

PM: Inflation still manageable and low

KUALA LUMPUR: The expansion in the Sales and Service Tax (SST) rate from 6% to 8% since March 1 this year had little impact on inflation, with an estimated 0.2% point increase, says Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

The Prime Minister said this is because the policy change only involves service tax, while sales tax remains within the existing scope and tax rate.

The scope of service tax is narrow, affecting only 41% of the total array of services within the economy.

He stated that the increase in SST did not have a significant impact on inflation following the increase from 6% to 8%.

"Expenses for food and beverages and telecommunications have not increased and remain at 6%. Expenses for utilities such as water and petrol remain untaxed (by SST).

"The government has also taken steps to reduce the incidence of double taxation, such as in the logistics sector.

"I agree that there is inflation. If it's around 0.2%, it's still manageable and still low. That's why we're trying to help by increasing

the Rahmah Cash Aid (STR)," he said during the Ministers' Question Time at the Dewan Rakyat yesterday.

Anwar was responding to Paya Besar MP Datuk Mohd Shahril Abdullah (BN-Paya Besar), who enquired about the impact of the SST increase on the cost of living and production costs for industries, as well as the additional revenue collection from the implementation of all new taxes for 2024.

Anwar, who is also the Finance Minister, pointed out that the government was assisting people by adding STR. The amount has already reached a total of RM10bil this year.

In Cyberjaya, Anwar said the nation has a shortfall of some 12,000 cybersecurity personnel to help fight the growing threat of cyber attacks.

The Prime Minister revealed this when launching the Cybersecurity Centre of Excellence (CCoE) in collaboration with BlackBerry to fortify cybersecurity and ensure data sovereignty for the country.

"We commend BlackBerry for helping to upskill our next gener-



Making an impact: Anwar and Fahmi (fourth from left) attending the grand opening ceremony of the CCoE in Cyberjaya. - MUHAMAD SHAHRIL ROSLI/The Star

ation of cyber-defenders, accelerating our goal to bolster national and regional security and innovation.

"We need 25,000 workers in cybersecurity by 2025," he said in his speech when launching the CCoE here yesterday.

Anwar described the setting up of the CCoE as a milestone towards creating a robust cybersecurity ecosystem while forging stronger partnerships between the public and private sectors.

"Through this strategic collaboration, we not only stimulate economic advancement and prosperity but also bolster the

resilience of our cybersecurity infrastructure against the risks that pervade the digital landscape, by keeping the nation's data, conversations, and citizens safe," he said.

On the nation's 5G rollout, Anwar said that as of February this year, Malaysia has reached 80.3% coverage in populated areas, and Internet coverage has reached 97.07% in populated areas.

He said communications connectivity will continue to accelerate digital transformation in the country.

The Prime Minister also took

the opportunity to congratulate the graduates of the first cohort of upskilled cyber defenders, trained by the SANS Institute and BlackBerry.

Meanwhile, Communications Minister Fahmi Fadzil said the setting up of the CCoE is the realisation of the agreement inked between Malaysia and Canada during the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (Apec) forum in San Francisco, United States, last November.

He said the centre will begin with entry-level training and introduce cybersecurity training for professionals by next year.