

Turun: 'Kangkung' remark shows Najib out of touch

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It may be the latest joke in Malaysia, but Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak's remark on prices of the ubiquitous vegetable kangkung (water spinach) reveals a more serious issue, said consumer group Gerakan Turun Kos Sara Hidup (Turun).

"At the very least, Najib's remark shows that he has never felt the struggles of the common man in trying to find his daily bread," Turun chairperson Mohamad Azan Safar said.

Worse still, he noted, Najib and his advisers seem to also be oblivious to this fact - to the extent that even the PM's younger brother needed to step in.

Although he did not say it explicitly, Mohamad Azan quipped that Nazir Abdul Razak's ode to his father - second prime minister Abdul Razak Hussein - yesterday reads like a "snide" message to his brother, when Nazir (right) waxed lyrical about his father's staunch frugality in managing the public purse.

He added that while the kangkung jokes brought some joy to Malaysians who are facing rising costs of living, it also brought shame to the country with news of the faux pas even making international headlines.

"The PM sought that the government be praised for the prices of kangkung dropping. We would like to take this opportunity to thank him instead, for embarrassing Malaysians around the world for having a leader such as yourself," he said scathingly.

Najib has been heavily lampooned online for a speech he made in Kemaman, where he said that the prices of fish and vegetables went up due to weather changes and not the government's doing.

Many took issue when Najib pointed out that the price of kangkung had dropped recently, and asked why the government is not praised for it.

Some felt that Najib was ridiculing the people's suffering, while many pointed out that kangkung - a generally cheap vegetable which grows widely across the country - is not an essential good unlike petrol, which pump prices have gone up following subsidy cuts.

The collective drubbing which took over the Malaysian social media landscape in the past few days with everything from kangkung-inspired jokes, parody videos and music remixes, made headlines in the Singapore Straits Times and BBC.

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