

Warning to subsidy profiteers

Unscrupulous parties trying to cash in will face hefty fine or jail time

By **MARTIN CARVALHO**
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PETALING JAYA: Unscrupulous companies and petty traders trying to cash in on the recent government subsidy cuts by pushing up prices may find themselves facing a hefty fine or even jail time.

Domestic Trade, Cooperatives and Consumerism enforcement director Mohd Roslan Mahyudin warned that some 2,000 officers were on the lookout for unscrupulous parties trying to cash in on the subsidy cuts.

"Although only sugar and facial

masks are controlled price items, it is still an offence for them to increase the prices of their goods or services without justification.

"We have the power to investigate complaints against them and request information to determine if there is excessive profiteering," he told *The Star* here yesterday.

Under the recently enforced Price Control and Anti-Profitteering Act, companies found guilty of profiteering can be fined up to RM500,000 for the first offence and up to a whopping RM1mil for the second offence.

Individual first-time offenders can

be fined up to RM100,000 or jailed for three years or both while repeat offenders may face a RM250,000 fine or five years' jail or both.

Mohd Roslan said consumers who felt they had been fleeced by unscrupulous companies and traders could also complain to the department.

"For instance, if they have to pay RM1.50 for a bowl of *cendol* from a shop which charged only RM1 a day earlier, they can complain to us.

"We will investigate the shop on its production costs, such as the price of raw materials, labour, transport and rental, to see if the increase

is justified," he said. However, Mohd Roslan said enforcing the law would be on a case-by-case basis as the Act was unique to Malaysia.

"We still have to see what constitutes excessive profiteering as there are no such laws in other countries," he said, adding that only those complaints with elements of excessive profiteering would be probed.

He also warned that those being investigated could be charged if they withheld information on their production costs.

Mohd Roslan said the identity of complainants would not be divulged

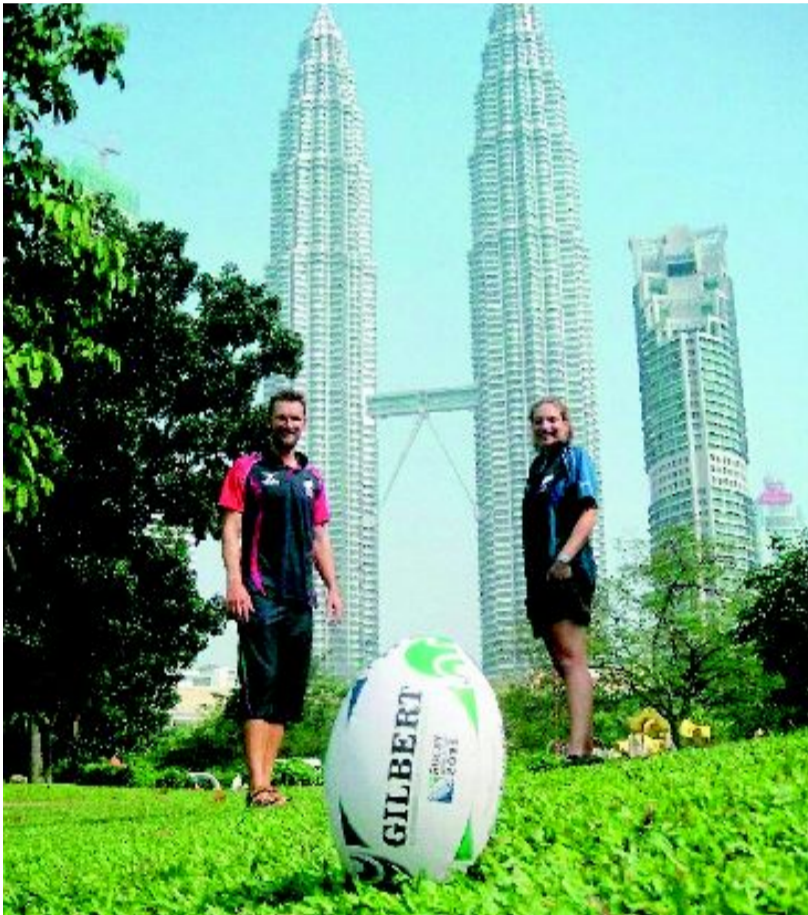
to encourage those with grouses to come forward, adding that so far, there had been no complaints from the public.

He said information from any investigation would be forwarded to the Price Advisory Council, which would determine if there had been excessive profiteering.

"The case will then be referred back to our department for legal action," he said.

Consumers can call the department's hotline at 1-800-88-6800 or e-mail their grouses via E-Aduan at www.kpdnkk.gov.my.

Towering challenge: Hudson (left) and Burton posing near the KLCC while sightseeing in Kuala Lumpur yesterday.



Couple cycles 30,000km to New Zealand for a real ball

By **JONATHAN FERNANDEZ**
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PETALING JAYA: They met for the first time during a spin class (indoor cycling) at a gym three years ago. Whether it was by pure coincidence, fate or plain irony, at that time Tom Hudson and Jodie Burton never thought they would be embarking on a journey together from England to New Zealand - by cycling about 30,000km!

The British couple, both 30, started their voyage a little over a year ago, overcoming obstacles through Europe and Asia, to catch the Rugby World Cup 2011 from Sept 9 to Oct 23.

After 24 countries across two continents, Hudson and Burton arrived at their 25th stop - Malaysia - on May 10.

"The moment we hopped on our bikes, we never looked back. The journey has been nothing short of magical. We have learnt so much about many countries and the various cultures," said Burton, who is an ardent reader of books based on real life experiences and journeys.

While taking a flight would have been less wearisome, Hudson joked that if they did follow that boring route, they would not have had their new passports almost completely filled with immigration stamps.

"We left our jobs at home in England, but not

before taking a lot of things into consideration.

"It has never been done before but we kind of expected what we would be up against. The change in climate, from shivering coldness to scorching heat, we had to adapt to it all. But when you do something genuinely from your heart and in good faith, these potential hindrances can be easily overcome," said Hudson, adding that they were also trying to raise up to £30,000 (RM147,758) for charity. "That's like a pound for each kilometre we cover."

He added that the expedition could be followed at www.cyclingtotherugbyworldcup.com.

The pair had initially put up in Penang but hitch-hiked to Kuala Lumpur to watch the last round of the local rugby league on Saturday.

Although Malaysia is not known for its interest in rugby, Hudson said the community here was as enthusiastic about the sport as any other bunch of rugby aficionados.

"Even here, despite the rugby clan being small, I feel that the fans share the same high level of passion for the sport," said Hudson, adding that they were hoping for the generosity of well-wishers when they arrive in New Zealand, as they had no tickets for the World Cup nor did they have much money left.

They will resume their cycling odyssey today with the next stop being Singapore, Indonesia, Australia and finally New Zealand.

Singaporean may have been supplying equipment to militants

JOHOR BARU: Singapore businessman Abdul Majid Kunji Mohamad, now held under the ISA, is believed to have been supplying double-purpose engineering equipment to a militant group in the southern Philippines.

According to an intelligence source, the equipment was for use in the arms factory of the militants.

He said the equipment could be used to make several types of weapons, including rocket-propelled grenades.

He said the 60-year-old businessman, who was residing in Kuala Lumpur, had a radical understanding of Islam but did not belong to

any militant group.

The source said Abdul Majid might be handed over to Singapore authorities after 60 days of detention under the ISA.

Inspector-General of Police Tan Sri Ismail Omar, in a statement on May 9, had said that Abdul Majid was detained on suspicion of contributing funds and giving logistic aid to a militant group in the southern Philippines.

A report in a Singapore newspaper said that Abdul Majid was a board member of the Association of Muslim Professionals in Singapore for a year in the 1990s. - Bernama

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