

CNS5066

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Requested rptn

Mahathir-consumers

CONSUMER PROBLEMS CAN BE ERADICATED, SAYS PM

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KUALA LUMPUR, May 4 (Bernama) -- Consumer problems can be reduced and even eradicated if the people are constantly aware of their roles as consumers and suppliers, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

Consumers and suppliers were the same people but this fact was often forgotten, the prime minister said when launching the World Consumers' Day 1993 at Pusat Islam, here.

"Consumers who use the daily necessities become suppliers of either goods or service when at work," he said.

Often, when putting on the hat of supplier, the same individual forgot and did not give that much priority to quality and other features demanded by the consumer, he added.

He said consumer problems essentially arose from this dual personality in each person. -- more

ZKK JK

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"We are only aware of the rights and interests of consumers when we become consumers but we forget about consumers when we take on the role of suppliers, so it is difficult for consumers to get priority for their interests," he said.

Measures to protect consumers were important to ensure that they received equivalent returns for their money, he added.

Dr Mahathir said it was useless for a country to continue to progress if its people were unable to enjoy the fruit of such progress.

He said the government and private sector could jointly look after the interests of consumers through cost control and quality which could be obtained from efficiency in production and transportation of goods, control of price, safety and standards and preservation of the environment.

Producers, distributors and retailers must realise that control by the government was good not only for consumers but also for suppliers.

"It is safer to get lasting moderate profits than to make huge profits for the short term only, said the prime minister. -- more

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Dr Mahathir suggested that the private sector have their own internal mechanism for speedy and easy settlement of consumers' complaints.

The big companies could have a specific unit for this purpose while the owners of small companies could handle the matter themselves.

Such a move would create a more caring private sector as a good corporate citizen, he added.

He said the joint involvement of the private sector and the government in championing consumers' rights would create an atmosphere of a mature and responsible "Malaysia Incorporated".

For the consumers, his advice was not to be extreme in pressing for their rights.

"True, there are irresponsible and greedy companies but not all of them are," he said. -- more

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Consumers should be prepared to pay more if they wanted higher quality goods or service and consumers' associations should only press their claims after verifying that there had been profiteering.

"In this matter the government is prepared to cooperate with consumers' associations...if there are stubborn suppliers, stern action like a boycott can be taken," he said.

He said the credibility of consumers' associations would drop if they resorted to extreme actions because this could affect the national economy and ultimately the consumer would lose.

He also reminded consumers of inflation that could result if they were not mindful of prices.

Rather than buy unnecessary luxury items, they should be invest like in the Malaysian Bond, he added. -- more

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Dr Mahathir later presented the "1992 Consumerism Champion" award to Federation of Malaysian Consumers Associations (Fomca) president Hamdan Adnan.

He also presented trophies, cash prizes and certificates to Sekolah Menengah Zainab, Kota Baharu, Kelantan, Sekolah Menengah Sultan Abu Bakar in Kuantan, Pahang, and Kolej Sultan Abdul Hamid, Alor Setar, Kedah, for emerging first, second and third in the Best School Consumer Club competition. -- Bernama

AZZ JK

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