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Rising cost reason for higher chicken price: PM

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PRIME Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said yesterday that the increase in the price of chicken is due to the rising cost faced by chicken farmers.

"Most chicken farms are running a profitable operation while some are experiencing a loss but continue their operations as they are hoping that this condition is for a short-term period and will improve later," Dr Mahathir said in Kuala Lumpur after opening the National Smart Partnership Dialogue 1998.

The Government had increased the price to save chicken farmers who have been hard pressed by the increase in production costs, which have gone up from RM2.70 to RM3.60 per kg.

Seventy per cent of the increase is attributed to chicken feed.

Farm chicken is now priced at RM3.50 per kg, an increase of 45 sen from the previous price of RM3.05 per kg. Wholesale chicken is RM4.50 per kg (up 95 sen) and dressed wholesale chicken is RM5.40 per kg (up 50 sen).

Meanwhile, Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs Ministry will leave it to the Malaysian Trades Union Congress (MTUC), the Congress of Unions of Employees in the Public and Civil Services (Cuepacs) and the poultry farmers to resolve the chicken boycott campaign issue.

Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs Minister Datuk Seri Megat Junid Megat Ayob said the ministry is not involved in any way with the 10-day campaign mounted by the MTUC and Cuepacs.

"It is between the MTUC and Cuepacs and the poultry farmers. The ministry is not involved. We don't even know whether the campaign is successful or not," he said in Kuala Lumpur yesterday after opening the Asia-Pacific Seminar For Youth Activities On HIV/AIDS and Drug Abuse.

Both MTUC and Cuepacs had initiated the campaign last week in an effort to get the Government to reverse its decision on increasing the price of chicken.

Megat Junid said although there is an increase in the price of chicken, it is still cheaper than fish and imported beef.

Fish can now cost between RM8 and RM12 a kg.

"In this case, people will still resort to chicken," he said.

Megat Junid said, however, that the increase in price is temporary and will be reviewed weekly.

On another development, the minister expressed his deep concern over reports of cybercafes allowing students to access pornographic materials on the Internet even until the wee hours of the mornings.

He said he has received reports from parents on the matter.

"These activities are not only unhealthy but can lead to their involvement in crime.

"I would inform the relevant authorities about this so that action can be taken," he added.

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