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Go for locally made goods, Malaysians told

KUALA LUMPUR, Fri. - Malaysians must seriously consider buying local products as it not only helps curb currency outflow, but also ensures the healthy development of the local manufacturing industry.

Alternative Response Sdn Bhd general manager Md Khalid Abdullah said for a long time when the economy was strong, Malaysians had a choice of buying either local or imported goods.

"We were exposed too much to imported products, but now with the value of the ringgit depreciating, these goods have become expensive and less affordable."

"In many ways we do not have a choice (of imported or local products) anymore," he said.

Speaking to reporters at the "Love Malaysia, Buy Malaysia" products campaign and exhibition at the Malaysia International Design Export Centre (Idec) in Sungai Besi today, Khalid said the centre was focussing on encouraging Malaysians to buy local goods.

"Malaysians have held a long-standing belief that imported goods are better, much to the detriment of our local industries. We want to change that."

He said Idec was established to assume a positive private sector role in encouraging Malaysians to buy local, supplementing and supporting the Government's efforts in that direction.

The centre, located on Level 2 of the Malaysia International Exhibition & Showroom (Mines) here was launched yesterday by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

Alternative Response, a subsidiary of the Country Heights Group, is managing the centre.

"We want to expose Malaysians to the best that our country has to offer and also provide a centre where local manufacturers can promote their products."

"This centre will be a meeting place for local consumers and manufacturers."

But a more important function of Idec, according to Khalid, is its role as a trading centre for foreign buyers.

"To promote exports and currency inflow, the centre will also promote the local companies internationally."

"It will also be easier for foreign buyers to view Malaysian products because this centre will be a one-stop centre for them."

Khalid added that Alternative Response would also work closely with the Malaysia External Trade Development Corporation and the Malaysian foreign missions to establish business links for local manufacturers with overseas buyers.

There are so far 50 companies promoting Malaysian-made products such as furniture, electrical appliances, building materials and traditional batik at the centre.

"We expect a maximum of 100 companies to take part," Khalid said, adding that the centre had a total exhibition space of 18,000 sq metres.

Khalid said from now until Mar 31 the companies would be allowed to use the exhibition space for free and only needed to contribute 10 per cent of their sales to the centre. "The proceeds would be used to finance further promotional activities."

A visitor to the centre, Datin Sharifah Syed Omar Shahabuddin, who came

with her daughter and a friend, said the exhibition was "interesting" and had exposed her to more locally-made products in the market.

"I find the products of good quality and the prices are also reasonable," she added.

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