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`Reduce imports of less popular goods'

Asiah Bujang

PRIME MINISTER Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has directed the compilation of a list of imported products that can be replaced by local substitutes with the aim of halting such imports.

Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs Minister Datuk Seri Megat Junid Megat Ayob said such a move would help to stem the outflow of the ringgit and instead encourage consumers to purchase local products.

The imported goods include foodstuff and other items which are still found in large quantities in supermarkets, Megat Junid told reporters at his office after the weekly Cabinet meeting. He said there are 50 different types of imported butter, for example.

"We have received complaints from retailers that there are too many different kinds of drinks and foodstuffs but very few buyers," he said.

Megat Junid said the ministry's secretary-general will meet the importers concerned to advise them to stop importing such goods.

Megat Junid also urged consumers to use cheaper but quality alternatives to minimise the effects of rising prices of foodstuff.

For example, locally-produced margarine can be used instead of imported butter when baking cakes during the festive season.

Traders can also do likewise by importing onions from Thailand instead of India or China, he said.

Megat Junid said enforcement officers have been directed to intensify checks on shops to ensure that the prices of products do not escalate.

The Cabinet Committee on Essential Goods chaired by Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim is to hold a meeting today to discuss, among other things, measures to overcome the increase in the prices of goods.

(END)