

Najib booed after mentioning GST at Kuching Labour Day celebration
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Oleh Desmond Davidson

Datuk Seri Najib Razak received a wave of boos at the national-level Labour Day celebration at the Borneo Convention Centre in Kuching, Sarawak today after saying that the goods and services tax (GST) was not designed to burden the people.

The noise came from some of the workers who were at the back of the hall. They were believed to be unhappy over Putrajaya's introduction of the 6% consumption tax.

Earlier, the prime minister said that the government could consider using some of the revenue from GST to increase the salaries of the public sector.

Continuing with his address, Najib said that the burden currently experienced by the people was due to profiteering activities.

He called on the relevant authorities to come down hard on the profiteers and unscrupulous traders who manipulated the GST for their own extra financial gains.

Najib received thunderous applause, however, when he spoke on Sarawak Chief Minister Tan Sri Adenan Satem's decision to abolish tolls on two bridges and reduce the electricity tariff on commercial and industrial consumers in Sarawak.

Last Wednesday, Adenan said that the new tariff would see half of the 85,200 commercial consumers, or around 46,000 shophouses, retail shops and commercial blocks, enjoy a reduction of about 15% to 50% while another 36%, or 30,500, would enjoy a reduction of between 8% and 11%.

The 5,000-strong crowd reacted with loud claps.

Najib added that Adenan's decision was a clear example of what Barisan Nasional was all about: a caring government.

"We sincerely want to increase the welfare of workers including those in the public sector," he said.

Therefore, Najib said, Cuepacs need not be worried as he was "responsive to Cuepacs's demands", referring to the request for a 35% increment for lower-income civil servants to meet the rising cost of living.

The prime minister at the celebration also disclosed a proposal for a national unemployment benefit scheme to provide some financial security for workers who had lost their jobs.

Although declining to further elaborate, Najib said he could reveal that the scheme could see laid off workers getting financial protection for up to six months. – May 1,

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