

'IT'S OUR SINCERE BID TO HELP POOR'

Don't politicise cash assistance, PM tells opposition

MELISSA DARLYNE CHOW
KUALA LUMPUR
darlyne@nst.com.my

PRIME Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak has told the opposition not to politicise the 1Malaysia People's Aid (BRIM), which he described as a sincere effort by the government to help those in need.

In a blog post yesterday, Najib said the opposition was trying to belittle the cash assistance by calling it a form of bribery, *dedak* (animal feed) and an attempt by the government to fish for votes.

"The opposition should be more sensitive, as the recipients of BRIM use it to buy daily necessities, among others. Don't use offensive language, don't confuse and don't demean the people just for political gains.

"BRIM should not be politicised," he said yesterday.

Najib, who is also finance minister, urged the opposition to stop claiming that the country would become bankrupt.

"Every year, the amount of BRIM aid is increased to help those in need."

Najib said BRIM was distributed fairly to the people based on the criteria set by the government, including the recipients' individual and household incomes.

"BRIM does not take into account race, religion or even political beliefs," he said.

Najib said BRIM was one of the main mechanisms to deliver targeted assistance to the people, adding that it was meant to replace the bulk subsidy system, which he said was inefficient and prone to leakages.

Najib also announced that the first round of BRIM would be disbursed in stages beginning tomorrow.

He said this year, the government received 8,277,391 applications for BRIM, and that a total of 5,153,238 applications had been approved.

"The remaining 3,123,850 applications are now being processed and the decision on the approvals is expected to be announced next month."

Najib said most of the applicants whose applications were approved were aged between 21 and 30, and those 61 and above.

A total of 2,782,799 applicants will receive RM1,200; 243,434 will receive RM900 and the remaining 2,127,005 will receive RM450 aid.

He said Selangor recorded the highest number of approvals with 686,318 applications approved, followed by Sabah and Sarawak with 477,482 and 537,588 of approved applications respectively.