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PM says media to blame too for sugar situation

PRIME Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad yesterday took the media to task for excessively highlighting the alleged shortage of sugar in the country.

When asked about the reports of sugar shortage which had made the headlines in the past week, Dr Mahathir said: "I see no point answering this... when the media write and show pictures to claim that there is no sugar in the shops, people will naturally rush to buy this essential item.

"They report everyday that there is sugar shortage... when people read about it, what do they do? They go to shops and if they find sugar, they buy them up," he told reporters in Kuala Lumpur after launching the Anti-Corruption Agency's campaign to consolidate the integrity of the Government's administrative machinery.

He dismissed suggestions that the situation was due to the Government's announcement of an increase in the price of the commodity more than a month before the proposed implementation.

Sugar, flour and condensed milk prices will be raised from February 1.

"You (the press) are the ones who told them (the public) there is a shortage... when you say there is not enough sugar, there will eventually not be enough sugar... it is not the price," Dr Mahathir said.

On the observation that some people are continuing to spend lavishly despite the Government's call to be prudent and to save and cut costs, Dr Mahathir said there is a misconception on the matter.

"We are not stopping people from spending money but they must spend it wisely... on Malaysian products and goods. It is all right if they want to spend lavishly, provided they have the money.

"If you don't have the money, don't spend. Problems arise when you don't have the money and still want to spend lavishly," he added.

Dr Mahathir said the Government wants the people to spend prudently but it must be understood that traders will go out of business if people do not spend at all.

"If people don't spend, business will die... we are saying if you want to spend money, buy more Malaysian goods. When we buy foreign goods, we will face problems," he said.

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