

Gov't says no to GST referendum
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Hazlan Zakaria

Minister in the Prime Minister Department Nazri Abdul Aziz today shot down calls for a referendum on the controversial Goods and Services Tax (GST) Bill.

"Referendum is not the way to solve this issue, that is what the parliament is for," he told reporters at the Parliament lobby today.

"If you want to ask the rakyat (for their opinion), you take the matter to Parliament. We are the their representatives."

parliament gobind singh ban over nazri mistake 251108 04The de facto law minister warned that if the government allowed a referendum on the GST, it would open the floodgates for referendums on other matters.

Parti Sosialis Malaysia (PSM) had called on the government to hold a referendum on the GST, as was done in Australia in 1999.

On the government decision to postpone the tabling of the GST bill, Nazri said the government needed more time to source public feedback.

"As our prime minister said before, the age of the government knowing all is over. Now we will consult and engage the rakyat in what we do."

He said there are ongoing dialogues with stakeholders and more consultations being planned to garner feedback.

During the question and answer session in the Dewan Rakyat, Second Finance Minister Ahmad Husni Hanadzlah denied opposition claims that they had stymied the government's GST plans.

"This has nothing to do with the opposition... we are giving people the priority, we want to hear their views on the matter."

Nazri welcomes independent caucus

In another development, Nazri welcomed the proposed independent caucus mooted by Bayan Baru MP Zahrain Hashim.

"If they think that it would help coordinate their performance in parliament, I welcome them," he said.

He admitted that such a grouping could be formidable and play an important part in any decision requiring two-thirds majority.

"Seven is a force to be reckoned with, they have the numbers. This can be very important when there is a constitutional amendment for instance."

Yesterday saw four new independents - Zahrain, Tan Tee Beng (Nibong Tebal), Mohsin Samsuri (Bagan Serai) and Zulkifli Noordin (Kulim Bandar Baru) - joining the opposition

bench.

Previously, there is only one independent Parliamentarian Ibrahim Ali (Pasir Mas), who is seated with two MPs from Sabah Progressive Party (Sapp), which is independent from Barisan Nasional and Pakatan Rakyat.

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