

AN ALLOCATION of RM674mil has been set aside under the recent stimulus package to subsidise prices of necessities such as sugar, bread and wheat flour.

I hope this truly benefits consumers. But seeing what the prices of necessities are today, there is much more that the Government needs to do to assist the poor and those with fixed incomes, though I am glad that the Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs Minister has done much to urge emporiums/supermarkets to come real with their retail prices.

But I see some traders still have not reduced the prices of essential food items, as was expected after the drop in fuel prices.

I also agree that consumers with a monthly income of, say, RM700 and below, be given cash to help them, as we did when fuel prices shot up.

Some consumers are having a really hard time. They do not have enough cash to buy essentials.

Also, I note with regret, that even today the prices of some retail goods remain unchanged when they should have come down by now.

Prices of powdered milk, cooking oil, bathing soap and the likes haven't been lowered. Vegetables prices are up, and so are the variety of cooked and uncooked food.

The *roti canai* has shrunk in size.

All these are the unfair ways of the retail trade, which treats consumers with contempt. This should not be allowed. The Government should not remain silent but act on it, and quickly, too.

Here are some helpful tips for consumers. It is time to learn the right way to shop. Be a wise and sensible buyer. Be pragmatic when buying.

Do not allow yourself to be taken in by errant traders, but report them. Do not suffer in silence. Speak up when you see that things are not right, like over-priced goods, faulty items and advertisements that misled you into buying a product.

Reward the good traders.

Try alternatives should the price of a product go up. Know where and when to buy.

Have a budget when purchasing. Do not go beyond it. Manage your purchases and know your finances.

The ringgit isn't what it used to be years ago. Today it buys so little. Before you shop, make a list of what you need and stick to it.

Simply put; be an informed and educated purchaser.

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Source: <http://thestar.com.my/news/story.asp?file=/2009/3/16/focus/3486768&sec=focus>