



"We need to build consumer confidence that local products are of comparable quality to imported goods."

Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs Minister
DATUK ALEXANDER NANTA LINGGI

» REPORT BY ADIB POVERA AND HANA NAZ HARUN ON PAGES 6 & 7

MALAYSIAN-MADE PRODUCTS

'BUYING LOCAL GOODS WILL HELP FIRMS SURVIVE'

Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs Minister Datuk Alexander Nanta Linggi shares with **ADIB POVERA** and **HANA NAZ HARUN** how the Buy Malaysia campaign will revitalise the economy

EARLIER this month, the government rolled out the Economic Recovery Plan (Penjana) to rejuvenate the economy, which was disrupted by the Covid-19 pandemic.

Among the 40 initiatives worth RM35 billion under Penjana include the Buy Malaysia campaign, which will be spearheaded by the Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs Ministry.

Its minister, Datuk Alexander Nanta Linggi, explains how the campaign will push for the consumption of made in Malaysia products to re-energise the economy.

Question: Has the ministry identified any activity or promotion to be included in the campaign?

Answer: We want to vigorously and comprehensively emphasise the numerous initiatives under the Buy Malaysia campaign.

The ministry realises that conventional sales and promotional events will not create sufficient hype for the campaign.

Therefore, we have developed strategies to support the campaign through promotional and marketing channels, among them social media and new media marketing, online sales and campaigns via marketplaces, and airtime and media buy to create awareness among Malaysians to support local products to boost the economy.

Apart from making local product tagging or identification compulsory for big supermarket

chains, dedicated channels will also be created for Malaysian products on digital platforms.

Q: Even before the Covid-19 pandemic, e-commerce and online shopping had registered growth in Malaysia. Is the ministry looking for or has it identified any innovative retail partnership to bolster the campaign?

A: Collaborations between the ministry and prominent marketplace platforms in Malaysia are not a new thing.

Last year, when the Buy Malaysia campaign was started, the partnership between e-commerce and online shopping platforms proved to be highly successful.

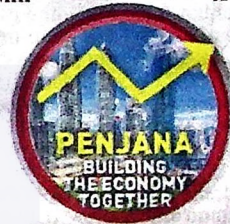
I want to share a fact about the success of this collaboration, which benefited local entrepreneurs and economy.

Last year, we saw a dramatic increase of more than 2,400 per cent in the sales of local products on Shopee, with an average daily sales worth RM49,183 and an average of 845 products sold daily.

Our collaboration with Lazada recorded a 3,800 per cent increase in the sales of local products on the platform.

Other marketplaces also recorded a tremendous achievement with at least an increase of 35 per cent in sales for last year.

Considering the success of last year's collaboration and leveraging the digital economy and e-commerce infrastructure, the ministry will intensify efforts to



promote local products on Lazada, Shopee, Go Shop, FashionValet, Prestomall and Zalora.

Up to 27 million users visit these sites monthly. So the ministry, in collaboration with these marketplaces, will apply initiatives and incentives, such as promotions, redeemable vouchers, sales discounts, lucky draws and giveaways to attract Malaysians to buy local products.

This collaboration is also in line with our commitment to educate consumers on the vast array of high-quality Malaysian-made products.

Q: What are the locally-made products that will be given more focus under the Buy Malaysia campaign?

A: Malaysian-made goods are available at all leading retailers in this country to support the campaign. There are hypermarkets or supermarkets that allocate up to 70 per cent of Malaysian-made goods and this figure may vary for each retailer.

Although the goal of the campaign is to spur the economy, the ministry will also emphasise on helping the most affected segments in the retail sector, such as fashion, lifestyle and automotive.

When you buy local products, you are helping to ensure the sur-

vival of local industries.

If local industries thrive, they continue to pay duties, which generate income for the country, and provide employment for our people.

This way, it helps us keep the money circulating in our country as we sustain economic growth post-Covid-19. So it makes a lot of sense to buy locally-made products.

Q: Will the campaign feature more entrepreneurs or products from Sabah and Sarawak?

A: The campaign supports all products made by everyone in the country.

The owner of the products could be Malay, Chinese, Indian, Kadazan, Iban or others.

Race does not matter. As long as the goods are made in Malaysia, they will be promoted. We need to keep up the momentum of this campaign because if it succeeds, Malaysians will benefit from it and it will boost the economy.

We encourage and welcome more entrepreneurs and producers from Sabah and Sarawak to participate.

This campaign will encourage traders to expand their products and services in the country, and to widen their market and eco-

nom ic income.

Q: How can local entrepreneurs as well as Malaysians prepare or contribute to ensure this campaign achieves its target set by the government?

A: The ministry will, from time to time, encourage local entrepreneurs to adhere to certain standards and maintain the quality of products and services to meet customers' expectations.

We need to ensure that local products and services are of the same quality or even better than imported products.

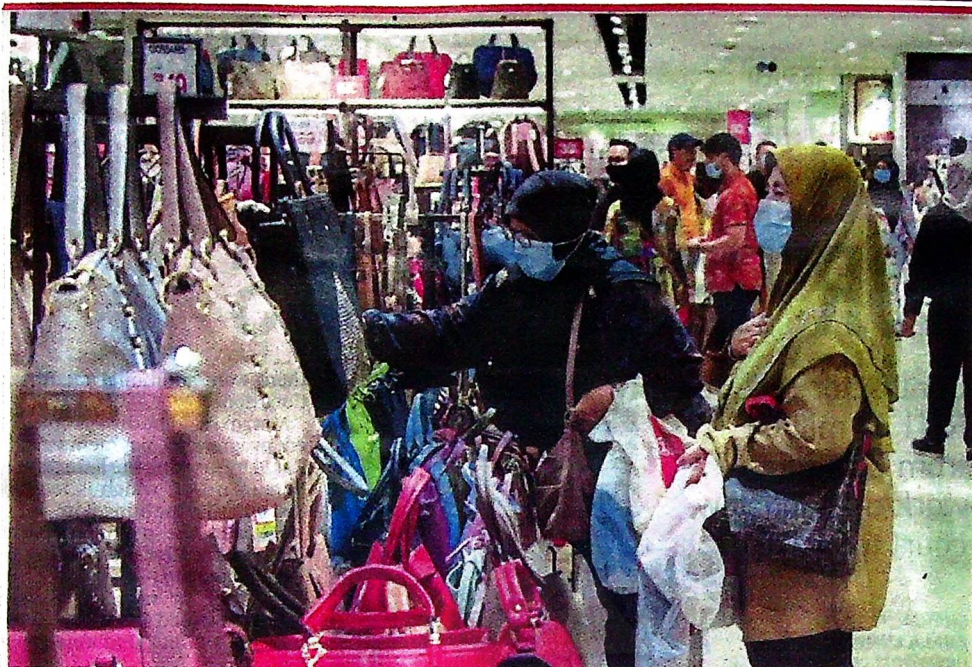
This is crucial to change the perception of consumers to Malaysian-made products.

We need to build up consumer confidence as well as realign their mindset to see that local products are on a par with imported goods.

The ministry's approach is always collaborative in nature with contribution from industry players.

For the campaign this year, a similar approach is being undertaken. Besides industries, ministries and agencies, state governments and local authorities will play active roles in making the campaign a success.

Q: Has the ministry set any



The Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs Ministry hopes the initiative to label and to tag locally-made goods will be supported by the retail sector. FILE PIC

sales target for the campaign or will this be reviewed throughout the campaign?

A: For last year's campaign, we achieved a 17 per cent increased sales compared with 2018.

For this year, we aim to achieve at least a 25 per cent increase from last year's sales.

Q: Will the ministry set up a task force to ensure the campaign achieves its goal?

A: The ministry has a big enforcement unit made up of more than 2,300 personnel in the country.

The unit has enabled the ministry to monitor and keep track of prices and the supply of goods in the market.

After the launching of this campaign, our enforcement officers will check on the prices of goods and ensure sufficient supply to meet consumer demand.

Having said that, we are not going to be punitive. Instead, we want to ensure that people conduct their business according to the rules set by the government.

There are standard operating procedures (SOP) that we need to abide by.

Q: How will the campaign this year differ from the previous campaign?

A: The events that are going to be held this year will not be similar to the ones before the world was affected by the pandemic.

Previously, thousands of people would throng the venue where we launched our campaign.

For this year's campaign, things will be different since there are SOP that we need to follow to ensure social distancing is practised.

However, from the feedback and commitment of stakeholders as well as industry players, we are confident that the campaign will achieve its goals, despite the limitations due to the pandemic.

Q: Will the ministry come up with initiatives to assist local entrepreneurs or businesses dealing with imported products since they also contribute to the country's economic growth?

A: We will come up with another campaign called Jualan Malaysia to assist local businesses and entrepreneurs offering products from other countries.

This campaign will help them during this challenging period since it is also an important aspect to rejuvenate the economy post-Movement Control Order (MCO) and Conditional MCO.

The Jualan Malaysia and Buy Malaysia campaigns, which will be launched and run simultaneously, are the ministry's main thrusts to regenerate the marketplace, and subsequently stimulate the economy.

If these two campaigns achieve their goals outlined by the ministry throughout the next six months, the ministry may extend the same programmes next year.

Q: Has the ministry decided on the launching date of these campaigns?

A: We are planning to launch these campaigns next month. We are in the advanced stages of planning.

The campaigns will be held at the national level in Kuala Lumpur before going on to the states.

Places as far as Tawau in Sabah, or Kapit in Sarawak, even Perlis and Kelantan will see their own Buy Malaysia awareness campaigns, and all entrepreneurs will benefit from the initiatives.

These campaigns will encompass (entrepreneurs) from the whole country because all are affected by the pandemic.

Q: How has the response from stakeholders and industry players been to these campaigns?

A: During the formulation of the campaigns, we drew participation from industry players and held several roundtable sessions to discuss ideas and initiatives.

They shared with us their plans to attract consumers. Many supermarkets plan to give discount vouchers and prizes for lucky draws, for example.

They gave direct input to Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin, and he was very happy with the participation of the stakeholders and organisation heads.

Q: Apart from encouraging people to buy locally-made goods, what are the other results the ministry hopes to achieve from this campaign?

A: Not only do we encourage people to buy and sell through online platforms, we also encourage young Malaysians to become entrepreneurs or create e-commerce platforms.

With the right training and skills, we hope that more youths will start businesses.

In time, as their enterprises grow, they would be able to provide employment, too. Creating jobs is one of the many reasons why we encourage entrepreneur development.

Young people today have greater opportunities and facilities to help them become entrepreneurs. All you need is your computer, phone, an Internet connection, product and some management skills. You can even do this from your home.

Q: With online purchases increasing in popularity, how can consumers protect themselves from becoming victims of scams?

A: Buying things online is definitely more convenient. It saves us time and can be significantly cheaper than buying from physical stores. However, while it has its advantages, it is not fool-proof.

People can cheat, and they do cheat. There have been many cases of businesses short-changing consumers.

Our enforcement unit pays close attention to this, but without complaints from consumers, it will be difficult for us to track down these businesses.

Complaints will enable us to investigate, and compound or penalise traders who scam consumers.

The ministry has set up channels for consumers to raise their complaints, including WhatsApp, e-Aduan Portal, our toll-free line and the Enforcement

Command centre.

Consumers can also channel their complaints over the counter at ministry offices or through the Ez Adu app.

People must be educated about their rights as consumers, and not brush off any incident if they were victims of scams, fraudulent pricing or services.

Be wise consumers. When we receive complaints from the public, we're able to penalise these businesses and it will act as a deterrent for other companies.

It is important for traders and retailers to note that they must always be ethical when conducting their business.

During the MCO, we compounded an online store selling three-ply face masks at RM3 each, despite the ceiling price set at RM1.50 per mask. The trader was compounded RM200,000 for this.

Q: According to the Penjana booklet distributed by the Finance Ministry, the government will ensure that local product tagging or identification is made compulsory for big supermarket chains. Will there be a nationwide operation to ensure supermarket chains adhere to this?

A: One of the strategic initiatives outlined by the ministry in promoting the Buy Malaysia Campaign is to encourage major supermarket chains to tag and label local products through dedicated racks and shelves that display and promote Malaysian-made products.

We hope that the initiative to label and to tag locally-made goods will be supported by the retail sector, and not only by big supermarket chains but also departmental stores, superstores, chain stores, convenience stores and petrol stations.



Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs Minister Datuk Alexander Nanta Linggi says the ministry's Buy Malaysia campaign this year aims to achieve a 25 per cent increase in sales compared with last year's campaign. PIC BY MOHD FADLI HAMZAH