

Consumer group wants direct link to PM

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Consumers groups want more muscle by being placed under the Prime Minister's Department's purview for effectiveness, according to the Federation of Malaysian Consumers Associations (Fomca).

Unveiling the Malaysian consumers wish list for the 13th general election today, Fomca president Marimuthu Nadason said this would allow the PM, who holds the supreme power of decision-making, to decide on various consumers' concerns.

NONEHe said under the current structure, the groups are governed under the consumer protection and consumer welfare division of the Ministry of Domestic Trade, Cooperatives and Consumerism.

"The current structure is too narrow; an integrated and holistic approach of consumer protection and consumer welfare encompasses multi-sectroral issues under several ministries," noted the wish list.

"Right now we have to go through everyone. For complaints about the murky water, we have to go to the Health Ministry; for complaints about buses we have to go to the Transport Ministry.

"If we are placed under the PM's Department, he can direct all the queries to the relevant departments," he said at a press conference in Petaling Jaya today.

Meanwhile, Marimuthu also reminded politicians and political parties to focus on consumer issues in the run-up to the general election as these are affecting the public the most.

List of consumers' concerns

Fomca, through a nationwide survey it conducted between 2010 and 2011, have found those which topped the list of consumers' concerns were the price of goods, jobs, public transport and healthcare.

Hence, the wish list was drafted based on the four criteria, to which eight rights were outlined.

The rights are: right to basic needs, right to safety, right to choice, right to information, right to be heard, right to redress, right to service, right to consumer education, and right to a safe and healthy environment.

"For example in the area of public transport, there is an over-concentration on improving transport in the Klang Valley, but not the rural areas," said Marimuthu.

“And for healthcare, we don’t want it to be privatised,” he added.

He urged elected reps in the next GE to reflect those concerns to parliament and not bicker about political issues.

However, he dismissed the notion that the manifesto was a threat in which consumer groups will decide who to vote for, saying they just hope the politicians will comply with their wishes.

“No, we are threatening them, because we are nobody. We just hope they can follow (our manifesto),” he said.

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