Press Statement   3 June 2020

WHY IS JELLY CANDY STILL BEING SOLD?

CAP is concerned about the four-year-old boy who died after choking on a piece of jelly candy in his house in Kampung Batu Manikar, Labuan, on 20 May.

In 2004, we had called for an immediate ban on this type of sweet from the market as it posed as a choking hazard. This boy could have been alive today if immediate action to permanently remove these products from the market had been put in place more than a decade ago.

However, our recent survey covering several supermarkets and shops in Penang showed that the sale of this type of jelly candy was still rampant.

The question arises as to why the authorities did not take the matter seriously and act on our call. We highlighted the fact in August 2001 that the US Food and Drug Administration had issued a warning against mini-cup jellies containing a thickening agent called konjac.

There was an import alert put on this product afterwards. New Zealand and Australia had also banned this form of sweet. Konjac does not dissolve easily and can pose as a choking and an intestinal blockage risk. If the jelly is swallowed whole, it may lodge in the throat and is difficult to remove.

Deaths linked to various brands of mini jellies have been reported in several countries. A local Tamil daily reported in 1999 that a young boy from Kuala Ketil in Kedah died due to choking after eating this type of jelly.

Subsequently the European Union banned jelly sweets sold in mini cups since April 2004. It warned that the safety labelling was not sufficient to safeguard against choking risks in children.

CAP urges the Ministry of Health to take immediate measures to ban the sale of jelly candy.

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