

**I feel your pain, Najib tells rakyat**  
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As the rakyat brace themselves for a slew of rising costs in 2014 due to subsidy cuts, Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak in a New Year message said he sympathised with the rakyat's pain.

"I understand and sympathise with these concerns. Hard-working people will feel the impact of rising costs.

"And when the media is full of red numbers and price rises, it can seem as though 2014 will bring pain without gain," he said in a statement today.

As such, Najib said the government is mulling a series of measures next year to help the rakyat cope with the rising cost of living.

"We will do everything we can to ensure the impact on the rakyat is minimised... We will put in place mechanisms to cushion people from rises in the electricity tariff and toll fares.

"(The) Performance Management Delivery Unit (Pemandu) is coming up with new ideas to ease the cost of living pressures," he said.

Najib took pains to explain that the subsidy cuts and rate hike were needed and they would not be done if not absolutely necessary to ensure the country's fiscal health.

"Subsidy programmes have benefited people for many years, but as our population grows and our nation develops, they are no longer sustainable and it is time to move on.

"We need to rationalise subsidies and target them to those in most need," he said.

'We can't collapse like Europe'

Najib used Europe as an example, pointing out more than half of youths in certain European countries are unemployed as their government had failed to ensure the country's fiscal health.

He added that the government will ensure the price rises are proportionate.

"We will not impose rising costs without supporting those who need it most. From last week, 7.9 million recipients in households earning under RM4,000 per month were eligible apply for new BR1M payments.

"We are opening new 1Malaysia shops, to help with the cost of daily goods, and new 1Malaysia clinics to provide affordable healthcare.

"Altogether, next year the government will spend some RM42 billion on subsidies - almost as much as we spend on development," he said.

He also highlighted 11 measures the government will be undertaking to reduce expenditure including cuts to ministers' and civil servants' entertainment allowances.

"If we are to be responsible in government, it sometimes means taking difficult decisions which are unpopular.

"Leadership is about looking to the long-term: about doing what is right, not what is popular," he said.

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