I WRITE in support of the complaints by Astro subscribers, the latest of which is the letter by M.G.S. of Klang ("Competition will help" - NST, March 6). I think that Astro should not charge its viewers for the monthly magazine and should also not demand late-payment charges. <table border="0" cellspacing="3" cellpadding="0" width="200" align="right"></table> Astro increased the subscription by more than 10 per cent recently and, although the number of channels has increased, it does not look like the quality of the programmes has improved as well. We do not need another lifestyle magazine which will be flipped through in two minutes and then added to the pile of waste paper.

All we need is a simple list of the channels and programmes and possibly a synopsis of the programme.

As for the late-payment charges, there are many reasons why people do not pay on time, among which may be automated teller machines not functioning, traffic jams and inconvenient location of payment points.
In any sale-and-purchase agreement, both parties undertake some obligations as well as commitments, yet because of unforeseen circumstances, both parties will seldom be able to fulfil 100 per cent of what has been promised.

In the case of Astro, there will be no reception if there is bad weather or equipment breakdown, for example.

It can also be difficult to get through to customer service lines and customers may have to wait a long time at Astro offices to register their complaints in person.

Although I have been a subscriber for 12 years now, I don't recall Astro ever calling to inquire if the service is satisfactory.

And, when the new channels were chosen, did Astro consult customers to see what their preferences were? No, it's Astro that decides what we will watch and expects us to pay as billed.

An attitude of understanding the customer and helping him to fulfil obligations, rather then penalising him would improve the situation of seller and buyer.

Monopolistic companies have come to a point where they think they can print a figure on a piece of paper and you have to pay because they are able to play the ever-powerful card of stopping your service if you don't pay.

Certainly business must be conducted in a more humane and understanding way, where the transactions conducted are beneficial and advantageous to both parties.

The government stated recently that crime matters will be dealt with first.

Well, maybe it should look more closely at the way business is conducted and how too many big companies provide sub-standard products and services while expecting to be paid on time and in full. New Straits Times - 7 March 2008 by M.A. Ipoh
