

Coalition to hold rally against GST on May 1 next year
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A coalition of NGOs and political parties will hold a rally next year in Kuala Lumpur to protest against the proposed Goods and Services Tax (GST) during Labour Day on May 1 next year.

The coalition, called Gabungan Bantah GST, will take to the streets of the capital to express their grievances against the taxation system.

"We will mobilise the people to urge the government to call off the implementation of GST.

"This assembly is for the people's rights," said the group's coordinator, E Parameiswary, in a press conference today.

The coalition consists of 18 organisations including NGOs Solidariti Anak Muda Malaysia (SAMM), Asalkan Bukan Umno (ABU) and political parties such as PAS and Party Sosialis Malaysia (PSM).

The coalition will embark on a nationwide roadshow from next month onwards to inform the public about how the GST will hurt their finances and also to rally people for the demonstration.

"We will be giving out leaflets throughout the roadshow. All of this is to create awareness of the negative impact of GST on the people," said Parameiswary.

'People have right to protest'

GST is set to be implemented on April 1, 2015 at a rate of 6 percent. Following this, sales and service tax will be abolished while corporate and personal income tax rates will be reduced slightly.

However, critics pointed out that reducing or abolishing existing taxes will not be enough to offset inflation caused by GST, particularly among the low-income group.

Meanwhile, PSM central committee member Dr Michael Jeyakumar Devaraj criticised the arrest of several individuals linked to the rally organised by Gerakan Turun Harga Kos Sara Hidup's (Turun).

Jeyakumar, who is also the Sungai Siput MP, said the police were attempting to criminalise the entire event based on a handful of flimsy allegations.

"The slew of price hike affects the people and it is their right to protest their problems. The police must be put in the right perspective.

"The police is not meant to protect BN but to protect and serve the public," he said.

Turun's leader Azan Safar was held for 20 hours by the police while several other personalities such as Pandan MP Rafizi Ramli has been hauled for questioning as well.

Turun is rallying the public to attend the demonstration on New Year's Eve at Dataran Merdeka in protest against government policies that have led to an increase in the price of basic necessities.

Rally goers have been urged to gather at the Sogo shopping complex, Central Market and Masjid Jamek. From there, the groups will converge at the Kuala Lumpur City Hall (DBKL) headquarters before proceeding towards Dataran Merdeka.

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