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Mahathir-consumers

CUT IMPORTS, RAISE OUTPUT TO ARREST RINGGIT SLIDE, SAYS MAHATHIR

KUALA LUMPUR, Nov 14 (Bernama) -- National emphasis should now be on cutting down on imports and increasing productivity to help arrest the slide of the ringgit due to recent speculative attacks by foreigners, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

It was now the task of consumer movements to impress this upon the public in helping to fight inflation and protect consumer rights, Dr Mahathir said when launching the national-level World Consumers' Day at the Islamic Centre here.

"Consumer associations should condemn those who have caused our currency to depreciate as the government's 40-year effort to bring prosperity to the people has been thwarted by a greedy few in a matter of weeks," he said at the function also attended by leaders of consumer bodies, traders, teachers and students.

Dr Mahathir said the import of both consumer and capital goods would have to be reduced.

Demanding increased payment because the cost of certain imported items had gone up would not solve any problem as the cost of producing goods for exports would go up, he said.

This would not make Malaysian products competitive with products of neighbouring countries which also faced depreciation of their currencies.

"Increased wages will result in higher inflation and this will not result in higher purchasing power," he said.

Dr Mahathir said Malaysians should not be influenced by the views of foreigners who claimed that the ringgit depreciated because of the country's inefficient administration.

"They are only good at economic analysis but had never managed anything and had certainly not administered any country successfully," he said.

He said consumer bodies could help reduce the cost of living by providing advice and information on checking inflation.

The Prime Minister said if consumer bodies levelled all types of criticism and resorted to various kinds of irresponsible actions cost would go up and consumers themselves would have to bear the burden.

Dr Mahathir said the cost of living in Malaysia could be halved if Malaysians did not act like those in developed societies.

"We want to live like people in developed countries but we do not have to follow their style of wastage or buy unnecessary things," he said.

He then handed over the various awards in conjunction with Consumer Day. The theme this year is "Be Cautious When Buying."

Minister of Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs Datuk Seri Megat Junid Megat Ayub, who also spoke at the function, urged the people to buy local goods.

He also urged them to go for domestic tourism.

Dean of the Faculty of Ecology, Universiti Putra Malaysia Associate Professor Dr Halimah Ahmad received the Anugerah Tokoh Pengguna 1996.

Three single parents, Hajah Amra Tunku Raja of Perak, Hajah Maznah Yaakob of Melaka and Puan Ajaib Kaur of Negeri Sembilan received the Anugerah Ibu Tunggal.

Sekolah Menengah Teknik, Kangar, Perlis won the Schools Consumer Club Award.

The Terengganu Consumer Affairs Council received an award for being the most active state in consumer affairs while the Seberang Perai Selatan,

Pulau Pinang, Consumer Affairs Council was adjudged the most active council. -- BERNAMA

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