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CSR, MSM crisis: Govt seeks mechanism to avoid raising sugar price

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KUALA LUMPUR: Even though the country is facing a crisis with the two largest sugar manufacturers, namely Central Sugar Refinery Sdn Bhd (CSR) and MSM Malaysia Holdings Bhd (MSM), the government has still not raised the price of sugar as of today.

Domestic Trade and Cost of Living Minister Datuk Seri Salahuddin Ayub *(pix)* said instead the government is trying to find the best mechanism to deal with the issue.

"No matter how raw materials go up, natural gas goes up, we (the government) always try to find the best way so that the people can still buy sugar at the price we control and the people don't have to pay more for the price of sugar," he said in a question and answer session at Dewan Rakyat, here today.

He was replying to a question by Rodiyah Sapiee (GPS-Batang Sadong) about the reality of the current situation which has seen a decrease in the power to buy among consumers during the fasting month and the recent Aidilfitri festival where the prices of basic goods have risen significantly.

Salahuddin also refuted claims that the price of basic ingredients in this country has risen sharply, including sugar.

He explained that the Ministry of Domestic Trade and Cost of Living (KPDN) is monitoring 43 types of controlled goods such as cooking oil, rice and RON95.

Meanwhile, he said that consumer purchasing power has increased in the past six months and it is proven by the growth of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in the first quarter of this year which recorded a growth of 5.6 per cent, driven by strong domestic demand.

"The achievement was also able to combat the rate of inflation for cooked food which dropped from 9.6 per cent to 9.3 per cent due to various efforts initiated under the Payung Rahmah initiative by the ministry to improve the purchasing power of the people," he said.

He added that KPDN has implemented Rahmah Sales in 3,500 locations and 120 parliamentary constituencies throughout the country recording a sales value of RM52.6 million as of today.

According to him, as many as 14,000 basic items needed by housewives have been given discounts of three to 50 per cent.

In a press conference afterwards, Salahuddin said his ministry had received complaints regarding the lack of sugar supply in several areas in Kedah since yesterday which was found to be caused by the delay in the delivery of supplies to retailers.

He said the issue had been addressed today by swift action under Ops Manis which was carried out at 214 wholesalers, retailers and sugar producers in the state.

"The supply of sugar at the main wholesaler level in Kedah that gets supplies from MSM and CSR has been successfully restored to a level of 796,721 metric tonnes," he said.

At the same time, Salahudin assured that the supply of sugar ahead of Hari Raya Aidil Adha celebration would be sufficient and that KPDN would announce a long-term plan to overcome the problem on Thursday.

Meanwhile, Salahuddin said the ministry has opened an official complaint channel regarding the case of reselling Coldplay concert tickets at unreasonable prices.

"So far, we have not received any official complaints...if there is a need to act, we will do so under the Consumer Protection Act 1999," he said. -*Bernama*

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