

**Want us to eat sand, anti-GST protesters ask
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Clad in red, some 100 protesters gathered in front of the Parliament building to object the hike in fuel prices and the Goods and Services Tax (GST).

They first assembled at Tugu Negara, then marched towards the parliament gate while singing songs, chanting slogans and waving red flags.

The protesters were in high spirits but the scene remained peaceful. The police force was present but only to maintain order.

The demonstrators also expressed their frustrations through creative means.

Some carried pots filled with sand and held up placards reading: "Mahu bagi rakyat makan pasir?" (Want the people to eat sand?).

Another protestor knelt down in a begging position, while filled plastic bags labelled 'car and housing loan', 'petrol price hike', 'education costs' and 'rising cost of goods and services' were piled onto his back.

Ask the rakyat

The group, represented by PAS Youth chief Suhaizan Kaiat and several NGO representatives presented their memorandum to the BN Backbenchers' Council (BNBBC), Pakatan Rakyat MPs and Domestic Trade, Co-operatives and Consumerism Ministry.

BNBBC representative Omar Daud accepted the memorandum for the council while the ministry was represented by officer Mohd Zain Zainal.

Pakatan MPs who accepted the memorandum include PAS' Pokok Sena MP Mahfuz Omar, PAS' Shah Alam MP Khalid Samad, PAS' Kuala Terengganu MP Raja Kamarul Bahrin Shah, PKR's Batu MP Tian Chua, PKR's Alor Setar MP Gooi Hsiao Leung.

In the memorandum, protesters urged for:
The cancellation of the fuel subsidy reduction;

A halt of the GST, pending a referendum to get approval from the people on the implementation; and

Parliamentarians to table emergency motion on these issues in the Parliament.
Speaking to reporters, PSM secretary-general S Arutchelvan said that those who are supportive of GST are neglecting the fact that Malaysia is not ready for this system.

"There are a lot of arguments saying that GST is very good and is the best system to collect tax. We agree on that.

"But in most countries that have GST, they also have free education and free healthcare and we don't have that. So we find that we are not ready to that."

The crowd dispersed after the one-and-a-half hour of protest.

The protest was organised by the NGOs Jaringan Rakyat Tertindas (Jerit), Bantah cukai GST (Bantah), Protes Kenaikan Harga Minyak (Protes) and political parties PSM and PAS.

On Oct 2, the pump prices for RON 95 petrol and diesel went up by 20 sen, while the GST will be implemented on April 1 next year.

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