

DR M: GST MAY BE REINTRODUCED

A study will be conducted to see if it is better than SST, as claimed by people, says PM

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THE government will consider bringing back the Goods and Services Tax (GST) if the people want it.

Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad said a study would be conducted to find out if GST was better than the Sales and Services Tax (SST), as perceived by many.

"If that is what the people want, we will look into it," he said after the launch of the Security and Public Order Policy here.

The Malaysian Institute of Economic Research had called for the government to reintroduce the GST in the 2020 Budget due to be tabled in Parliament on Oct 11, but at a lower rate of three percent.

Its chairman, Tan Sri Kamal Salih, reportedly described the GST as a tax regime that was fair to the people, adding that the system had kept the government afloat when the crude oil price declined to below US\$36 per barrel in 2015.

He said he was against the idea of abolishing the GST and replacing it with the SST, when the Pakatan Harapan government took over last year.

He justified that no matter how one expanded the SST to different sectors or how the enforcement was done, it would not be enough to match whatever (income) that had been produced by the GST.

Asked if the 2020 Budget could include the GST should the government agree to bring it back, Dr

Mahathir replied that it was very unlikely.

"For the upcoming budget. It is a bit difficult (to include it)."

On another note, Dr Mahathir said he would keep National Unity and Social Wellbeing Minister P. Waytha Moorthy in his cabinet. I don't have any problem with him."

On Aug 22, Dr Mahathir reportedly said there might be a minor change in cabinet portfolios soon instead of a reshuffle.

Waytha Moorthy had said he would leave it to Dr Mahathir to decide on his position in the cabinet.

There have been growing calls for him to quit following what was perceived as his failure to contain interracial tensions surrounding the riot at the Sri Maha Mariamman Temple in Subang Jaya last year, which led to the death of fireman Muhammad Adib Mohd Kassim.

On calls to speed up the transition plan between him and PKR president Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim. Dr Mahathir said there had been no new development on that.

"We have not discussed it. We have to study the situation first before deciding on a specific date (for the transition plan). If work is only half done or not done, *susah lah* (it will be tough)."

PKR Advisory Council member Syed Husin Ali had said a delayed handover between Dr Mahathir and Anwar would "destroy" Pakatan Harapan.

He said the PH coalition had agreed to have Anwar replacing Dr Mahathir as soon as the PKR president was pardoned.

He branded Dr Mahathir "unreliable" for not keeping his promises.

Youth and Sports Minister Syed Saddiq Syed Abdul Rahman had hit back at Syed Husin for his "Irresponsible and misleading" statements about Dr Mahathir, calling him "transition-obsessed".

"If that is what the people want, we will look into it."

TUN DR MAHATHIR MOHAMAD
Prime minister