

**Consumer groups laud subsidy reduction**  
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The government move to reduce fuel and sugar subsidies has been lauded by the majority of the people as it seems to provide more benefits, especially in terms of education and health.

Consumers Association of Penang (CAP) president S M Mohamed Idris said the move was a comprehensive plan for a more sustainable financial management.

However, he said the government should ensure that traders and manufacturers do not take advantage of the situation by increasing the prices of other consumer products.

"Reducing the subsidy for RON 95 petrol and sugar is a right decision and it will encourage the public and the industry to reduce the consumption of both items," he said in a statement in Kuala Lumpur.

In Seremban, Malaysian Islamic Social Economic and Charity Society chairman Ghafar Nin said, although the move should be viewed positively, he hoped the government could control the prices of other essential items.

"The people, especially those in the low-income group, will not feel burdened or depressed if the prices of other essential items are under control," he said.

Negeri Sembilan Consumers Association president Khairuddin Yunus, on the other hand, hoped the government would tighten enforcement on the subsidies.

"We do not want the subsidies to benefit those who do not deserve to receive them," he said.

Federation of Malaysian Consumers Associations president N Marimuthu said Fomca would conduct an early monitoring operation for a week to identify the effects of the subsidy reduction on the consumers.

"We will monitor the situation for a week and if there is a sudden price hike, we urge the public to lodge a report with the authorities," he said, adding that all quarters, including the government, were responsible in controlling the increase on the consumer products, following the subsidy reduction.

In Malacca, Bernama checks revealed that many foodstall operators adopted a 'wait-and-see' attitude on whether to put up a new price tag, especially on beverages.

"I think we can still afford to accept the impact of the 25 sen price adjustment for sugar. We are just curious about the price of milk," said a food seller in Taman Melaka Baru, who wanted to be known only as Hamidah.

The 53-year-old's views were shared by restaurant operator Jahir Hussain, 44, who also wondered about the possible increase in the price of condensed creamer and sweetener.

"Right now, my concern is over the 192 cans of condensed sweetener which I have yet to receive after making the order last month," he said.

In Kuala Terengganu, Gong Batu Lagoon Caged Fish Breeders Association chairman Johari Awang Besar said the price adjustments on the two items were accepted by many.

“However, the government should be careful in increasing the price of consumer products while the country is facing the global economic crisis,” he added.

- Bernama

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