

2009/02/26

THE COMMON GOOD: Focus on vital economic issues

By : PAUL SELVA RAJ for Consumer Research and Resource Centre, Kuala Lumpur

THE world is in the midst of an economic crisis. Jobs are being lost. Prices are not coming down, no matter how much the politicians may shout.

The policy-makers seem unaware what every consumer knows and is part of their daily experience -- after the earlier price hike, prices are staying put or going up.

It is true that in a market economy, there is not much the government can do anyway.

It can control prices and maintain or increase subsidies to some extent, but fundamentally, the market will determine prices based on the simple principle of demand and supply.

However, there is one thing the government can do. It can focus. It can focus on the economy and the many social challenges people are facing. It can try to understand the market, to further liberalise it so that with strong competition at every level of the food chain, consumers will benefit. It can try to understand how other nations in a similar predicament are taking steps to help consumers and workers face the challenges.

That is what they were elected to do; that is what we expect them to do. We are voters once in five years; we are consumers every day.

But the politics has not stopped. After the March 8 general election, there was September 11. Then, two by- elections. Now, the confusion is in Perak. The beginnings of another side-show in Selangor. And who knows what's next!

Meanwhile, the people suffer.

For the good of the nation, for the good of our citizens, our workers and our consumers, it is time for everyone to take a step back and reflect on what politics is all about. Is it about individual power or is it about enhancing the common good? When does politicking become enhancing and when does it become destructive?

Let us all as citizens and spiritual beings pray that the malaise that is ravaging Malaysian politics will go away. That politicians will once again remember they were selected to enhance the common good. That the news that we will read in the front page every morning is news that will motivate us, sustain us and give us the courage to face these tough times.

It is our right to expect this focus from the government; it is our responsibility to serve and make sacrifices to help this nation endure and reach its fullest potential.

Source: http://www.nst.com.my/Current_News/NST/Thursday/Letters/2489367/Article/index.html