

Guan Eng maintains RM18-bln GST funds 'robbed' by BN Government

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KUALA LUMPUR, Aug 9 (Bernama) -- Finance Minister Lim Guan Eng today defended his statement that RM18 billion meant for the Goods and Services Tax (GST) refunds to traders had been “robbed” by the previous Barisan Nasional (BN) government.

He did not yield even when several opposition Barisan Nasional (BN) MPs demanded that he withdraw the word “robbed” considering that no investigation had been conducted as yet.

These MPs included Tan Sri Noh Omar (Tanjong Karang); Datuk Seri Hamzah Zainudin (Larut), Khairy Jamaluddin (Rembau) and Datuk Seri Dr Wee Ka Siong (Ayer Hitam).

Lim, while winding up debate on the Customs (Amendment) Bill 2018, said an internal investigation would be conducted after which it would be recommended to Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad to have an open investigation led by an independent and experienced outsider.

He said Treasury secretary-general Datuk Seri Dr Ismail Bakar had been appointed to head the internal probe.

“This is (being done) so that the people can know the truth about this case,” he told the Dewan Rakyat.

Lim had told the House yesterday that there was only RM1.49 billion remaining in the GST refund trust fund when there should be RM19.4 billion for the period April 2015 to May 31 this year, thus showing a shortfall of RM18 billion.

Speaking to reporters at the Parliament lobby, Lim said former Treasury secretary-general Tan Sri Dr Mohd Irwan Serigar Abdullah would be asked to explain the alleged missing GST refund money.

"If it (money) is there (in the Consolidated Fund), we would have paid back (the input tax) now but it is not there. So, if (Mohd) Irwan (Serigar) said it's there, we want him to tell us where it is hidden.

"Perhaps he knows something that all of us don't know," he said.

Lim was responding to Mohd Irwan Serigar's statement today denying the allegation of the missing money.

The former Treasury secretary-general explained that all the GST proceeds were placed in the Consolidated Fund before being channelled to the trust fund to repay GST claims based on the request of the Royal Customs Department.

Meanwhile, the Dewan Rakyat passed the Customs (Amendment) Bill 2018 pertaining to the implementation of the new tax system, the Sales and Service Tax (SST).

The House also approved the Free Zones (Amendment) Bill 2018 after the MPs showed no interest in debating the bill.

Yesterday, the Dewan Rakyat passed the Goods and Services Tax (Repeal) Bill 2018 to abolish the GST. On Tuesday, it approved the Sales Tax Bill 2018 for the reintroduction of the SST.

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