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'Ensure cash aid used to buy only essential items'

KUALA LUMPUR: The government should stop giving cash to low-income Malaysians for the 1Malaysia People's Aid (BR1M) programme and, instead, add value to their MyKad, forcing them to buy essential items.

Tan Sri Megat Najmuddin Megat Khas, who is president of the Malaysian Institute of Corporate Governance and director of the MyKasih Foundation, said this would ensure the money was spent wisely.

"Recipients can swipe their MyKad at partner supermarkets to buy goods at discounted prices. We do not want recipients using the money for the wrong reasons, such as buying drugs and alcohol.

"At the moment, there is no control over how they spend the money.

"The allocation this year is RM4 billion. That is a lot of taxpayers' money. We need to be sure it is spent wisely, especially with reduced sub-

sidies and rising cost of living."

Najmuddin said due diligence must also be done on the system and process to ensure the right people were getting the money.

He said the government should review the risk management and the implementation of BR1M.

"It is good that the government is giving financial help to the people. But this will fail if the implementation is not done properly.

"The government must have a foolproof database to ensure only the deserving receive the money. It would be a shame if BR1M money is leaked to wrong recipients.

"We hear of rightful recipients either not getting the money, or receiving only half the amount."

Najmuddin said BR1M should follow what MyKasih did, which was caring for the hard-core poor and taking them out of poverty.