

Budget 2011: Seven major issues to be deliberated
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A series of focus group meetings are being held by the Finance Ministry to gather inputs for Budget 2011 to be tabled by Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak in Parliament on Oct 15.

As of yesterday, three focus groups' discussions on private investment, innovation and services sector have been concluded, said Second Finance Minister Ahmad Husni Hanadzlah.

"We've identified the topics for discussions. We aim to conclude the discussions by this month," he told reporters on the sidelines of the National Tax Conference 2010 in Kuala Lumpur today.

The remaining seven topics to be discussed are Human Capital for the New Economy; Enhancing Quality of Private and Public Service Delivery; Green Technology for Sustainable Growth; Income Generation for the Poor; Addressing Social Issues through Gender Budgeting; Inclusive Development; and Strengthening Small, Medium and Micro Enterprises.

Ahmad Husni said the meetings provide a forum for a select group from industries associations, professional bodies and non-governmental organisations to provide suggestions for government consideration.

"Further discussions are needed to accelerate private investments. We have had discussions on private investments, but we need another forum to invite people from different groups," he said.

On Goods and Services Tax (GST) implementation, Ahmad Husni said the government has not set a definite timeframe to impose the tax.

"It will depend on the consultation with the people to make sure they understand (the rationale to enforce the tax).

"The GST implementation will also depend on the cabinet's decision. However, implementation in 2011 may be off.

"We've engagements with the people on this matter. The government is thinking of the people's welfare.

"The GST is not a new taxation system. With the GST in force, sales and services tax at between five and 10 per cent now, will be reduced to four per cent," he added.