

**You don't understand GST, so don't protest, says deputy finance minister**  
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**BY LEE SHI-IAN**

Putrajaya today ticked off the thousands of Malaysians who had protested on Labour Day against the Goods and Services Tax (GST), saying they did not understand the consumption tax and should not take to the streets.

"Not many people understand the Goods and Services Tax (GST). If you do not understand, do not march on the streets, do not protest and say GST is no good."

"Both the GST and hudud are similar, people just need to learn about it to accept it," Deputy Finance Minister Datuk Ahmad Maslan (pic) told a forum on GST today in Kuala Lumpur.

On May 1, thousands of Malaysians gathered near Dataran Merdeka in Kuala Lumpur to voice opposition against GST, which takes effect in April next year.

Despite the protest, Ahmad told the forum Putrajaya was going ahead with the tax.

"We have a RM250 million budget to educate the public about the GST and to facilitate its implementation," Ahmad said.

He told the forum that the GST was an idea floated in 1983 and had remained firmly in the thoughts of the government.

"Hudud is more than 20 years old but is still mired in controversy," Ahmad said, adding that people who read books will understand the Islamic law in a day.

"It is the same with GST, you can understand it in an hour. If you do not get the relevant information about the issue, you will not understand GST even until 2020," he said.

He advised the public to visit the two official government websites to learn and understand GST instead of believing "lies".

"Unlike hudud, the GST has already been passed by both Dewan Rakyat and Dewan Negara in Parliament.

Tens of thousands gathered in Kuala Lumpur on May 1 to protest the GST. – The Malaysian Insider pic, May 15, 2014. Tens of thousands gathered in Kuala Lumpur on May 1 to protest the GST. – The Malaysian Insider pic, May 15, 2014. "There is no turning back now, we just need to educate the public," Ahmad said.

He pointed out that 160 countries around the world have already implemented GST.

"Surely their finance ministers are not that ignorant? Their economies did not collapse after GST was implemented," Ahmad said.

He revealed that Malaysian government officials had visited South Korea in 1983 to learn about the GST.

"It had also been mooted in Malaysia back in 1992 when Tun Daim Zainuddin was the Finance Minister," he said.

Ahmad repeated what Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak had said, that the GST would help make Malaysia's economy open and competitive.

"The traditional walls of tariffs and import duties have been broken down by the multitude of free trade agreements introduced around the world," Ahmad said.

"Malaysia has also signed free trade agreements, but the resulting loss of revenue to the Treasury must be replenished."

"This is why the GST is so imperative for Malaysia," Ahmad added. – May 15, 2014.

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