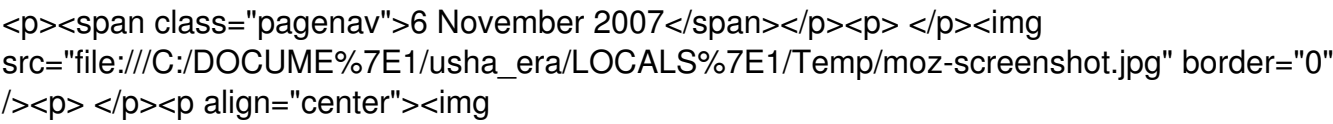
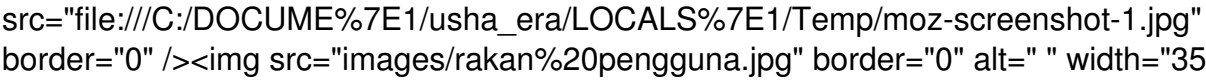
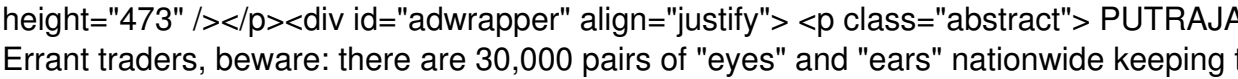


6 November 2007







PUTRAJAYA: Errant traders, beware: there are 30,000 pairs of "eyes" and "ears" nationwide keeping tabs on you.

With Deepavali around the corner, Rakan Pengguna (RP) members are expected to be especially vigilant especially about unreasonable price hikes.

Cell groups of 20 or more RP members are being used to follow enforcement officers on price checks.

"This is more effective as errant traders will not suspect civilians are being used to monitor prices," Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs Ministry's consumer affairs director Mohd Mokhtar Tahar said.

He said they would also be looking out for unethical practices among traders.

Mokhtar said the RP members, formerly known as Price watch Volunteers, were an important part of the ministry's enforcement arm. On the cards are an expanded role for them that would include monitoring of taxi and bus services.

The ministry is also thinking of a reward programme for RP members who may be able to earn reward points that could be exchanged for exclusive gifts.

"We are planning to increase their numbers and empower them through training courses and activities held nationwide."

Mokhtar said a one-day training session would be held soon to help RP members learn more about their role. Training will cover topics like monitoring price trends, reporting grouses, being smart consumers and being knowledgeable about consumer issues.

He said each state had an RP committee that would oversee the needs of members, besides informing and conducting price watch activities.

"Their feedback will enable enforcement officers to take immediately action as they are not able to be at numerous places at one time.

"Being an RP member also makes consumers more aware of price increases and price trends in the market."

As consumer awareness increases, so will RP membership, he said, adding that the division had registered 6,000 new members since July.

"They do the monitoring and supply information to us on price increases throughout the year, but have no power to enforce the law.

"The role of RP members is not merely to monitor prices but also to monitor unethical practices among traders. They are supposed to be agents of change to enhance education and awareness among consumers on their rights and responsibilities.

"Working individually or as a group, RP members should be able to educate consumers to be smart and be able to influence prices and not be exploited by traders."

Lifetime membership is open to anyone between 18 and 60 years.

The public can register at road shows, ministry branch offices, by sending a SMS to 32255 or at www.rakanpengguna.com.my.

Meanwhile, the ministry's director-general of enforcement Mohd Roslan Mahayudin said his division would study information provided by RP members first before taking action.

"Our actions must be justified. If we are unsure, our officers will countercheck the information with RP members.

"The wider the RP network, the better for us to take action against irresponsible traders."

Championing consumers' cause by providing tip-offs

KUALA LUMPUR: Mohd Khair Abdullah is on duty even after ending his day at the office.

While he is a narcotics officer from morning until he clocks out, he is a Rakan Pengguna after that.

This

NST : Spies out to nab errant traders

Written by Administrator

Friday, 11 September 2009 15:18 -

usually sees him, his wife Zainab Ahmad, 43, and eldest daughter Noor Yasmin, 22, monitoring price hikes and unethical practices among traders.

 The 49-year-old civil servant of almost 30 years came to know of RP through a road show and introduced it to his wife and daughter.

 "I monitor reports of price trends and report abuses through SMS to the Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs Ministry. I use my code number to protect my identity."

 Khair once reported on an illegal DVD seller, providing the location where the peddler operated.

 "Within a couple of days, I was informed by the ministry's enforcement division that they had taken action against the peddler.

 "It gives me satisfaction in knowing that the enforcement officers acted on the information given."

 He added that enforcement officers also sometimes contacted RP members for help to monitor prices in specific areas.

 For 48-year-old Junaidah Abdul Manaf, playing the role of a RP member has become second nature to the housewife from Cheras.

 "I became very interested in RP as I am a consumer myself. Sometimes, when I go to the market, residents come up to me and complain about a sudden price hike by traders."

 She said RP members also gathered in groups to monitor prices especially in rural areas where enforcement officers seldom conducted checks. Junaidah also holds talks in her neighbourhood to educate residents on consumer rights. </div>◆ <p align="center"> </p>