

Ahmad Maslan turns hero in Dewan Rakyat

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Deputy Finance Minister Ahmad Maslan has described himself as Malaysia's most hated man for touting the benefits of the Goods and Services Tax.

But his stand that telecommunication companies should just absorb GST for mobile prepaid top-up cards has made him a hero in the Dewan Rakyat.

Among those agreeing with him was his arch-nemesis Tony Pua (DAP-Petaling Jaya Utara) who said he actually agreed with the deputy minister on the matter.

“This time I agree with Pontian (Ahmad) [...] before this (the telco's absorbed) the Sales and Services Tax so why can't they do this now with the GST?” he asked Communication and Multimedia Minister Ahmad Shabery Cheek.

Ahmad, who was in the House at the time, did not respond.

Meanwhile Johari Abdul Ghani (BN-Titiwangsa) echoed Pua's question.

“The government said if telcos absorb GST, then operators would incur opportunity losses of RM800 million.

“If they absorbed RM800 million (for SST) before, now they should be absorbing RM800 million (for GST) too.

“Unless they were not telling the truth before,” he said.

Wrong message sent

In response Shabery (photo) said he was not defending the telcos but did not want to send the wrong signal to other companies.

“GST should not be borne by companies. GST is a consumption tax. [...] this is not the signal we should send to the business community.

“We should not say to the international community that when doing business in Malaysia, they have to absorb GST,” he said.

Instead he said, what should be done is for companies to lower their charges so as to not profiteer.

In the case of telcos, he said, they should lower their tariffs so that users will get the same amount of usage out of each top-up as they did before GST was introduced.

Last week, Shabery announced that GST will not be charged for the purchase of top-ups but they will instead be charged on usage.

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