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Seafood supply in Penang stable for now

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GEORGE TOWN: Seafood supply here is stable for now but unpredictable weather in the coming weeks could affect fishermen's catches.

This could possibly cause supply disruption during the upcoming festive season of Christmas and Chinese New Year, say fishmongers.

Chan Kok Seng, who has been a fishmonger for three decades at the Chowrasta Market, said the current supply remains steady but the situation could change if adverse weather persists.

"The weather has been erratically but fortunately, we haven't faced any issues with supply so far."

"However, if the sea becomes rough, the fishermen may not be able to go out. This could reduce the quantity of seafood available," he said.

Chan, 46, noted that supply disruptions are common during the monsoon season as the unpredictable weather affects fishermen's ability to catch at the sea.

If supply drops, he said the price of seafood could increase.

"And if we sell our fish, squid and prawns at a higher price, our customers will not like it and end up not buying," he said.

Chan said currently, black pomfret, saddle grunt (gerut-gerut) and fourfinger threadfin (senigin) are among the most sought after, selling at between RM26 and RM30 per kg.

Other than fish, he said squid and prawns were also in demand at the market.

Hamid Osman, 57, another fishmonger at the market, also lamented



No fishy business: Chan (left) busy dealing with his customers at the Chowrasta market in Penang.
— CHAN BOON KAI/
The Star

about the impact of the northeast monsoon on the supply of seafood.

"The rough sea conditions have made it difficult for fishermen to go out for extended periods, which is why the supply of fish like mackerel, kembong, yellowtail and torpedo scad (cencaru) are affected," he said.

For now, Hamid gave an assurance that there is enough supply of seafood.

"Many of us are managing with the supply we have now, but we are also keeping an eye on the weather," he said.

Housewife T. Balamani, 74, said she could still source for the fish she wanted at the market.

"If I cannot get it, then I will switch to chicken or mutton," she added.

Hawker Sarjahan Ibrahim Ghani, 57, who runs a food stall in Bandar Baru Air Itam, said there had not been any significant price increase in seafood such as fish and prawns amid the unpredictable weather condition.

"So far, the prices are relatively stable."

"Although certain fish types are less available due to the rough seas, our seafood supplier has maintained the price for the time being," she said.

On Wednesday, Fisheries Department director-general Datuk Adnan Hussain said that the department expected a 10% decrease in fish supplies in the east coast of the peninsula during the northeast monsoon period.

He said that the department

had taken preemptive steps to ensure a stable supply of fish from now till March next year.

On the west coast in states such as in Penang, Kedah, Perlis and Perak, fishing at sea is going on as usual.

Adnan said his team would ensure sufficient fish supplies during the monsoon, besides taking measures to stabilise prices and also by storing frozen fish as a buffer stock.

According to the Malaysian Meteorological Department, the northeast monsoon began on Nov 5 and will continue until March next year.

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