

GST is like antibiotics, says Najib
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Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak today impressed upon civil servants the necessity of the goods and services tax (GST), likening it to antibiotics.

In his monthly address to staff of the Prime Minister's Department, Najib also warned them of certain quarters out to incite hatred against the government over the GST.

"The simple analogy is, when we need antibiotics, we need to take the antibiotics and finish the full course of it.

"When you finish the course, then your health will recover.

"So, in the journey for the country's transformation, we need to swallow the medication and be confident that the outcome will benefit all of us and see a successful nation," Najib told the civil servants gathered in the courtyard of the Prime Minister's Department in Putrajaya.

Najib, in his 18-minute address, added that the country could not focus on short-term benefits at the expense of long-term considerations.

"What we know is the outcome will be to our benefit, but in the short-term, we may face some difficulties because there are quarters out to twist and turn (on GST) or to plant hatred against the government," he said.

'Some appear poor by under-declaring income'

He urged the civil servants to help to explain the policy to the people.

"We need to step up our explanation to the rakyat so that they will truly understand, not just participate without knowing the purpose and basis of the tax," he said.

However, Najib did not specify what "participation" he was referring to.

His remarks come just four days after some 50,000 people hit the streets at Dataran Merdeka to in opposition to the GST.

The prime minister said many people were not paying the taxes they should and the GST would therefore address this problem.

"We hear of stories of people who are supposedly poor but can still send their children

overseas.

"That means they under-declared their income but with the GST, it is progressive and depends on our consumption and purchasing power," he said.

Furthermore, Najib said, the GST was needed to expand the revenue base to help the government to improve and build hospitals and modern infrastructure.

'GST needed to take care of civil servants'

"We also need to take care of the 1.5 million civil servants and this is only possible if we have enough revenue," he said.

Najib insisted that Putrajaya could not adopt a populist approach by putting off the GST, and drew parallels to the Selangor water crisis.

"If in 2009 the Selangor government had accepted the (construction of) the Langat 2 water treatment plant, then there would be no water problems.

"This difficulty could have been avoided had they not looked at short term populism...," he said, noting that many civil servants in the crowd were also affected by the water rationing.

Najib reiterated that 90 percent of the countries in the world had already implemented the GST and Malaysia could not go wrong with a proven policy.