

## **'O what fun' Malaysians will have for the rest of 2014**

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**OLEH Malaysia Insider**

An email calendar – titled "The Rise of Malaysia" – circulating in cyberspace spells out what is in store for Malaysians for the rest of the year.

While the source of the creatively presented calendar is unknown, it proudly claims to be "produced by Malaysians, for Malaysians".

It breaks down the rising cost of living into 12 months – and each month with its own "theme".

"This calendar was produced to share in our sorrow and help deal with our 2-week memory problem (our leaders say we can only remember bad events for 2 weeks, after that we forgive and love them again). "It (2014) will be a bleak financial year for Malaysians as we face an increase in toll prices, electricity tariff rates, public transportation, possibly further fuel subsidy cuts, impending GST, etc, etc", it stated.

The "inspiration" was the ordinary Malaysians who had "vented their frustrations" on Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak's Facebook page.

"All facts quoted in the calendar are accurate and reported in the mainstream news."

Contending that if Putrajaya will not serve the people, "then the people must serve themselves", with the caveat that "2014 must be the year we":

- Remember all the failed promises and ask for good governance.
- Demand for good leaders who care for the whole population, not just their own relatives.
- Move as a nation to see our real issues, rather than the petty ones that are frequently thrown as veil over our eyes.
- Work to support the poorer and most affected of our nation.

Each month quoted ministers highlighting products or services that are targeted for price hikes. Most of the quotes presented the 'September' highlights Malaysia's educational woes. – The Malaysian Insider pic, January 30, 2014. ministers in an unflattering light.

January kicks off with removal of the sugar subsidy and Najib's "justification" for the price increase.

"Sugar is bad for you. Besides poor vision, gangrene and being dependent on a dialysis machine, excessive sugar intake could affect the male libido.

"I myself have learnt to have tea without sugar. People can change for their own good. If this is a responsible government, we must teach people the right things," the prime minister was quoted.

January also featured Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Seri Abdul Wahid Omar's argument that "we do expect that the inflation rate would go up, but our current inflation rate is still acceptably low, so it won't increase by a lot".

Yesterday, the Malaysian Institute of Economic Research's (MIER) released a report which noted that inflation went up from a two-year low of 1.2% in December 2012 to 3.2% in December 2013 following the rise in prices of goods. In October, the calendar highlighted Putrajaya's "promises" versus reality.

For example, Putrajaya had promised a host of consumer-oriented measures to help ease the cost of living.

The response was a tart "Ha, ha, ha! (good one there), see January to December in calendar".

The rest of the calendar featured hikes in petrol price, school bus fares, toll rates, electricity tariff, Kuala Lumpur assessment rates, public transport fares, broadband rates and the declining education standards.

November cited United Nations statistics showing that Malaysia has the highest income disparity between the rich and poor in Southeast Asia, greater than that of Philippines, Thailand, Singapore, Vietnam and Indonesia.

Malaysia's millionaire population had also doubled in 2011, according to a Wall Street Journal report.

It quoted an Umno delegate, who said, "more Malay millionaires are needed to protect the dignity of Islam".

The calendar ends with Najib's Christmas "present" – the goods and services tax, which will come into effect in April 2015 – and a parody of "Jingle Bells".

"GST, GST, GST all the way, O what fun it is to have, A nice big new tax system." – January 30, 2014.

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