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Plan your spending to avoid wastage and losses, urges PM

KUALA LUMPUR, Fri. - Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today called on Malaysians to plan their spending to avoid wastage and losses.

The Prime Minister said they should stop spending lavishly as such a culture could lead to negative consequences for themselves and the country.

"Businessmen, who are also at the same time consumers, practise good ethics and responsibility.

"Remember, as consumers, businessmen like to get good services and goods, as businessmen we must also provide good service and goods," Dr Mahathir said in his speech tonight to mark World Consumers Day at the Putra World Trade Centre here.

He said businessmen would not lose as they would be appreciated and recognised for being ethical and trustworthy, resulting in their businesses doing better.

Dr Mahathir called on leaders of consumer associations to be more proactive in helping the Government educate consumers, especially in the globalisation-era and the fast-developing open market system.

"Consumer associations have a duty and responsibility to explain to the public the positive and negative aspects of globalisation and the impact of globalisation on the country, the people and consumers," he said.

Dr Mahathir said the open market system practised by the country must also be explained to consumers so that they would not blame the Government when there were price fluctuations.

"Demands that quality and efficiency be raised but prices be reduced do not reflect sane, careful thinking.

"Being aware that all costs have gone up but still demanding that prices not be raised, but rather lowered surely is not reasonable," he said.

Dr Mahathir said consumer associations should help the government educate consumers with relations between them enhanced for the well-being of consumers.

"As associations that have close ties with a target group at the grassroot level, the information channelled by consumer associations can help the Government plan suitable policies for the country as a whole."

Dr Mahathir said World Consumers Day, also known as World Consumer Rights Day, was to promote and enhance awareness among the public of their rights and responsibility as consumers.

He said that while many consumers held fast to the basic rights of consumers, a large number always forget or were negligent in carrying out their responsibilities.

"For example, all consumers want an environment that is clean, healthy and safe. But I always hear and read in the newspapers that many consumers are still not careful about caring for the environment by throwing rubbish all over the place.

"It is not appropriate that consumers demand their rights but at the same time neglect their responsibility to collectively care for a clean and safe environment," he said.

Dr Mahathir said the Government was serious about consumer protection with the setting up of a consumer claims tribunal representing another channel for consumers to seek compensation for losses suffered during business transactions or services provided.

He said consumers before this had to resort to civil courts which

involved a difficult process, high costs and a lot of time.

Dr Mahathir said while people before had to meet to buy goods and use services, now they need not do so with e-commerce becoming more important in the future.

He said the Government will always monitor the situation whether it involves consumers or the interests of businessmen to ensure the success of e-commerce and looking after the interests of all quarters.

He said as developing countries raced to provide lower wages and less costly factors for production to attract investors, they also opened up their markets in the hope of having greater economic growth and a higher standard of living.

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