

Supermarkets packed with pre-GST shoppers

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With just a few days to go before the Goods and Services Tax (GST) is implemented on April 1, city folks are busy this weekend stocking up on necessities.

A Bernama survey found there was unusual traffic congestion in the city, including Bukit Bintang and Jalan Tuanku Abdul Rahman, as well as large crowds thronging several shopping complexes.

The survey also found that stocks of several necessities like milk powder, sanitary pads, toilet paper and washing powder at some supermarkets had finished due to high demand.

Ewe Cheung Chung, 21, a sales executive at one of the supermarkets said the management had to re-stock the racks at the supermarket every two hours to cater to demand.

"In the past few days, we ran out of stock for several necessities and food, especially cocoa drinks, biscuits and toilet paper because they were selling fast.

"Most of the patrons told me that they were preparing to face GST, so they were buying in bulk," he told Bernama.

Ewe said the supermarket had prepared new labels for certain products a month ago, and they would be displayed on the racks, beginning this Wednesday.

"We have also prepared a list of items that would and would not be charged GST for the convenience of customers. However, it will only be displayed from April 1," he added.

Bulk buyers

Meanwhile, private sector employee Chong Meng Mei, 34, said she had to queue up in long lines at supermarket payment counters in the past few days because it was full of customers buying items in bulk.

"I had to queue up for almost an hour before it was my turn to pay because many customers were pushing trolleys full of necessities, with some even paying for three trolleys full.

"To avoid the crush of crowd at the supermarket, I had re-stocked on necessary items like canned food and washing powder at other supermarkets since a week ago, worth about RM500," she said.

A clerk, Chan Poh Ling, 43, was of the opinion that the price hike due to GST was only temporary because she was confident the government would make re-adjustments after that.

"For example, necessary items like baby diapers and sanitary pads, maybe now they will be a little expensive after the implementation of GST but after that, perhaps the government will make price adjustments after taking into consideration public feedback on GST," she said.

Operations staff Suhaiza Othman, 50, said she had made a checklist of things to buy, including those that would be charged with GST, and had started slowly stocking up on the items in the past few days.

"Everyone should start planning financially, especially when GST is implemented because GST can make us aware of spending more wisely," she added.

The implementation of GST at the rate of six per cent from April 1 is set to replace the Sales and Services Tax which is rated an overall 16 per cent.

- Bernama

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