

## **MP: 'GST police' must end harassment, help traders**

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The government has been urged to end "hostile" inspections of small businesses for GST infringements and instead take a more friendly approach.

Kluang MP Liew Chin Tong in a statement today said he has received complaints from traders that Customs officers have been "harassing" them over the new tax effective April 1.

"In my visits to shops in Kluang, Johor this morning, small businesses complained of hostile inspections with an intention to find fault by Customs enforcement officers.

"In Sabah, DAP assemblyman for Likas, Junz Wong, informed me of raids by Customs officers at 1am on April 1 on several eateries in Lintas, Kota Kinabalu.

"It just borders on ridiculous," said Liew.

He said the government should instead take a gentler approach to help small businesses adapt to the new tax.

"I call on Finance Minister Najib Razak to instruct the Customs Department to halt all enforcement activities and focus on hand-holding small businesses to adapt to GST collections," he said.

### **'Gov't partly to blame'**

Liew said part of the problem traders are facing is the confusion caused by changes in the exemption list.

Most businesses had based their pricing on the Customs list published on January 2 and the amendment on March 27, just four days away from implementation, had caused difficulties, he reasoned.

"This last-minute change causes so much difficulties. Even for this reason alone, the Finance Ministry should have halted any enforcement activities until the dust settles.

"Even big corporation like 7-Eleven made a mistake by charging newspaper GST which goes to show that small businesses need hand-holding, not aggressive raids," he said.

The DAP parliamentarian said the government itself was guilty for "perpetuating myths" that GST implementation would result in a fall in the prices of goods, and that any increases would be attributed to profiteering.

"A simple fact that most Malaysians knew by now is that GST will push up costs on all

fronts as even insurance premium now requires payment of GST.

"But armed with this 'profiteering businesses' narrative, Customs officers have been busy harassing small businesses since April 1. This must stop.

"The Finance Ministry and the Customs are culprits themselves in this national mess of GST implementation," said Liew.

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