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Joint secretiat to resolve cost of living woes

MINISTRIES JOIN FORCES

Joint secretariat to resolve cost of living woes

KUALA LUMPUR: The Domestic Trade and Cost of Living Ministry and the Economy Ministry have agreed to form a joint secretariat to discuss the roles of government agencies to address cost of living issues.

Domestic Trade and Cost of Living Minister Datuk Seri Salahuddin Ayub and Economy Minister Rafizi Ramli, in a joint statement yesterday, said the secretariat would serve as a platform for officers to work towards the goal.

The ministers urged the people to focus on four areas to empower their role as smart consumers, including planning their expenses.

Consumers, they said, were also urged to be mindful of alternatives to the goods they sought if there were price hikes, and to buy only according their needs, besides using the government's "Price Catcher" application to compare prices.

"Both ministries are fine-tuning the implementation of several quick solutions, including cross-ministry action plans, as well as updating policy implementation procedures, which we expect to roll out by the end of January.

"Through these discussions, some decisions are being implemented while others require more study.

"The government is committed to helping the people without risking the business and industry ecosystem, which is still recovering from the Covid-19 pandemic," read the statement.

They said close cooperation involving all parties in the value chain, including the government, manufacturers, traders and the people, was necessary to manage inflation and the rising cost of living.

"Cost of living does not necessarily revolve around cheaper prices, but must also be fair to producers, traders and consumers. The government hopes that this will help ease cost management and ensure that all savings can be channelled to consumers, thus lightening the burden of the people."

The ministers said the government had taken several short- and medium-term measures to address the issue.

Domestic Trade and Cost of Living Minister Datuk Seri Salahuddin Ayub checking the stock of cooking oil and eggs at a shop in Taman Perling, Johor Baru, recently. PIC BY NUR AISYAH MAZALAN

They said the two-week deadline given by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim to the relevant ministries during the National Action Council on Cost of Living meeting on Nov 27 was followed by suggestions in a follow-up meeting, as well as the cabinet meeting on Dec 13 and 14, respectively.

They said other meetings involving stakeholders, including ministries, industry players, academicians and consumer groups, had been held.

This, they said, resulted in the continuation of price controls and subsidies for standard chicken, as well as Grade A, B and C eggs.

Other measures included the retention of the electricity tariff for domestic, commercial and industry users, as well as Padiberas Nasional Bhd's channelling of RM60 million to farmers.

The import of chicken eggs as well as the two-tier pricing of crude palm oil were also continued so that the price of bottled cooking oil in the domestic market could be cheaper, thus reducing demand for oil sold in 1kg polybags.