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Call to opt for local food substitutes

JOHOR BARU, Thurs. - Consumers have been urged to explore local alternatives to imported food items in line with the Government's austerity drive.

Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs Datuk Tan Chai Ho said the public should make concerted efforts to break their dependence on imported food items.

He said sugar was a classic example as 80 per cent of it was imported, adding that manufacturers and consumers should switch to other alternatives.

"For example palm sugar could be a good alternative as a sweetener, for use in cooking and food manufacturing.

"Similarly, it would benefit the country's economy if we look to our traditional home-made alternatives to many of the food items that we are importing".

He said there were already many food manufacturers in the country who had introduced such alternatives in their production, in line with efforts to increase ingredients in their products.

Tan, who was speaking to reporters after launching the State level 'Back To School Sale' at Plaza Angsana in Tampoi here, also took to task consumers who despised made in Malaysia goods such as shoes, clothes and electrical appliances.

"Consumers are still chasing after imported branded items not knowing that these very items are made in Malaysia, exported to foreign countries and re-imported as branded items.

"The trend is so bad that even children are crazy about imported branded goods. Parents with school going children are driven by the children to buy branded school shoes for them."

He said with the current financial problems faced by the country, everyone should cut down on imported goods, particularly luxury items.

"Even our leaders, including Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and MCA president Datuk Seri Ling Liong Sik, have switched to using Malaysian made cars," he said.

On price hikes, Tan said manufacturers affected by the depreciation of the ringgit had been urged to absorb the increased cost of production where possible.

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