

GST forces Chinese shop to close after 74 years

The Malaysian Insider

March 30, 2015

By Looi Sue-Chern

Yew Chian Hooi's Chinese medicine shop 'Ban Swee Choon' in Bukit Mertajam is opening tomorrow for the last time after 74 years in business.

It will be closed for good come Wednesday, the day the goods and services tax (GST) begins implementation.

The shop was founded by Yew's late father in 1941 and survived the second World War, the Japanese occupation and years of ups and downs. The GST is the last straw for the 75-year-old.

Yew said he did not support the government's move to implement the GST because he was not convinced that it was a good thing.

"I have over a hundred types of Chinese medicines and herbs in my shop. Can you imagine how difficult it would be to translate all the names of the herbs and medicines into English and Malay?"

"I would have to do that if I want to register my business for GST. Even if I can accomplish that, I still have to figure out which item is exempted from the tax and which is not.

"Even such matters are not entirely clear to everyone yet. I doubt even the prime minister can tell us everything there is to know about the tax. It will be a headache," Yew told reporters at his shop this afternoon on Jalan Danby, Penang.

Due to the uncertainties, Yew said he decided late last year to give up the business, even though he felt sad letting it go after so many years.

Asked if he thought about getting professional help to get things in order, he said he never considered it since he had already decided to close shop.

Yew, a degree holder from Nanyang University in Singapore, said if it was as simple as hiring help, he could have done the work to sort things out himself.

He said even his four daughters, including one who was an accountant, were supportive of his decision to close shop.

"The accountant clapped her hands when I told them. She said I had made the right decision. Even she said that, and she did not tell me to get professional help to keep the business.

"I know as children, they would rather have their mother and father, who are advanced in years, relax at home than run the business... if not for the GST, I would

keep the shop going for a few more years," he said.

Asked what they were planning to do once the shop was closed, Yew's wife Chin Meow Leng, 72, joked: "I look at him, he looks at me."

Yew said he and his wife would retire, and they might plan a visit to Fujian, China – the home of his ancestors – and catch up on his reading.

The shop is one of several small and old businesses in Penang that are closing down because of the GST. Earlier this month, Chief Minister Lim Guan Eng had highlighted two other cases – a grocery store in Air Itam and a sundry shop in George Town on the island.

Lim said the situation with the GST was very real for those operating small businesses, pointing at the empty shelves in Yew's shop.

He questioned Putrajaya whether it had thought about how the GST would affect small traditional businesses like Yew's, which still used the abacus and the old weighing system for the herbs.

"I want to ask the ministers if they thought about the outcome and the impact the tax will have on the people.

"This is not just talk. It is very real," he said, adding that the national Chinese Chambers of Commerce had also reported that their members were pessimistic about the business outlook because of the GST.

"This is why we had always argued that we will need two years to get ready and to familiarise with the new tax.

"But the government is pushing ahead and taxing at 6% right from the start. Only the federal government has to gain from this."

With just a day more before GST hits, Lim again urged Putrajaya to at least postpone the implementation of the tax, if it would not scrap it. – March 30, 2015.

Copyright © 2015 Edge Insider Sdn Bhd

Source:

<http://www.themalaysianinsider.com/malaysia/article/gst-forces-chinese-shop-to-close-after-74-years>