

**Ministry: GST a must, not an option**

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**By Kow Kwan Yee**

Implementing the Goods and Services Tax (GST) nationwide is a must, not an option, says Finance Ministry secretary-general Mohd Irwan Siregar Abdullah.

Describing this as the ultimate objective of taking care of the country, he said the ministry would try its best to include the plan in the upcoming October Budget to tackle the fiscal deficit.

NONEIrwan (left) revealed that there would be some sort of rebate for individuals and small and medium enterprises (SMEs) to ensure that the GST did not burden the people.

"We (the ministry) have identified a list of zero-rated items like basic necessities such as rice and milk powder," he said.

Mohd Irwan said 14 months were needed for implementation should the GST plan be approved, and the taxes would be charged by 2015 nationwide.

"It's a whole package. We look at the corporate sector, personal income tax and so on... nobody will be left out," he added.

"More details will be announced next Monday after the fiscal committee meeting," he said during a question-and-answer session at a briefing on the Economic Transformation Plan (ETP) at the Securities Commission today.

When later pressed for the proposed percentage of the GST during a press conference, Mohd Irwan refused to reveal the number.

Asked if the government would proceed with the subsidy rationalisation move, Mohd Irwan said this would be done "gradually".

He said the government had pledged to ensure the cut from subsidies would not impact the public.

Stating an example, Mohd Irwan said some people do not deserve to be subsidised, such as those owning five cars.

He added that rationalised subsidy enabled the government to have better savings,

which could be allocated towards public aid.

"More details will be revealed after the fiscal committee," he said.

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