

**Traders Exploit GST, Burdens People - Najib
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GOPENG, May 23 (Bernama) -- The action of some traders who exploited the Goods and Services Tax (GST) has burdened the people when the tax system was implemented last April 1, said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak.

He said the traders should have reduced the prices after the Sales and Services Tax (SST) was abolished but they did not do so and instead took the opportunity to raise prices by six per cent using the GST as an excuse.

"The GST issue is caused by traders, these traders are evil, they are not responsible, not the government, we have other policies.

"When traders exploit the situation, the people blame the government and prime minister.

"Everyone want to step on my head even though my heart's intention is to strengthen the country's finance and people's welfare," he said when speaking in front of over 20,000 people during a working visit to the Gopeng Rural Transformation Centre (RTC) here Saturday.

"We have abolished SST of 10, five per cent, some people do not know about SST before, the problem (abolition) is, it should have reduced prices but another six per cent is added, this is the cause.

"If want to be angry, get angry with the traders, they must be blamed because they do not have compassion to think about the people's interest," he said.

The prime minister said through the GST system, the country's revenue will increase and many aid could be channeled to the people, including from the aspects of infrastructure and people's needs.

"If BR1M (1Malaysia People's Aid) needs to be increased, I can do so, if roads need to be increased, I can do so, if government employees want to have additional bonus and pension, it can be considered," he said, adding that the government could do these on condition there were financial sources.

Hence, Najib asked the relevant authorities to intensify enforcement and act more firmly to take errant traders to court.

"Sue them (traders), consumers please inform us their offences so that we can take action," he said.

Najib said the government had expected such kind of problems to occur when the GST was implemented in the country.

As such, he said the government took steps to raise the BR1M aid from RM650 to RM950.

He said GST related issues were expected to be settled within a period of one year.

"I will table to the people every ringgit of the country's additional revenue related to GDT for the public's knowledge.

The prime minister also denied allegations that the BR1M disbursement had made the recipients more lazy but said it helped to ease the burden of the low income group.

"The disbursement is not to make people lazy or addicted but if they receive BR1M, they can buy rice and their children's milk and school uniform.

"The people need assistance and with this RM950, many things can be done if spend wisely. There is nothing wrong to give BR1M because developed countries also have such a system," he said.

Najib said the BR1M disbursement was aimed at increasing the consumers' power, which in turn profited the traders and caused the local economy to grow.

He said the government abolished the oil subsidy, namely bulk subsidy that was more favourable to the rich and the BR1M disbursement was a targeted subsidy that gave attention to the poor and needy.

"The opposition also get (BR1M), sometimes they are the first to ask, but never mind, support or not, that is another question because the government is responsible to help the people who need assistance," he said.

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