

Wan Azizah goes shopping to make a point about GST
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By Looi Sue-Chern

PKR president Datuk Seri Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail, who is Pakatan Rakyat's candidate for the Permatang Pauh by-election, took her campaign to a mini mart in Penanti to make a point about the goods and services tax (GST).

She spent about 30 minutes walking from aisle to aisle at the Jimat mini mart, looking at food and household items such as canned sardines, instant noodles and women's sanitary pads that are subjected to GST.

After cashing out the items she bought, which included various food stuff, household items and baby items, she told pressmen that for necessities over RM200, a family would have to pay RM11.23 for GST.

"I have many children and grandchildren too. I also go shopping for household items often. The GST will burden the people, especially the poor every time they need to buy their household items.

"If wealthy people like Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad complains about the GST, then what about the ordinary citizens?" she said, in reference to the former prime minister's criticism against implementation of the consumption tax by the present administration under Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak.

Dr Wan Azizah said the GST was unfair to those in the low-income group, rubbishing claims that now everyone had to pay tax, adding that the people were being forced to pay for Putrajaya's mismanagement of the economy.

She said when her husband Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim was deputy prime minister and finance minister in the 1990s until he was sacked in 1998, the national budget recorded surpluses.

"Now we see a deficit budget recorded every year. The nation's debt has hit a critical level," she said.

Asked if the GST was giving her an advantage in the by-election, Dr Wan Azizah said PR could also win on many other issues.

"There are more issues than the GST... like 'beli jet dan cuci rambut' (buying jet and washing or styling hair)," she said.

PKR's campaign is going with the tagline: "Demi Rakyat: Bantah GST, Tegakkan Keadilan" (For the people: oppose GST, uphold Justice) in its campaign. The GST is the Pakatan Rakyat coalition's number one issue.

PKR strategy director Sim Tze Tzin said the coalition had found the issue to be the

main concern of the people during their house-to-house visits around the Permatang Pau constituency so far.

He said what was amazing was they found that Barisan Nasional supporters were also concerned about GST, not only PR supporters and fence-sitters.

Meanwhile, BN leader Datuk Dr Wee Ka Siong said the opposition was taking advantage of the situation and confusing the people.

The Minister in the Prime Minister's Department said there was a difference between the real impact of the GST and the actions of unscrupulous traders hiking up their prices.

He said it was true that Putrajaya must step up on its enforcement exercise but both sides of the political divide should also be united in standing up against irresponsible and profiteering traders.

"The people cannot just blame the government whenever a trader hikes up his prices. It cannot be simply the government's fault.

"If wantan mee is up RM1 or so, do you just blame the government? Flour is zero-rated but washing liquid is not, so that is another issue. Traders must explain if they hike up their prices beyond what is reasonable," he told reporters during a walkabout this morning at the Sama Gagah market, where he campaigned for BN's candidate Suhaimi Sabudin.

The MCA deputy president said the objective of the federal government was still to ensure the people do not suffer and that out of over 170 countries implementing GST, Malaysia was among the more caring ones with many items categorised as zero-rated. – April 28, 2015.

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