

**Defending BR1M, Najib says criticism of cash handout inaccurate**  
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**By Anisah Shukry**

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak tonight defended Putrajaya's 1Malaysia People's Aid (BR1M) programme, saying that criticism against the aid was inaccurate.

He said that the similar welfare programmes were carried out by many countries to help the needy, adding that BR1M was merely a transitional measure to replace blanket subsidies.

"I understand that BR1M has become a much-discussed topic. Hence, I should take the opportunity tonight to correct the misconceptions by certain quarters regarding this aid," Najib said in his speech at the launch of the Performance and Delivery Unit (Pemandu) Annual Report at Angkasapuri, Kuala Lumpur.

"In truth, BR1M is a targeted subsidy in the form of cash, given to those in need as the best approach Malaysia can take for now.

"Everyone should know, such welfare programmes are carried out by many countries in various forms and names, like education funds, health financial aid plans, welfare payments, and aid in the form of food coupons, and more."

The BR1M cash aid programme introduced by Najib some time before the last general election in 2013, has been severely criticised by former prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad as a form of "bribery" in order to win votes.

Dr Mahathir cited BR1M as one of the reasons why Najib should step down, along with the 1Malaysia Development Berhad (1MDB) scandal and the murder of a Mongolian woman, Altantuya Shaariibuu.

But, Najib tonight said that Indonesia in 2013 had a programme similar to BR1M, with the neighbouring country providing cash vouchers to 3.2 million recipients in its bid to reduce their cost of living as a result of petrol and diesel subsidisation.

Meanwhile, in the UK, food stamps were given out, Najib added.

The prime minister said BR1M had touched the lives of ordinary Malaysians, and told the story of one Dayah Mahmut, a 41-year-old school security guard who lived in a longhouse in Betong, Sarawak, with her four children.

"As a leader, I would like to say that anyone can say whatever they want and like. But for an individual like Dayah, BR1M really helps reduce her burden in paying her children's schooling.

"You should know, besides Dayah, besides what was mentioned tonight, at least the government has tried its best to provide aid to seven million households and

individuals in need, regardless of their political background."

Although he said that BR1M would be temporary, Najib did not mention when the government would cease giving out the cash aid, which costs the government RM3.64 billion in last year's disbursements. – April 28, 2015.

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