

**GST main issue among Permatang Pauh voters**  
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**By Ista Kyra Sharmugam**

The number one issue playing on the minds of voters in Permatang Pauh, be it government or opposition supporters, is Putrajaya's controversial goods and services tax (GST).

Ask a voter here what are the issues important to them, and the first thing he or she would say is GST.

The complaints ranged from how the consumption tax was being used to jack up prices of goods and services even though, in the case of restaurants, some items were exempted from GST.

Some said that profiteering flourished as authorities were not doing enough to monitor sundry shops and restaurants.

Retired civil servant, Abu Bakar Rejab, 67, is an ardent Barisan Nasional (BN) supporter but complains that GST has inflated his monthly prepaid phone bill.

"They are selling mobile top ups 60 sen extra now.

"Raising it by 60 sen at once definitely makes people like me feel the pinch.

"After all, the phone is an important tool of communication these days," he said.

The voter from Kampung Permatang Ara, which falls under the Permatang Pasir state seat, said that making official complaints did little to improve the situation.

He instead, expressed hope for the authorities to beef up enforcement against profiteering in the villages.

"The government needs to make more frequent spot checks.

"What is happening now is that whenever enforcement showed up, the shops bring down their prices but the moment the authorities leave, they go back to charging extra," he said when met in his village today.

The man, who was nearing his 70s, said that he would still cast his vote for BN as he felt that the Pakatan Rakyat (PR) leaders in his constituency had failed to bring about much change.

"This place has been the same and not seen any developments for more than 10 years.

"I don't even know how to find the assemblyman in charge of this area.

"I will vote BN because the government has helped me in getting study loans for my children," he said.

Fishmonger, Sabri Ahmad, 62, said that he found it unacceptable for restaurants to raise prices of roti canai and tea, when ingredients of the food, flour and sugar, were exempt from GST.

"I went to the mamak shop recently and the price of tea without milk was RM1.70 and roti canai RM1.80, when previously it was only RM1.10 and RM1 or only 80 sen.

"Enforcement is not strong here and that is the biggest problem," he said, although he refused to say how he would vote.

When asked if he followed the news of political differences within BN or PR, he said he took little interest but had heard of former prime minister, Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad's criticism of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak.

"Their differences make little difference to me. My main concern is how to put food on the table for my family as well as the financial future of my children," he said.

Another fishmonger from Kampung Permatang Pasir, Mohd Nazir Ismail, 53, said that his vote was for PR as he believed voting for BN meant agreeing with GST.

"I have advised my three children, who are just entering adulthood, to hold on first before buying a car.

"With GST now, they have to be satisfied with going around on motorcycles instead of cars."

Nazir said that he frequently kept up to date on politic news and was not deterred from supporting PR despite the clashes between PAS and DAP.

"I'm voting for them because I do not support GST. Once the by-election is over then I hope they can solve their internal rifts."

He added that his children, who were working outstation, would be returning home to vote in the parliamentary by-election.

Retired salesman, who only wanted to be known as Ong, 55, said that his support was also for PR due to the GST implementation.

He said that he was also concerned with the news reports on 1Malaysia Development Berhad and several other disturbing news over the years such as the death of political aide, Teoh Beng Hock and the gruesome murder of Mongolian woman Altantunya Shaariibuu.

"Even Dr Mahathir was talking about this issue, which means these issues are very

serious," he said.

Another resident, who gave his name only as Teh, said that he was unhappy that GST was implemented but salaries were not raised.

"My son who recently had a baby is struggling financially because everything from diapers to milk powder is under GST.

He, however, said that he planned not to vote on May 7 despite being registered in the constituency.

"What difference will it make? Not that the GST will be abolished," he said. – April 27, 2015.

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