

## **'PM hypocrite for blaming price hikes on traders'**

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Petaling Jaya Utara MP Tony Pua has called Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak a "hypocrite" for trying to lay blame solely on traders for price hikes following the implementation of the Goods and Services Tax (GST).

Pua (right) said while traders have become Putrajaya's target to deflect heavy criticism over the controversial tax, the government has given a very different treatment to the telecommunication industry.

He pointed out that Putrajaya endorsed the collusion by telecommunication giants to impose the six percent tax on prepaid card users even though they had previously absorbed the cost under the now abolished Sales and Services Tax (SST).

"Why is the BN government helping these highly profitable companies make an additional estimated RM770 million in profits?"

"While the Ministry of Domestic Trade, (Cooperatives and Consumerism) attempts to punish the restaurants raising the prices of roti canai by 30 sen, the Najib government embraces the RM770 million windfall profits for the mobile telcos.

" There can be no bigger unscrupulous profiteering exercise in the country today as a result of the GST implementation, and Najib chooses to be a blatant hypocrite to fully endorse the burden to be placed on the man-on-the-street," said Pua in a statement today.

Prepaid users now only receive RM9.43 worth of call services for the RM10 they pay, as the result of huge public outcry following the initial increase in price of the cards at RM10.06 including GST.

Prior to GST, a same rate of six percent was imposed as SST but this had been absorbed by the telcos.

### **Najib: Get angry at traders, not me**

Pua was responding to Najib who yesterday deflected anger at the government for price hikes following the implementation of GST, blaming it instead on traders and calling them "evil".

"The GST issue is caused by traders, these traders are evil, they are not responsible, not the government, we have other policies.

"When traders exploit the situation, the people blame the government and prime minister.

"If want to be angry, get angry with the traders, they must be blamed because they do not

have compassion to think about the people's interest," he was quoted saying.

Pua said Pakatan Rakyat had long warned that the price of goods would go up with GST implementation and criticised the government for dismissing simple economic facts and thinking it could defy gravity.

"It is hence no surprise that the prime minister, who is also the finance minister, looks like a complete fool today.

"What is even more galling is the sheer hypocrisy of the attempt to shift the blame on the petty traders when it is his administration which is endorsing the single biggest profiteering exercise by the multi-billion ringgit telecommunications industry," he said.

Last Wednesday, Communications and Multimedia Minister Ahmad Shabery Cheek said it would be "unfair" to force telcos to absorb GST as it would send wrong signals to potential investors.

However, he said his ministry was looking at asking telcos to reduce their rates so that users can get more value for their money.

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