

Motorists forced to go on 'diesel hunt' in Klang Valley

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PETALING JAYA: Motorists are puzzled as to why they have been made to go on a "diesel hunt" around the city to fill up.

S. Mahindran, 47, from Sungai Long, Kajang, was surprised to be sent away from his regular petrol station despite turning up as early as 8am yesterday morning.

"There was a sign saying that the sale of subsidised diesel was limited to 60 litres from 11pm to 8am and 100 litres from 8am to 11pm.

"Yet, when I arrived at 8am, it was sold out. How is that even possible?" he said.

The Star has been receiving complaints since early this month of diesel shortage from as far as Rompin, Pahang.

National Consumer Complaints Centre (NCCC) deputy director K. Ravin said it has been "almost impossible" to buy subsidised diesel in Klang.

"For the past six to seven months, I've received constant complaints of diesel running out in the area.

"A few weeks ago, a petrol station operator informed my source that they were rationing subsidised diesel because of smuggling activities.

In an immediate response, Shell Malaysia said it had experienced "intermittent diesel stock-outs" at various retail stations in the Klang Valley.

"We strive to manage the deliveries to ensure the government quota for the month is not breached.

"We are making every effort to minimise the incidents including working with the relevant government authorities for additional quota," it said in a statement.

Kesatuan Pekerja-Pekerja Perikanan Pulau Pangkor chairman Beh Chiew Ning said the lack of subsidised diesel, priced at RM1.25 per litre, had been going on for the past nine months, affecting some 200 fishing boats on the island.

On Jan 7, lorry drivers and other diesel users claimed there was a shortage in Johor after petrol station operators said they were "haunted" by "ghost lorries" that filled up on subsidised diesel.

Meanwhile, Petroleum Dealers Association of Malaysia (PDAM) president Datuk Hashim Othman said motorists need not worry about diesel supply despite the Hari Raya *balik kampung* exodus expected soon.

"Road users need not worry because the Government usually increases both the diesel and petrol subsidy quota during the festive season.

"The priority of petroleum companies is to ensure that petrol stations along all major trunk roads and highways are well stocked.

"Any shortage will most likely affect petrol stations in smaller towns," he said.