

## Continuing efforts to protect consumers

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**Proactive move: Muez said the ministry will continue protecting the rights of consumers. Photo by Bernama.**

**KUALA LUMPUR:** THE Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs Ministry (KPDNHEP) has undertaken various efforts to reduce the cost of living for citizens. This is something the ministry will continue to do, said its secretary-general Datuk Muez Abd Aziz.

The freedom and peace Malaysians enjoy today can be seen through various forms, including the protection of consumer rights.

"The stability of our country covers administration, economy and the harmony among our races, which we sometimes take for granted. We're free to buy sugar, petrol, cooking oil and flour without having to ration food, where all ingredients can be obtained at reasonable rates with the government controlling the supply and prices, while providing subsidies at the same time," he said.

The Malaysian economy is prosperous due to sufficient supply of basic necessities such as petroleum, liquefied petroleum gas, cooking oil, chicken, meat and eggs.

That said, he added there are times when the prices of items hike up because of misbehaving traders that create demand by hiding necessities or profit unscrupulously.

In turn, it leads to speculation and panic-driven purchases that add to the confusion and even anger among consumers who eventually blame the government for the state of affairs - this is when KPDNHEP steps in, said Muez.



He explained, "This is where KPDNHEP's role comes in, as we do 24-hour monitoring and act quickly if necessary with the ministry's enforcement team. It has proven successful in overcoming this problem.

"Moreover, part of the work we do include inspection at business premises and wholesale markets.

"At times, our market is flooded with strange items such as ghost smoke and vape of different flavours that enter the country, but thankfully, our enforcement officers work agilely in the field to combat these issues."

Successful enforcement activities are then publicised in mainstream and social media platforms to educate consumers.

"The more educated consumers are in consuming products and services, the more sustainable the country's economy will be and the tougher it is for traders to take advantage of them in times of distress," he opined.

In addition, KPDNHEP occupies the top spot among the 16 ministries this year for its excellence in financial management, which he attributes to the joint efforts of its employees.

Muez, who also thanked KPDNHEP Minister Datuk Seri Saifuddin Nasution Ismail for his fresh ideas and progressive leadership, said that the ministry is now ready to take on the challenges of implementing the targeted petrol subsidy for RON95 petrol, Budget 2020 and the 12th Malaysia Plan.

He said, "This ministry will always be sensitive and proactive towards any complaints on price increases, the cost of living or the lack of food supply. We will overcome this together because I'm confident that - in the words of Henry Ford - 'coming together is a beginning. Keeping together is progress. Working together is success."

As an example, he pointed to the close cooperation with ministries such as the Ministry of Agriculture for seasonal celebrations including Hari Raya Aidilfitri, Aidiladha, the Gawai Dayak festivities and Deepavali.



“Although the supply of raw ingredients such as fish and meat are not under KPDNHEP’s monitoring, close cooperation between ministries have seen positive results in ensuring main food supply was sufficient at reasonable prices during festive periods.

“I see this as the strategy of the new government, which aspires for all ministries, supervised industry players and non-governmental organisations to come together to overcome the rakyat’s issues without compromise,” stated Muez.

Another example he raised was the establishment of Foodbank Malaysia, an initiative sparked from an idea by Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs Minister Datuk Seri Saifuddin Nasution Ismail, which he committed to expand to public institutions of higher learning across the country.

He suggested that the initiative should be implemented on a smaller scale at every ministry, government agency and easily accessible locations to ensure that a wider network can be established to benefit more recipients.

He said, “This step is an avant garde move that may seem pedestrian at the beginning, but now gives meaningful and effective impact to more than 6,700 needy tertiary students and 300,000 members of families from the B40 community.

“The total is one that will increase from time to time, as we might expand distribution through registered charities and houses of worship.”

The cooperation is also a result of strong industry support, which means that industry players can leverage each government initiative as a medium to give back to the community through corporate social responsibility and strengthen their brand at the same time.

“We believe in the win-win philosophy, where all Malaysian consumers and industry players in various sectors come together to achieve this aspiration,” he said, adding that the ministry has readied different avenues such as complaints channel eAduan, claims filing via the Consumer Claims Tribunal and daily prices display of goods through the PriceCatcher app.



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