

BR1M does not add to financial burden, says KJ
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Youth and Sports Minister Khairy Jamaluddin has denied that the Bantuan Rakyat 1Malaysia (BR1M) cash aid programme will add to the country's financial burden, as claimed yesterday in a blog-posting by former premier Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

In a series of tweets today, Khairy said the cost of giving out BR1M is offset by the savings acquired by the government in reducing bulk subsidies.

"The bulk subsidy system where everyone, regardless of income, can enjoy petrol subsidy is more burdensome for the government compared with the BR1M," Khairy said.

Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak similarly claimed in Putrajaya earlier today that the BR1M allocation was possible due to the reduction in bulk subsidies.

"We saw the imbalances because when we spend too much on subsidy, there will be leakages, wastages and unfairness," *Bernama* quoted him as saying.

Najib said by reducing bulk subsidy to targeted subsidy, the government had allocated RM4.6 billion for BR1M, which would be channelled to 7.9 million households earning RM3,000 a month and less.

Mahathir questioned the wisdom of continuing the BR1M programme, arguing that it only added to the country's financial burden.

In his blog posting, Mahathir said he has received complaints that BR1M is a form of bribery, especially when given out near the election.

"It is the same as giving people placards to raise when you pass. It does not really reflect their feelings or sentiments," he said.

Without BR1M, Mahathir said, the people had supported the government and if people do not support the government, then the root cause must be determined.

"Failure to understand public sentiments would be disastrous for politicians. Self-delusion is even worse," he added.