Revamp BR1M programme

SINCE 2012, when the government started the 1Malaysia People's Aid (BR1M) by handing out RM2.1 bil to 4.2 million recipients, the numbers have been growing.

In 2013, this increased to RM2.8 bil for 6.8 million people and the following year, RM3.6 bil was paid to 7.2 million people. This year, more than RM5 bil has been allocated. That's RM13.5 bil to date.

Despite criticism from various quarters, the BR1M programme will not only continue but is also set to increase its payout next year. BR1M is designed to assist the poor and needy.

To say that more than 7.2 million Malaysians are needy doesn't quite make sense. If there are so many in need of RM950 per annum to tide them over, we have failed to lift their standard of living since independence.

If that is the case, shouldn't we instead spend the bulk of the RM5 bil on efforts to lift living standards? There is a saying, "Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day; teach him to fish and you feed him for a lifetime."

At best, revamp BR1M to ensure only the most deserving get it. The quantum per person can thus be increased. The funds allocated for BR1M should be used to help those near the poverty line. Surely those earning RM4,000 per month are less needy than those surviving on the minimum wage of RM900?

And what about those poor who are too unknowing to apply for BR1M or open a bank account? The welfare department should look into assisting them.

The Auditor-General's Report also revealed that from 2012 to 2014, some 5,000 recipients double-cashed their BR1M vouchers amounting to RM4 mil.

Has action been taken against the cheats?

It is best to plug these loopholes before we extend the programme. Something must be wrong if the fraud cannot be detected despite recipients providing identification.

It is good that the payments are now banked in or vouchers posted to recipients. Please stop handing out BR1M vouchers through NGOs or offices of political parties. It only raises the suspicion of leaks or abuse. FocusM