

## **Dr M pans BR1M, Najib defends payout**

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PETALING JAYA: Former prime minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad voiced his dissatisfaction over the government's Bantuan Rakyat 1Malaysia (BR1M) scheme, saying it was costing a bomb.

In a blog post yesterday, Mahathir said that BR1M was fast becoming a burden to the government which was already plagued with deficits and mounting debt.

"Do we really need BRIM? Even without BRIM there was good support by the people," he said.

Prime Minister Najib Tun Razak introduced BR1M in 2012, where those earning less than RM3,000 in household income would get a yearly cash aid worth RM500.

Recently, Najib said that the government would consider increasing the sum to RM1,200 in light of rising cost of living.

However, Mahathir was not too pleased with the announcement, saying it would add too much pressure to the nation's coffers.

"At RM500 per person for seven million people, it would cost the government RM3.5 billion. Increase that to RM1,200, the cost would be RM8.4 billion. That is a lot of money. Yet there is still a lot of poor people in the country," he said.

Instead, Mahathir urged the government to meet the people on the ground and formulate a better policy to help the masses, who are still unhappy despite the cash aid.

"If they do not support the government, it must be because they are not happy with something, maybe even with BRIM.

"Find out what they are not happy with and you will know what you should do," he said.

However in an event in Putrajaya today, Najib disagreed with Mahathir and defended the BR1M payout.

He said the payment was helpful to the needy and helped expand the domestic economy.

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