

Ministry to sign up housewives

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They can help identify traders who raise prices, says Muhyiddin

By Hemala Devaraj

KLJALA LUMPUR, Mon: The registration of housewives to help the Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs Ministry monitor post-Budget price increases will start soon.

"We are working on a plan," its minister, Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin, said today, following his announcement last Friday that housewives can help identify businesses which raise prices.

He said housewives will soon be able to register at booths in the ministry's offices, located in most major towns and in every state.

"Those who want to take part can inform the ministry of any price increase following the hike in diesel and petrol prices, by calling us on a toll-free line," he told reporters after officiating at a two-day seminar on consumer awareness organised by the ministry.

"The ministry will provide guidelines to these volunteers on what they should look out for.

"Enforcement officers will verify the information before taking action against the errant traders."

Muhyiddin said the programme is on a voluntary basis. He said the response should be positive as "according to

media reports, they (the housewives) feel it is a good idea".

Muhyiddin said there are already 20 women in Muar that have volunteered their services.

"Besides housewives, the ministry has enlisted the help of village heads to provide information," he said.

The village heads will be guided by the enforcement officers at the early stages of inspection. After that, they can act alone.

The ministry stepped up its checks following the increase in diesel and petrol prices as announced by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad when tabling Budget 2002.