

Monitoring prices of goods and ensuring continuous supplies are ministry's priorities, says sec-gen

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

PUTRAJAYA, Dec 22 — Apart from monitoring the prices of goods, the Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs Ministry ensures that essential items with controlled prices, such as petrol, sugar, wheat flour and cooking oil, are in continuous supply.

Speaking with Bernama recently on the role of the ministry, its secretary-general Datuk Muez Abd Aziz explained that if the supply of flour was negatively affected, the ministry was empowered to import the item to address the situation.

In reference to petrol prices, petrol stations which experience supply disruptions, or which shut down operations without informing the ministry, are guilty of an offence and can be prosecuted under the Control of Supplies Act 1961, which carries a penalty of a compound or the withdrawal of an operations licence.

Muez added that the ministry's scheme which implements ceiling prices for controlled goods during the festive periods such as Aidifitri, Chinese New Year, Deepavali, Christmas, Hari Gawai and Kaamatan, was also helpful to consumers faced with a rising cost of living.

During the scheme's implementation this year, a total of 128,085 checks were conducted on business premises across the country, comprising 3,116 wholesalers and 124,969 provision shops.

A total of 726 courses of action were taken against the traders, with goods worth RM86,349 seized and compounds totalling RM88,500 issued.

Comparing prices between Malaysia and Vietnam, Muez said a 12-kilogramme barrel of liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) was RM22.80 in Malaysia, while it could reach as high as RM70 in Hanoi.

Sugar costs RM5 per kg in Hanoi, compared to RM2.85 per kg in Malaysia.

Muez added that the ministry was also striving to raise Malaysia's profile internationally and to observe international standards, and in this connection, the passing into law of the Trademarks Act 2019 to replace the Trade Marks Act 1976 and amendments undertaken towards other existing legislation, are examples of such efforts.

Passed in July this year, the Trademarks Act enables Malaysia to participate in the Madrid Protocol to enable local entrepreneurs to register their product trademarks in a single filing and receive trademark protection in 122 countries including the United States, Australia, United Kingdom and Brazil.

Next year, Muez said, amendments are scheduled to be made to existing legislation in Malaysia on copyrights and patents so that they are in compliance with the Budapest Treaty and the Marrakesh Treaty, thus "enabling Malaysia to be in par with other countries in reference to the protection of intellectual property".

Such initiatives are aimed at making the government business-friendly, he added. — Bernama

