

Covid-19: Traders warned against hiking price of goods, says ministry

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People shop at a wet market in Selangor October 27, 2017. — Picture by Miera Zulyana

KOTA KINABALU, March 14 — The Sabah branch of the Ministry of Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs (KPDNHEP) has warned all traders in the state not to exploit the situation by increasing the price of goods excessively following the spread of COVID-19 infection.

Its director Georgie Abas said traders found to be hiking prices of the commodities could be subject to action under the Price Control and Anti-Profitteering Act 2011.

He said if found guilty, the individuals could be fined up to RM100,000 or jailed for not more than three years or both, while the companies could be fined up to RM500,000.

“The public can submit the complaint either to the official complaint channel at e-aduan.kpdnhep.gov.my or to contact the nearest KPDNHEP office,” he said in a statement here today.

He said the ministry was taking proactive actions by conducting regular monitoring and inspections starting yesterday following news of panic buying of household goods due the spread of the COVID-19 infection.

He said 200 enforcement officials and 90 price monitoring officers would conduct inspections at the consumer focus areas to ensure that control items such as sugar, cooking oil and flour were sold at prices stipulated by the government.

During an inspection at a supermarket here today, Georgie said they found that the supply of basic necessities was adequate and there was no sign of panic buying by consumers.

"To date, there is sufficient supply at all levels — manufacturers, wholesalers and retailers. The Sabah KPDNHEP will ensure that supply of essential goods is adequate and sold at reasonable prices," he said.

In a related development, Georgie said KPDNHEP Sabah had conducted inspections on 11,985 business premises throughout January to date, with stern action taken against 438 cases involving a total seizure of goods valued at RM236,235.98.

"The total amount of compound paid was at RM69,420," he said, adding that he had received 395 complaints from consumers in the first three months of the year, with 353 of them have been resolved while 42 cases were still under investigation. — Bernama

