

## Sugar price hike a bitter pill people must learn to swallow

Ho Kit Yen | March 15, 2017

Malaysians must learn to adapt to price increases by making changes to their diet and lifestyle, say consumer groups.



PETALING JAYA: Consumer group Persatuan Pengguna Islam Malaysia (PPIM) has advised the public to stop relying on the government to protect them from price hikes.

The Muslim consumer group's chief activist, Nadzim Johan, said it was time Malaysians grew up and learnt to fend for themselves instead of always relying on the government for help.

"Such is the attitude of some consumers who expect the government to help them."

He said the people must learn to adapt to price hikes by making changes to their diet and lifestyle.

"For example, if sugar has become costlier, then one should take less sugar. Such a change would be good for one's health, too.

"Therefore, the price increase should not be an issue at all," Nadzim said, adding that after trying other means of helping people reduce their sugar intake, it appeared that now was the best time for people to start.

Meanwhile, Malaysia Consumers Movement president Darshan Singh Dhillon agreed that sugar consumption should be reduced, with or without a price hike.

"We have always advocated zero sugar consumption because it (sugar) leads to many diseases."

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Darshan, however, warned those in the food and beverage business against using the price hike as justification to increase their prices.

"Don't touch the prices but reduce the amount of sugar in food and drinks."

On March 1, the price of sugar went up by 11 sen, from RM2.84 to RM2.95 per kg, which the domestic trade, cooperatives and consumerism ministry said was due to the global price hike in raw sugar.

In Parliament, its minister Hamzah Zainuddin told reporters that the people should be grateful the price of sugar had gone up by only 11 sen.

"When we did the calculation (for the price adjustment), the millers were asking to increase the price to RM3.20 (per kg), which is a jump of 40 sen."

Hamzah said that Malaysians should thank him instead of being angry with him.

He also warned food traders against taking advantage of the situation to raise their prices.

"It does not take one kilogramme of sugar to make roti canai, so no, they shouldn't increase their prices. Not even for teh tarik," he said.

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