

It all boils down to spuds

Tay Yek Keak



There are so many things happening in the world that I can't keep up.

Make that things happening outside of the world, too, because right now, as I'm writing this, the faulty toilet at the International Space Station (ISS) floating in space has been fixed.

Whew!

Anywhere you go, I tell you, you want the toilet to work, especially when you're out there in outer space.

I'm not joking.

What are you going to do if things don't flush up there?

Bag it, throw the stuff out of the window and watch it come back at your face in zero gravity?

As part of my public information service, I checked and found that there really are handy bags in the space station used to collect, you know, waste matter.

Apparently, they're called Apollo bags and since Apollo is the Greek god of the sun and all things bright, s**t happens to astronauts but it's treated as a good thing.

We're talking about science here so I can be very clinical about this.

To scientists, bodily discharge is a very wonderful, natural thing, like a plumber's dream of the perfect inter-connected system which works in supreme harmony.

Anyway, the loo in the space station now sings nicely, thanks to the latest space shuttle crew which delivered the essential spare parts along with a huge, high-tech made-in-Japan research lab for the astronauts to chill presumably after 6pm playing *Godzilla vs Mothra Version 7.0*.

For all of mankind, I'm glad to report that both laboratory and lavatory up there in the space station are now fully functional.

In a sense, such a funny thing may actually have some kind of United Nations endorsement.

I'm not kidding. I found out that the UN has declared this year as the International Year Of The Potato

It's also the year when Yahoo shocked a lot of shareholders by turning down billions of dollars from Microsoft for a takeover; the year in which Hillary Clinton, anointed queen of a dynasty, got beaten by a lofty, idealistic rookie; and the year that Singapore just got thrashed by Uzbekistan at our closed-down-but-still-open

National Stadium in what I thought was an ice hockey score of 7-3.

So the UN got it right - it really is the Year Of The Potato.

The potato, as you know if you like chicken curry or foreign men, is a staple food among many, many people, and I don't think I have to tell you how much food has been in the news lately.

When you're buying rice, eating rice or hoarding rice in your civil defence shelter, you'll know that its price has changed and the only rice which has remained basically the same is Condoleezza Rice, Secretary of State of the United States. Everywhere she goes, she's always saying that her country's enemies are a threat to world peace.

But everywhere Ban Ki Moon goes, he's more concerned about the threat of people having nothing to eat.

Mr Ban, of course, is the Secretary-General of the UN, a post which means that he's not only in charge of secretaries, but also very important matters concerning our world.

He's just warned that mass starvation will occur if our planet doesn't increase food output by 50 per cent by the year 2030.

That's when there's going to be a heck of a lot more people around, much more packed than Orchard Road on an extended shopping night, and according to the grand plan of the people who want cars to go with their burgers, there's also going to be a lot more land producing ethanol.

Man, those folks at the UN couldn't have hit it more accurately.

This really is the Year Of The Potato.

The whole scenario sounds end-of-days serious but look at the funny, messy state our world is in right now.

Leaving aside intricate economics, trade barriers, special interests and the politics of madness, here is a Dummy's Guide as far as I can figure it out.

To grow food, we need land for food crops, but that vital real estate is competing for space with fuel crops because the fossil fuels - meaning oil - we've been using is killing our planet, our climate, our health and, worse, our polar bears with less and less ice to cling to.

That's not including the minor fact that so many of the places with that dreaded fossil fuel which has the quality to make sane men go insane are the adversarial sort which gets the temperature of Ms Rice steaming.

Now, usually, rice steaming is a good thing for the world.

It means there's food to eat.

But not all the time though.

Not in the Year Of The Potato.