

**No need for Putrajaya to reduce prices of essential items, says Hasan**  
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**By Jennifer Gomez**

Domestic Trade Co-operatives and Consumerism Minister Datuk Hasan Malek spoke at length in Parliament on the need to ensure traders reduced prices in view of the drop in global oil prices.

However, when asked by an opposition MP why Putrajaya was not reducing prices of essential goods such as sugar, flour and locally produced cooking oil, the minister said that there was no need to do so for now.

In answering a question in Parliament on setting up a committee to find solution to lower the price of goods in line with the reduction in oil prices and action to be taken against errant traders, Hasan said that traders were prone to increase prices when oil prices increased.

He said the increase in price of goods was also caused by climate change, natural disasters, tariff rates, labour charges, foreign exchange as well as movements in the global economy.

He added that the Malaysian government was the first country in the world to set up a committee to oversee cost of living issues at the Cabinet level, which was chaired by the deputy prime minister and made up of 14 ministers.

He also highlighted various methods the government was using, including engagement with suppliers, producers, wholesalers and traders, to ensure fair pricing.

This prompted Datuk Mahfuz Omar (Pas-Pokok Sena) to ask the minister why the government did not reduce controlled prices for items such as for flour, sugar and cooking oil.

"Instead of saying it's the fault of the Chinese for raising prices, why is the government not bringing down the price of these essential items, especially cooking oil which is locally produced?"

Hasan replied that there was no need for the government to bring down prices of the essential foods mentioned.

"We did not reduce but we have been speaking to the large suppliers in the private sector.

"Thankfully, one or two have agreed to reduce prices and hopefully this will have a domino effect but there is no need for us to bring down the prices of essential foods for now," Hasan said. – March 11, 2015.

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