



Persatuan Pengguna Pulau Pinang Consumers Association of Penang

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Letter to the Editor

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CAP: Strictly Enforce the Poisons Act 1952

The Consumers Association of Penang, (CAP) calls on the Ministry of Health to strictly enforce the Poisons Act 1952 as controlled poisons were found to be added to food.

Recently the Health Ministry found 21 food products such as health drinks, candies and premix coffee to contain controlled poisons, such as sildenafil, tadalafil, dexamethasone and prednisolone.

Sildenafil is the active agent in Viagra, while tadalafil is also branded as Cialis. dexamethasone and prednisolone are steroids.

Sildenafil, tadalafil, dexamethasone and prednisolone are all controlled drugs and can only be purchased with prescription. The question is how did these poisons get into the hands of food manufacturers?

In the past there have been many cases reported of individuals getting sick or died after consuming coffee tainted with drugs.

In 2014, a 36-year-old man died after drinking his favourite “traditional” coffee which also contained sildenafil which is a sex stimulant. The product which combines high levels of both sildenafil and caffeine can cause extremely high blood pressure and if this goes unchecked, can ultimately lead to death. The particular coffee has been banned by the authorities but it was still available.

The issue of drugs in food is not a recent matter. Since 2008 CAP has brought up the issue to the Ministry of Health. In a survey we found a number of different brands of coffee mixes which claimed to contain traditional ingredients such as *Tongkat Ali*, or *Kacip Fatimah*. The brand names of some of the coffee mixes appear to hint at the products’ ability to enhance sexual prowess in men.

From time to time we hear of the Ministry of Health confiscating food and supplements containing controlled drugs. Even though the authorities have banned the products that were found to contain drugs, similar products are still available under different brands.

The Ministry of Health should conduct an investigation to find out from where the manufacturers of these illegal products obtain their supply of controlled drugs for their products. If this is not done, no amount of raids can stop these hazardous products from being in the market.

It is time that the Ministry of Health take a serious view of the situation and nip the problem in the bud by strictly enforcing the Poisons Act 1952.

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