

The Star : Going the distance to buy wheat flour

Written by Administrator

Friday, 11 September 2009 16:05 -

21 October 2007

IPOH: Out of desperation, *roti canai* seller S. Muthusamy drove here all the way from Cameron Highlands so that he could get his hands on some wheat flour. It is impossible to find any flour up there, said Muthusamy, who drove some 100km from Kuala Terla and spent RM20 each way on petrol. Even then, he was only able to secure three 25kg bags of flour, which would last him four days.

Pau seller Wong Kok Ming, 50, said he was considering increasing prices by 10 sen to 20 sen. He was now buying enriched wheat flour at RM60.50 for a 25kg bag, compared with RM45 on Tuesday. Wholesaler Tan Hock Eng, 60, said the price of enriched wheat flour, a non-controlled price item, had gone up. Perhaps this is because of the rising cost of imported wheat, said Tan. Not only wheat flour users have been hit by rising costs. Restaurant owner Chang Kok Aun, 52, said *bee hoon* also cost more now. He, however, was resisting increasing his prices. Business is already slow. I would rather absorb the cost and make less profit than lose my customers. According to Chang, a 4kg packet of *bee hoon* cost him RM7.30 last week compared with RM8 this week. In Johor Baru, baker James Lim has been absorbing the price increase in wheat flour. However, Lim, 27, said he might be forced to raise prices if the price of flour does not come down in the next two weeks. I may have to raise the price of each bun and cake slice by about 10 sen, he said. In Penang, consumers might have to fork out more for eating out next month because hawkers were considering increasing prices. They claim that this was because of rising cost of raw ingredients and materials, especially high-fibre flour, which was used to produce a wide array of food including noodles and pastries. Federation of Hawkers Association president Lam Tong Ying said the prices of the ingredients went up between 10% and 30% during the Hari Raya Aidilfitri season. He said the association hoped hawkers would not charge more than an additional 30 sen for a bowl of noodles or cooked food. Penang Grocery Association president Leong Keng Fei urged the Government to fix a ceiling price for flour. This is because flour is the main ingredient for many products, he said.