

Under GST, lobsters valued more than human lives?

MalaysiaKini.com

Dec 11, 2014

DAP parliamentarian Charles Santiago today queried whether the value of expensive seafood such as that of lobsters, which are exempted from the goods and services tax (GST), is higher than that of human lives.

"Do lobsters have more dignity than human beings?" he said to Malaysiakini at his service centre in Klang today.

Lobsters are among the luxury goods on the exempt list.

Charles said after the GST is implemented come April next year, the poor and the middle classes will be affected the most, as not all medicines will be exempted or zero-rated under the GST.

"Health is a fundamental right that should not be enjoyed by the rich only.

"By imposing the GST on medicines, the government is going to violate the rights of all Malaysians," he said.

He further pointed out that in the United States, even the upper class could no longer afford private healthcare. Therefore, Malaysia should not go in that direction, he stressed.

As such, although the Health Ministry had said that it had no control over the implementation of the GST, it is the ministry's responsibility to educate the Customs Department that people are not commodities, said Charles (left).

"The government has to exercise pressure on it," he held.

The Customs Department had denied that the GST will cause a sudden rise in medical costs. However, Charles said "nobody buys this".

Meanwhile, the Klang MP said that because Malaysia practises the free market system, the prices of the 10 most used medicines in Malaysia is 30 to 148 percent higher than in Australia.

Prices of medicines are lower in Australia due to drug pricing control and the government subsidies for pharmacies, he explained.

He then suggested that the government follow the Australian model, or that of France, Italy, Germany or Japan.

France and Italy regulate the prices of medicines while Germany and Japan have indirect control through reimbursement under social insurance schemes.

“The government must regulate prices of medicines and implement a price control mechanism,” he further asserted.

Charles also said that a study must be conducted before the GST is implemented to show people why prices will not go up.

“It should not be conducted by the Customs Department of the Health Ministry, rather, by an independent authority,” he said.

Meanwhile the Malaysian Pharmaceutical Society is collecting signatures for a petition to appeal to the government for all medicines to be zero-rated under the GST.

Health Minister S Subramaniam however, had turned down the proposal by the MPS to categorise all medicines as zero-rated items under the GST.

Copyright © 1999-2012 Mkini Dotcom Sdn. Bhd
Source <http://www.malaysiakini.com/news/283187>