

**So it takes Rosmah's hair to prod Putrajaya into noticing rising prices, asks Nurul Izzah**  
**The Malaysian Insider**  
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Deputy Finance Minister Datuk Ahmad Maslan's concern over complaints by the prime minister's wife on the rising cost of home services proves that for Putrajaya, the people do not come first, PKR said today.

Party vice-president Nurul Izzah Anwar also asked why it took Datin Seri Rosmah Mansor's complaint about higher charges she incurred to style her hair for the minister to notice the need to monitor prices.

"What about the fate of the lower- and middle-income group that continue to be burdened with the high cost of living?"

"What happened to the 'people first' slogan?" Nurul asked in a statement today, referring to Ahmad's promise that the Domestic Trade, Cooperatives and Consumerism Ministry would take note of the issues raised.

Rosmah had reportedly said on Monday that guidelines were needed to monitor prices of home services, especially after the implementation of the goods and services tax (GST) on April 1.

She said this was necessary because hairdressers, tailors and make-up artists, who made house calls, had raised their prices.

Highlighting this at a GST briefing in Petaling Jaya, Rosmah said she, too, was not spared and had to fork out RM1,200 each time she had to dye her hair at home.

"It is really hard to make tailored clothes these days. Their prices come up to RM500, and I am speaking as a representative of a housewife who buys made-to-order clothes.

"We have to make beautiful clothes to attend functions, but the prices are way too high. For those who can afford, it's all right.

"But what about housewives like us, with no income?" she had said during the briefing, which was attended by other wives of ministers and deputy ministers.

Nurul Izzah said today she would continue to fight the government, whom she said was neglecting its social responsibility by going ahead with plans to implement the GST in April, when essentials like medicines and books were not zero-rated.

She said various pharmaceutical and medical groups have issued statements over their concerns on the rise of the price of medicines post-GST.

Publishers, too, have expressed their concerns over the impending costs of books.

According to Nurul Izzah, last month, the Malaysian Pharmaceutical Society (MPS), Malaysian Community Pharmacy Guild (MCPG), Pharmaceutical Association of Malaysia (PhAMA), Malaysian Organisation of Pharmaceutical Industries (MOPI) and Malaysian Association of Pharmaceutical Suppliers (MAPS) had issued a statement that only 320 types of medications were zero-rated.

This was despite the fact that under the National Essential Medicines List, there were 4,200 types of medicines, with many of them counted over and over again just because they were produced by different companies.

For instance, paracetamol, which is produced by various companies, is calculated as 17 different medicines by the government.

In addition, those needing walking sticks, wheelchairs, prosthetic legs and hearing aids would also be subject to higher prices when the GST is implemented.

Controlled medicines used in the treatment of cancer, kidney dialysis and HIV will also be subject to the new consumption tax.

"As it is, prices of medicines have already increased by between 20% and 50% last year and is supposed to go up more this year," Nurul Izzah added.

The PKR politician said only textbooks, exercise books, children's dictionaries and religious books were GST-exempted. – February 25, 2015.

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