

## KERATAN AKHBAR

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### Scheme to boost B40 income better than cash handouts, says Rafizi



Economy minister Rafizi Ramli said there were many problems with past cash aid programmes which did not help the hardcore poor and B40. (Bernama pic)

KUALA LUMPUR: Economy minister Rafizi Ramli has defended the recently launched People's Income Initiative (IPR), saying cash handouts had not benefited the hardcore poor and B40 group in the past.

Rafizi said the government's programmes to alleviate poverty over the past three to four decades were simply cash aid, with applicants not being asked about their needs and their plans to generate or improve their income.

"What if they say they don't want to do anything? Then you are in a bind because it could mean you have to keep giving them cash for an unspecified time," he told reporters after a forum here.

Rafizi added that cash handouts placed the entire risk of planning and generating income on the hardcore poor though they were not equipped with the necessary knowledge and resources to run a business.

“That’s why we do it by ‘templates’. You have to slot them into a ‘template’. There is a higher chance for success when there is an ecosystem that helps them,” he said in response to criticism of the IPR.

The RM750 million IPR programme involves three initiatives – Inisiatif Usahawan Tani (Intan), Inisiatif Usahawan Makanan (Insan) and Inisiatif Operator Perkhidmatan (Ikhsan).

The programme aims to leverage on the public and private sectors as well as the community to spur economic growth at the grassroots level to address poverty and inequality in the country.

Intan will see Putrajaya opening up 800 acres (324ha) of federal government land for the people to participate in agricultural activities.

Insan involves selling ready-made food prepared by participants for as low as RM2 through vending machines, while Ikhsan will see people skilled in maintenance and service recruited for the public sector.

An estimated 150,000 people are expected to benefit from the initiatives to boost their income.