

## **GST and the city - how single youngsters cope**

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**By Geraldine Tong & Chai Jian Mei**

Already living on a slim budget, students and those starting out in life are forced to tighten their belts further with the onset of GST.

Malaysiakini talked to some young adults about their GST experiences. Here's what they shared.

### **Who are they?**

Madeleine Tan and Linger Tan are sisters from Malacca living in a rented house with two other housemates in Subang Jaya. They also have two dogs.

Madeleine, 28, works in administration, while Linger, 23, works as a pet groomer.

Ebbie Chua (photo), 22, is a student from Sarawak, currently living in Kampar. She is in her final year in Utar.

Coming from a poor family background, Chua works part-time to cover her living expenses, and to help out in her family's household expenses.

### **Did they do anything to prepare for the GST?**

**The Tans:** They stocked up on a lot of dry goods before April 1st. As such they had not gone shopping for dry goods since the implementation of GST. They acknowledge that once their stock runs out, it is going to be another added cost to their expenditure.

"We have four big bottles of laundry detergent in the house now," Madeleine said.

**Chua:** She did not prepare much as she always shops on a budget anyway.

"I always make a budget sheet before I spend, usually before the month begins. That way, I know where and how much I spend.

"I try to be optimistic. GST is unavoidable. What I can do is adjust my budget if the prices of goods and services have gone up.

### **Any changes in expenditure after GST?**

**The Tans:** The most significant change in their expenditure is definitely their electricity bill. It used to be around RM200 but now it's up to RM400 per month. They have now become a lot more careful with their electricity usage.

Their two dogs also contribute to their expenditure increase, with dog food costing RM90 now when it was RM60 before. This has forced them to buy off-brand rice to supplement the diet of the animals.

"I told my dogs that I can fall sick, but they cannot. Because if I fall sick, I can claim (the doctor's fees) from my company, but my dogs cannot," Madeleine shared.

"Our dogs' health is more important than ours," Linger (photo) laughed.

**Chua:** There are no changes to her expenditure, except that she has cut down her entertainment expenses.

"As I've said earlier, I keep track and monitor my expenses. So far there's not much change.

"But, I have cut down on my entertainment. From RM150, I reduced it to RM75.

"After the implementation of GST, I don't go out for movies as often as before. Cinema tickets aren't that cheap anymore."

### **Any changes in lifestyle after GST?**

**The Tans:** They used to go to the movies every week. Now, they can't even recall when they last went to the cinema.

The also used to drive back to their hometown, Malacca, every other weekend. But to save on petrol, they don't go home as much anymore. Even when they do, they try to take the bus.

Messaging services like Whatsapp have gotten a lot more use from the sisters as well. These services use Internet data, as opposed to costing extra on their phone bills.

The sisters just mostly stay home nowadays. They used to eat out with their friends once a week, but now it is more like once a month.

"The moment we go out, we have to spend money," Madeleine explained.

**Chua:** She now thinks twice before making any purchases and practices smart consumerism.

"I'm starting to be more smart when it comes to buying stuff. I will check whether that particular item has GST or not before buying. Before GST, I'd buy anything that I like, within my budget.

But after GST, I will really consider first before buying. I buy products for daily use only when there are sales going on.

“I would also say that I have become stingier when it comes to eating out. I like red meat so much, but after GST, I have stopped going to dining places like Morganfield and Naughty Nuri.

“Nevertheless, my expenses are still within my capabilities. And the good news is, I sometimes spend less than my budget!”

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