'GST neither discouraged nor encouraged'
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The National Fatwa Council has once again declared that it is 'harus' (neither discouraged nor encouraged) for the government to collect the goods and services tax (GST).

Its chairperson Abd Shukor Husin said the council did not deny that there were less fortunate people in the country and as such pointed out that the collection of tax would help the poor.

"We have studied differing views of scholars, therefore we say that collecting the GST is 'harus' on several conditions," Shukor (left) said in a press conference today.

Among the conditions are that the government must be committed in upholding Islamic syariat, in need of financial resources and the taxes must be spent for the public good and not on vices.

Meanwhile, Abd Shukor said it was up to the government in terms of setting the GST rate.

"Whether it should be lowered from six percent to four percent, give them a chance first. They must have had a basis for coming up with the six percent tax," he said.

When asked on the view that the GST was not needed if the country experienced less financial leakages, as evidenced in various auditor-general's reports, Abd Shukor said they took into account all views.

Reiterating that the government should be given time in relation to the implementation of the new tax system, Abd Shukor however admitted that the Fatwa Council had no power to force the government to follow its suggestions.

"Give it time, maybe a year, then we will see the effects of the GST. As for its implementation, we ask that the government do as what we have decided upon (based on the conditions). But we do not have the power to enforce," he said.

Meanwhile, on Federal Territories mufti Zulkifli Mohamad's (left) proposal that zakat-paying Muslims be exempted from paying the GST, Abd Shukor said that was merely his personal opinion.

"I, too, have a personal opinion, but I prefer not to share it as some might regard it as a fatwa (edict)," said the Fatwa Council chairperson.

Zulkifli, in a Facebook posting last Friday, had urged for the six percent tax be either reduced or abolished for those paying 'zakat' (tithe or Islamic tax).

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