (BR1M). “We can consider it according to the situation.”

A poll conducted in February, when BR1M was in full swing, found the PM’s approval rating had shot up by 10 percentage points to 69 per cent, mainly due to over three-quarters of households earning less than RM1,500 a month giving him the thumbs up.

The handout comes at a time when both the ruling Barisan Nasional (BN) and opposition Pakatan Rakyat (PR) prepared for general elections that must be called by the first half of 2013.

Najib also said today 80 per cent, or 3.74 million out of 4.78 million households, had successfully applied for BR1M as of March 1, amounting to RM1.92 billion being disbursed.

The BN chief said PR-held Selangor received 13 per cent of the total handout, the highest of any state, while 84 per cent of all households in PAS-ruled Kelantan qualified for the programme.

The opposition has accused BN of “a naked attempt to buy votes” using public funds as BR1M was rolled out ahead of what is likely to be an election year.

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