

KERATAN AKHBAR

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'Relook at supply chain'

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Yeah said that apart from inflation, which is now at 3%, disruptions in the supply chain has also pushed prices even higher.

He said there is now a shortage of manpower at vegetable farms in Cameron Highlands, given that many migrant workers have left amid the Covid-19 pandemic.

The departure of these workers has left many without adequate labour to work on their farms, thereby reducing supply and raising prices.

Yeah said another factor that has worsened the financial situation for Malaysians is the fact that the country relies heavily on food imports.

"With the ringgit so weak, prices of imported food items invariably rise."

The bottlenecks in the global supply chain, also caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, only adds to the pain.

Yeah added that while there are signs of a recovery, the slack in the labour market would continue to keep wages low.

"Only when the recovery gains momentum and the labour markets tighten, will we see higher wages."

Yeah urged the government to encourage farmers to invest in high technology equipment that would reduce dependency on imports for food and labour.

Malaysia depends heavily on imports to ensure an adequate supply

of food.

As a result, the food import bill is staggering. In 2020, it amounted to a record RM55.5 billion.

According to the Statistics Department, the country's annual import of mutton amounted to RM879.4 million, mango - RM87.9 million, coconut - RM266.1 million and beef - RM2.2 billion, from Australia, Thailand, India and Indonesia.

The data also shows an enormous import bill for chillies, ginger and round cabbage.

Barjoyai said the supply chain must be examined carefully to determine the factors that have led to the sharp increase in prices.

"We also need to know if there is anyone trying to create artificial shortages to push prices up," he said.

"The relevant ministries must investigate and find out what is causing the price increases and take action against those responsible for the price manipulation."

Barjoyai added that wages play an important role in helping people meet their obligations, but it has remained stagnant.

However, he said the local workforce is as much to blame for being underpaid.

"Productivity is a problem here. Our workers tend to get complacent. They need to be more productive," he added.

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