

Anxious families hit the stores ahead of GST
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Confusion as to which items will be affected by the goods and services tax (GST) has led many to decide to play safe by stocking up on items they expect would be costlier from tomorrow.

Checks by The Malaysian Insider show that many of them are from families with young children, who stock up on essentials like diapers, milk and baby food.

Mother of two, Azarina Mat Shaari, 37, bought three months' worth of items that her children would need.

"I normally shop once a month for items we need at home and for the kids but since GST is coming, my husband and I are stocking up.

"We are stocking up on things the kids need, like milk, food and diapers. But we can only buy so much. Once we finish the three months' worth of supplies, we have to face the GST," she said, adding that she and her family spent RM400 a month to buy household necessities.

Huzalina Hussein, 39, said she was stocking up for just a month.

"Usually I buy what I need to last only two weeks, but now I am buying a month's supply. After that, I have to face the GST," said the mother of three.

Cashier Anusha Dewi, 22, and her family of eight were also stocking up for a month.

"We usually get two weeks' worth of supplies but we are buying more this time. We are mostly buying food items," she said.

IT technician Mohd Faizi Dollah, 30, said he was willing to spend more now because he did not want to miss out on the pre-GST sales and promotions.

"Who knows how things will be after Wednesday? The prices are not going to be the same. There are also a lot of promotions, so I rather make the most of the deals now," he said.

However, some families have decided not to stock up on household items because they said they would still have to face the GST when their supplies run out.

Taxi driver S. Ragupathy, 40, who has two school-going children, said he was buying more food items than usual but not stocking up on other household items.

"I am buying more food this time. I only buy household items once a month. You can't do anything about the GST. It is coming no matter what," he said.

Factory manager Foong Hoong Khoon, 60, said he and his wife had decided not to buy additional items as what they needed most were food items.

"What we usually buy are things for the kitchen. With or without the GST, (the price) is the same.

"We also don't need much. We have three adult children and only one still stays with us," he said, adding that they spend between RM50 and RM200 a week on household necessities.

Foong admitted being confused about the GST, and his wife had been trying to find out what items were exempted from the new consumption tax.

"I think many people are unsure too. I think the government should not impose GST on all goods, but only on high-end items.

"Yes, it may have been implemented for a long time overseas but it is causing panic among consumers here," he said, adding that his family was planning to cut down on dining out and entertainment.

Another shopper P. Alagan (pic, right), 57, said he too was confused about the GST and wondered if there would be labels to inform consumers what items were GST-free and what were not.

"They say sugar is not taxed under the GST but there is no label to show yet. So we are not very sure.

"My family is not going to spend a lot to stock up now. Even if we do, the supplies will still run out eventually. We will still have to buy after GST," said the self-employed man.

A shopper who wanted to be known only as Melissa said there was little reason to stock up for her house before the GST hits.

"I live with my mother. It is just the two of us so we don't really need to buy a lot. Not everything will be taxed although I am not sure what are the items," she said.

Civil servant Abdul Razak Abu Bakar, 49, said there was no need to rush and stock up "because life is long".

"It's not like we will only live for another few months," he said, adding that items at supermarkets were relatively expensive.

"When things are expensive, we just have to look for cheaper alternatives," he said.

Putrajaya is imposing the GST beginning tomorrow in a move strongly opposed by the opposition who said it was burdening the people financially.

Former prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad has also warned that support for the government would decrease if people were burdened with too many taxes. – March 31, 2015.

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