

Explain double-digit rise in raw building materials, says Wee

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By MARTIN CARVALHO



PETALING JAYA: The government must explain the reason behind the double-digit rise in the prices of raw building materials if there has been no rise in cement prices, says MCA president Datuk Seri Dr Wee Ka Siong (*pic*).

"After checking the Producers Price Index report issued by the Statistic Department for November and December 2019, which is after reports of a rise in cement prices in October 2019, I found that the prices of raw building materials for the construction sector rose drastically for two months," he said in a Facebook post on Thursday (Feb 13)

He added that the report showed raw building materials had risen by 5.9% in November compared to the same period in 2018 and rose again the following month to 16%.

"If the double-digit rise in the prices of raw building materials is not due to cement prices, then the minister must answer what the cause for such a steep rise is," he said.

Dr Wee, who is Ayer Hitam MP, noted that a drastic rise in construction cost, including cement prices, would have a negative impact on the economy and consumer purchasing power.

He was responding to a statement issued by Domestic Trade and Consumers Affairs Minister Datuk Seri Saifuddin Nasution Ismail on Thursday (Feb 13), which denied there was a rise in cement prices by four cement manufacturers.

Saifuddin said ministry enforcement officers had conducted checks with the cement manufacturers concerned on Feb 3 and found that there had been no increase in cement prices since 2014.

He also said checks were conducted following recent claims on social media and by Persatuan Pembina Johor (JMBA) that cement prices had risen by between 20% and 50%.

Earlier this month, Dr Wee raised the alarm, saying cement prices had gone up from RM180 a tonne in October last year to RM230 a tonne despite the government's assurances that there would be no price hike.

He said that contractors and construction companies claimed cement prices had risen some 44% since October last year.

