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TODAY Voices
news@newstoday.com.sg
Fax: 6534 4217

A CASE for all

I refer to the letters by Mr Leong Sze Hian (23 Dec) and Mr Jeffrey Law Lee Beng (27 Dec).

CASE has asked consumers to report their concerns of GST-related profiteering to the Committee Against Profiteering (CAP). CAP was set up by the Government to combat GST-related profiteering and it has the vested power to investigate such complaints. CASE is an institutional member of CAP. We understand that CAP investigated all complaints against retailers who use GST hikes as the reason to increase prices at the last round of GST adjustment. It is expected to do likewise in the coming round of GST increase.

CASE was set in 1971 when the prices of basic necessities were unstable and there was rampant profiteering. Our mission of protecting consumers' interests remains relevant today.

The writers asked if CASE examines and speaks out on price increases, especially those relating to services provided by monopolies. They cited examples such as postage, public transport and electricity tariffs. Some of these services are already monitored and subjected to regular reviews by the authorities, such as postage costs by the InfoComm Development Authority, and public transport fares by the Public Transport Council. Electricity tariffs are determined by a formula that tracks the ups and downs of quarterly prices depending on the changing input costs, which primarily comprises oil.

CASE watches all price increases closely. We are not against price adjustments by market forces *per se*, and we believe the principle that businesses should be transparent and consumers should have more information when prices are adjusted. We have consistently been calling for transparency on pricing and an example was our task force on transparency in hospital bills in 2004. We will continue to take a firm position when price increases are either unjustified or lack transparency.

CASE is an affiliate member of Consumers International since early 2004. CASE is a non-profit, non-governmental organisation that draws on the strength of our volunteers. We have a pool of more than 200 volunteers and they help us champion consumer issues. CASE serves consumers from all sectors of society and in addition to handling individual complaints, we also conduct public education talks to raise awareness of potential problems that consumers may face.

The leadership of CASE is provided by its Central Committee where its members, including the president and vice presidents, are elected. Of the 19-member committee, besides six who institutional members with union and co-operative background, the rest are individuals and professionals who have volunteered their time.

We welcome people from all walks of life to contribute their time and expertise to the consumer movement in Singapore.

Yeo Guat Kwang
President
Consumers Association of Singapore