

'What good is PM's cost-cutting to us?'

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Despite Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak's announcement on 11 measures to reduce government expenses in view of price hikes, the lower-end of the food and beverage industry is not impressed by the premier's effort.

Malaysiakini had interviewed some hawkers, mamak stall owners and restaurateurs around Kuala Lumpur and Petaling Jaya areas, some of them are mulling raising food and beverages prices after Chinese New Year which falls on Jan 31 as the prices of many goods and services had gone up.

But at the same time, they also questioned the necessity of the measures taken by the government to reduce its expenses, asking that, "Have these done anything to me?"

Selling nasi lemak at SS2, Petaling Jaya, 40-year-old Iwan Abdul Wahab lamented that he needs to pay additional business costs due to the petrol subsidy cut and the abolition of sugar subsidy.

However, when asked about his view regarding the 11 measures to reduce public sector expenditure, Iwan strongly questioned this move by saying that the measures do not help his business.

"That's their (the government's) matter, to whom will the government give the trimmed down money to?"

"I don't know who will they give it to, but if the money is given to me, that is a different story," he said.

Seafood restaurant owner, who only wanted to be known as Yit, echoed Iwan's point of view, saying that the saving measures had nothing to do with his business and did not think that they will be well implemented.

He said that ultimately the government "only talks" and the people should be grateful if there were no corruption within the system.

"We are a rich country, but they have screwed it. How much money can they save?" he quizzed.

Noodle hawker Wong also shared the same opinion, saying that he was “numbed” with the series of price hikes.

Wong also described the measures announced by Najib as meretricious and that the money spent by the government was more than what it had saved.

Two days before the New Year, Najib announced 11 measures to reduce government spending, including cutting down the entertainment allowance of the ministers, deputy ministers and top government officers by 10 percent.

However, the prices of several goods and services are set to be raised in the coming days, including electricity, highway toll charges, ice, taxi bus, train fares, etc., not including last year’s petrol subsidy reduction and the abolition of sugar subsidy.

Food prices might go up after CNY

Some food and beverages operators said that they will not raise the price of their food temporarily as the prices of some of the goods and services had just gone up two days ago.

However, they added that they are planning to review the prices after Chinese New Year considering the impact of price hikes.

Abdul Malik (left), manager of a mamak restaurant in Kuala Lumpur, said that they will review the prices of their food one or two months later after monitoring the impact of the hikes.

“But now, we still maintain our food prices,” said the 39-year-old.

Restaurant owner Wong Hooi Goh also claimed that the costs had increased more than RM1,000 after he raised the salary of his workers and the sugar and petrol subsidies had been abolished and reduced respectively.

As the prices of ice and electricity are going up, he is also considering to raise the prices of the drinks after Chinese New Year.

Although his nasi lemak is very popular as there is always a long queue of customers, Iwan too is unable to stand the impact of raising costs.

“The prices of many things have gone up, the price of onion has raised, so does the beef,” he said, adding that he is planning to raise the price of his nasi lemak this

month.

Meanwhile, Kuala Lumpur Selangor Chinese Assembly Hall civil rights committee chairperson Liao Kok Fah also claimed that a food court at Puchong had raised the prices of food and beverages since Jan 1.

Liao noticed it when he was paying for a bowl of noodles two days ago at that particular food court and found out that its price had raised 50 cents.

According to him, all the hawkers who operate at the food court had reached a consensus to raise food prices by 50 cents.

Besides, a consumer told Malaysiakini that several food courts at Bandar Mahkota and Sungai Long, Cheras, had raised the prices of their food by 50 cents and the prices for drinks had increased 10 cents or 20 cents.

He said the hawkers were forced to increase the prices in order to overcome the impact of price hikes.

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