

**Politicians out of touch with the rakyat**  
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I would like to congratulate the media for highlighting the hardship faced by the low and middle-income group due to price increases in food. Realities on the ground provide empirical evidence that the economic visions of political elites and certain academics – especially those related to removal of subsidies or ideals of a higher income nation – do not reflect the daily living realities of the rakyat.

I believe the problem with political, academic and certain social elites is that they lack the important virtue of solidarity with common people and this is the reason why they are unable to construct a vision that touches the lives of common people. There are also certain fundamental questions related to food related inflation that need to be addressed.

Why are prices of basic goods going up even with the presence of subsidies? Is there a problem related to middlemen buying cheap from farmers or fishermen and selling expensive to the retailers? Has there been a proper analysis conducted on the food chain from source to delivery?

Is there a lack of effective inspection and enforcement of the prices in the grocery stores and supermarket? Does corruption play a part in the weakening of enforcement? Do powerful business cartels monopolise food prices? Why are salary and wages not in tandem with the increase of the consumer price index?

Unless these questions are answered honestly by the government, the plan for a high income nation and the removal of subsidies would merely be a slogan that is politically expedient in the short term – but in the long term it would result in an unstable nation. The media has played a critical role in highlighting the power of truth on this issue.

It should do more to expose issues related to the questions raised above, so that policy-makers are aware of empirical realities on the ground instead of merely expressing the government's point of view. The truth is, if the rakyat earns more there would be more money in the government coffers, not the other way round.

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