

The Consumer Research and Resource Centre and its new Journal the CRRC Consumer Review were launched by Prof. Emeritus Dr Mohamed Ariff Abdul Kareem on 20 March 2010 in conjunction with World Consumer Rights Day 2010.

Datuk Marimuthu Nadason, Chairman of the Board of Directors and also President of FOMCA explained that consumer issues have become increasingly complex. The new forces affecting and shaping consumer protection and interests include globalization, increasing food and energy process, water shortages and climate change issues. Another very powerful force affecting not only current consumers but also the next generation of consumers is technology. Through internet and the new social media, corporations can directly reach children and youths bypassing the role of parents as the gatekeeper. In Malaysia, the most popular website for children is that of a fast-food chain.

Domestically, it is clear that government's role is also becoming more restrained due to the global forces affecting consumers. Certainly, Governments can enhance consumer protection and consumer welfare through appropriate laws, policies, enforcement and programs but the nature of globalization and that of technology means their influence is increasingly limited.

Due to the complexity of issues, the consumer movement, to remain relevant and effective needs to evolve. Simplistic solutions will no longer do. The consumer movement needs a more strategic and long-term approach in addressing consumer issues.

The Consumer Research and Resource Centre was thus formed to take a strategic and long-term approach in consumer protection and consumer welfare. Formed on 16 September 2008, the CRRC undertakes research and studies on issues related to consumer protection including food prices and food security, public transport, healthcare, crime in the neighborhood and local government issues.

To date CRRC is monitoring food prices of thirty five food items, undertaking research on household expenditures, consumption patterns of children and youths, marketing of junk food and toys to children, and organized a roundtable discussion on food prices and food security. CRRC also conducts an on-going research on what consumers in rural and urban communities consider as important consumer issues affecting their lives. CRRC also undertakes studies on current consumer laws to towards enhancing consumer protection and consumer welfare.

In the future, CRRC will be conducting research on public transport, healthcare, impact of removal of subsidies on the consumer, internet usage of children and youths and financial literacy levels of children and youths. CRRC is also working with FOMCA on areas of consumer, media literacy and financial literacy education. CRRC's new Journal, CRRC Consumer Review was also launched. The first edition focused on issues of food prices and food security, food safety, consumer laws, corporate responsibility, youths spending behavior and marketing to children. The Journal seeks to influence policy makers, industry and civil society leaders towards enhancing consumer protection and consumer welfare.

In his speech Prof. Emeritus Datuk Dr. Arief emphasized on the need for a competition policy to enhance consumer interests, gradual removal of all form of subsidies except those based on need for those who deserve it, and the importance of the goods and services tax. He also emphasized the importance of the consumer movement to educate the consumers of their rights and responsibilities.