

31 DEC 1999

Cuepacs-Chicken

THE BOYCOTT OF CHICKEN NOT DONE IN HASTE

KUALA LUMPUR, Dec 31 (Bernama) -- Ceupacs today welcomed the government's move to review the ceiling price of RM6 per kilogramme for chicken after the Chinese New Year in February.

Cuepacs president N. Siva Subramaniam said the ceiling price for chicken should be RM5.40 per kilogramme and he believed the problem would be discussed jointly with the parties concerned.

Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, after chairing a meeting of the Cabinet Committee on Essential Items yesterday, said the new ceiling price could be higher or lower than RM6 per kilogramme, depending on the situation.

On the advice by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad that the boycott of chicken launched by Cuepacs together with three other organisations beginning Dec 23 was rather hasty and could affect small chicken traders, Subramaniam said the move was not aimed at causing hardship on the small traders.

"We want profits to go to the small traders. What we don't want is for one or two people to dominate the chicken market," he said.

"We don't agree that the price of chicken should vary from place to place. There are traders who sell at RM5.20 per kilogramme but there are also traders such as the ones in Taiping who sold at RM5.80 per kilogramme today," he said.

Malaysian Trades Union Congress (MTUC) president Senator Zainal Rampak said the boycott was not a hasty act as the congress had taken into consideration the effects it had on the small traders.

"Our study found that if dressed chicken was sold at RM5.40 per kilogramme, traders in the market would gain a fair profit of 70 sen per kilogramme or RM1.50 per chicken," he said.

He said the boycott would not affect the income of small traders because it would only be implemented if the price of dressed chicken exceeded RM5.40 per kilogramme.

Other than the MTUC and Cuepacs, the Federation of Malaysian Consumers Association (FOMCA) and the Malaysian Youth Council (MYC) are also joining the boycott.

He said the MTUC also received many calls from restaurant and food stall operators who urged that the boycott be continued.

"The operators say that they have to increase the price of food if the price of chicken exceeds RM5.40 per kilogramme," he said.

He said the increase in food prices would be a burden on the lower income groups who were the main customers of restaurant and food stalls.

The increase in the price of chicken would not benefit the small traders but rather the middlemen who bought the chicken cheaply from farms and sold them at a higher price to the small traders, he said.

Zainal said the MTUC would hold a meeting with Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin on Tuesday to discuss in greater detail the escalating prices of essential goods in the market.

Meanwhile in PULAU PINANG, the Consumers Association of Penang (CAP) urged the government to allow more imports of chicken to curb prices during the festive season.

Its president S.M. Mohd Idris said the move would ensure that the price of chicken was not raised indiscriminately as there would be ample supply of the bird.

-- BERNAMA
ZKS NY/NER AO