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Bernama Feature

WAYS TO SAVE AND BEAT THE HIGH COST OF LIVING

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KUALA LUMPUR: Stretching the ringgit to meet the daily needs and desires of a modern family is not easy.

Blame it on inflation.

A sustained growth and flourishing national economy does not go without any side effects. Over the years, our living standards had risen steadily, reflected in the change in the lifestyle and taste of the people.

Many of us have perhaps become a bit more careless with money than our parents or grandparents.

Signs of global economic slowdown is in the air. With the pinch evident, most of us are wondering how to find the best way to revive the old habit of thrift which can make ends meet without compromising the living standards that we are now so used to.

Let's look at some of the age old remedies of money-saving ideas sprinkled with modern day philosophy as seen through the eyes of some laymen and professionals.

Check it to see whether it is worth your while to ponder and maybe after some thoughts put in practice.

+ Come the month's end, we the wage-earners will be paid for our labour. On this day, put aside a small amount into a savings account or an investment plan.

+ Start your own bank by building up a savings account and borrowing from it when necessary, instead of a financial or a banking institution. This will save you from paying interest.

+ Keep your money in a bank account that charges no service fee.

+ If you have money in a financial institution, you will gain more with one that pays interest from the day of deposit to the day of withdrawal. In others, know when earnings are credited so you don't make an untimely withdrawal.

+ If you have a large savings account, it would be wiser to withdraw a part of it and invest in fixed deposits that will yield more interest.

+ If you have to borrow, try to secure the loan by putting a collateral or go for a short term unsecured loan at a simple interest. You will pay less than what you pay if you go through monthly instalment. Should you need a sizeable loan for a worthwhile project, then borrow on your life insurance if it has a cash value. There's no time limit, no fuss and interest rates are relatively low.

+ When you hire purchase, shop around and compare the interest rates to be paid. Some shops have interest free period when a purchase is made, usually a short term purchase. Take advantage of it.

+ Impulsive habit of purchasing should be avoided. Whenever you go shopping, take with you only enough cash for what you intend to spend as this will eliminate impulsive buying.

+ Before shopping, have a meal or snack as this also make you less likely to buy on impulse.

+ If you are shopping for canned foods, it's probably better to go to a supermarket where prices are generally lower than to buy from a smaller store.

+ If you are buying fresh meat or fish, fruit, vegetables, remember that the closer you get to the producer, the less your purchases are likely to cost.

+ When buying furniture or appliances, try the classified advertisements as substantial savings can be made.

+ Buy Malaysian. Locally made goods, the quality of some clothing, for instance, is just as good or maybe better than imported ones.

+ If a member of your family often takes medicine for an illness, instead of obtaining the medications from the doctor regularly, ask him for the names of the medications and get them direct from the neighbourhood pharmacies. This will save you the consultation fee.

+ Save on postage by sending letters abroad using the postage-paid "aerogrammes" that can be sent anywhere.

+ Inflate your tyres two to four pounds above the lowest recommendation in the owner's manual, but not above 32 pounds. You will save on tyre and petrol per kilometer and may find the steering easier.

+ If your old car is giving out, buy a well-cared-for low-kilometer secondhand car instead of a new one, if you can find a reliable one at a fair price.

+ Take advantage of public transport whenever possible. If you have to drive, drive to save on petrol. Accelerate moderately because most petrol is consumed in getting the car moving; keep as constant on speed as you can, drifting up to stops rather than slamming on the brake; idle sparingly. Save the tyres by avoiding screeching stops and squealing turns.

+ Save gas by cooking as many dishes at the same time as you can. For instance, steam a couple of dishes over the rice while it is cooking. If you cook two meals at one time, you need only reheat the second meal.

+ Get into the habit of turning off electric appliances and lights when they are not needed. Save on electric bills by closing doors to rooms that are not air-conditioned, so that the coolness does not escape to space which is not in use.

+ Everybody loves to travel and the fastest mode of travel is by air. When flying, be sure to take advantage of special airline fares - enquire or ask your travel agent for a special discount.

+ Last but not least, do not leave cheques or cash lying around.

In other words, make every ringgit work. And the longer you can hold funds in the bank or saving accounts, the more interest you earn. --

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