



Persatuan Pengguna Pulau Pinang Consumers Association of Penang

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Letter to the Editor

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Consumers need accurate information from government to avoid unnecessary anxiety

The government should get its act together over the confusion on the palm cooking oil, chicken and eggs subsidy issue. One very clear example was the announcement reported in the media on 23 June 2022 by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Ismail Sabri Yaakob who said that the subsidy for cooking oil in bottles of 1kg, 2kg, 3kg and 5kg will be stopped from 1 July.

However, on the same day the media reported that the Plantation Industries and Commodities Minister Datuk Zuraida Kamaruddin stated that the government is not ending the subsidy for palm cooking oil after July 1 but reverting to the original pricing mechanism before the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Consumers Association of Penang (CAP) is puzzled why there are two contradicting announcements on the same topic of serious concern on the same day in the media. Moreover, why was there a sudden U-turn after all the announcements on 21 June of the removal of the subsidy in the media for two days, causing undue concern among consumers. Such announcement caused some supermarkets to ration cooking oil, fearing panic buying. Such announcements can trigger panic buying which is something that the government and consumers should avoid.

If the government is listening to the consumers as it claimed, it should have done a study and decided upon before announcing the subsidies removal.

This shows a gross lack of coordination among the Ministries or that they were not properly briefed, leading to Zuraida trying to explain on 24 June that “there had been some misunderstanding over the issue”. If there had been a misunderstanding, why did the government take the trouble to explain that bottled cooking oil is easy to smuggle just two days prior?

The Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs Ministry was also put on high alert on the situation, anticipating possible profiteering by the traders.

We urge the government to appoint a spokesperson who makes all the announcements after careful deliberations to reduce or eliminate all possible contradicting statements that cause unnecessary confusion. Such approach will help to reduce much anxiety or cause panic among consumers.

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