

Najib: We will not allow rice price hike

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BUTTERWORTH: The wholesale price of imported rice will remain unchanged. This is despite increases of between five and 20 sen by Padiberas National Berhad (Bernas), the country's sole rice importer, from July 1.

Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak said the government had no intention of allowing such increases.

He said Bernas should not have increased prices without consulting the Agriculture and Agro-based Industry Ministry.

"There will be a widespread effect if there is any increase in the price of the staple food. It will burden the people.

"There should not be an increase, and the government has no intention of allowing it."

Najib said a report on the matter would be tabled by minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin at the next cabinet meeting.

He said this after opening the Batu Kawan Umno delegates conference here.

Najib had been asked about Bernas' statement that the wholesale price of rice had increased by five to 10 sen per kg for white rice, fragrant rice and basmati rice.

The price of glutinous rice had gone up by 20 per cent.

Muhyiddin had, on Saturday, wanted to know why rice prices had increased "as they have been stable for long".

He was also unhappy that his ministry had not been consulted.

He added that Bernas should have discussed the matter with his ministry even though it involved imported rice which did not come under the Price Control Act 1946.

The wholesale price of glutinous rice has been spiralling from RM1.85 per kg since January, to RM2.50 in February and RM2.60 in April.

With the latest increase of 10 per cent, glutinous rice is expected to retail around RM3.20 per kg.

The wholesale price of Vietnamese rice has increased from RM1.44 per kg to RM1.55 while Thai rice increased from RM1.49 per kg in February to RM1.60.

Fragrant rice will now cost 10 sen more.

Its wholesale price is now RM2.45 per kg from RM2.35 previously.

The price of local rice is also expected to increase.

Its wholesale price is RM1.55 per kg in Kedah and Perlis, RM1.85 in Johor and RM1.75 per kg in other states.