

## **‘Live within means’? Will Najib take his own advice?**

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COMMENT | Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak gave a very good piece of advice when he spoke at a forum on the effects of the 2018 federal budget on Malaysian households.

“Lifestyle is about making the right choice,” he said.

Citing an example of spending some RM800 for an expensive Japanese meal when one can opt for a much cheaper RM8 meal at a regular eatery, Najib urged Malaysians to live within their means.

I felt so touched by his speech and his concern for the wellbeing of Malaysians that I almost shed a tear. Almost. Sadly, no matter how much I squeezed my eyes, I never got a tear. And I think I know why.

Advising one to live within their own means is very, very good advice. I know, for I advise my own children on the matter on a regular basis. The problem is just that giving our thoughts (and advice) as a third party is often easier than being the ones on the receiving end.

### **Quinoa versus kangkung**

With our national debt ballooning every day, we don’t see Najib spending within our country’s means, do we?

If he was, he’d be flying economy class on commercial flights; he’d be considering a cheaper energy source than to spend as much as RM2.2 million in a year on Seri Perdana’s electricity bills; and he’d think twice before approving a RM30 million race track for the mat rempits.

And mind you, that’s just a few examples.

Clearly, it’s always easy to offer advice to others, especially when one is not using his or her own advice – it’s like saying, “Here, take my advice, I am not using it anyway.”

I suppose it is easier to enforce our expectations on others rather than having the empathy to understand the struggle of others and applying it in our own lives. When a leader consumes expensive quinoa as his staple food while the people are asked to be thankful for a drop in the price of kangkung, what more can we expect?

After all, while Najib gave free advice to people to go for a RM8 cheapo meal instead of a RM800 luxurious Japanese meal, I doubt he would ever in a million years advise his beloved wife Rosmah Mansor to give up a RM40,000 Birkin handbag and settle for a RM4 Ikea bag, would he?

### **Walking the talk**

This reminds me of a story about how a woman in India took her young son to meet his hero, Mahatma Gandhi (*photo*). She requested Gandhi to advise her son, for he had a sweet tooth and was eating too much sugar. Worried for his health, she complained that no matter how much she advised him, her son would not listen to her.

Gandhi listened to the woman and told them to return to see him in two weeks' time.

Two weeks later, the woman and her son returned and Gandhi looked at the boy and advised him to stop consuming too much sugar for it was not good for his health. The boy nodded in agreement, promising his hero that he would stop the bad habit.

The woman was perplexed and asked Gandhi, "Why didn't you advise him that when I brought him here to see you two weeks ago?"

"Because at that time, I was still eating sugar myself," replied Gandhi.

Ba-dum-tss!

No one expects Najib to be Gandhi - I doubt they have the same fashion sense anyway - but a good leader should develop the habit of always walking the talk, or else his or her words will have no power over anyone.

In other words, when you are giving any advice which you find difficult to follow yourself, you should never expect others to follow it.

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