



Persatuan Pengguna Pulau Pinang Consumers Association of Penang

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Press Statement

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CAP: Pay Attention To Areas In The Shadows of Broadband Internet

There has been much hype by the authorities recently about the roll out of 5G trial runs in October, while the vast majority of people are still struggling with slow speed and connectivity problems. Consumers' Association of Penang, (CAP) calls upon the authorities to fix the problems in areas that are in the shadows of broadband Internet, where there are no fibre optic cables and broadband wireless signals are weak and unreliable.

Under the *National Fiberisation and Connectivity Plan*, selected housing estates have been provided with fiber optic cables. However, within the housing estates where the cables are running, there are many buildings that have been denied connection for reasons only known to the utility company, in this case Telecom Malaysia, (TM).

These buildings are connected by copper telephone cables which are aging. Therefore, most of them can carry low speed signals up to about 4Mbps only. Even 8Mbps may be an issue. When complaints are made to TM, they can only send technicians to trouble shoot and claim that everything is fine on their side. This is nothing but dragging of feet and wasting everyone's time.

What the TM should do is to send competent officers with expertise to study the situation in each locality case-by-case and recommend the necessary upgrade and solve the problems once and for all. Other telcos like Maxis and Celcom do not have their own fiber optic cables, but depend on TM fiber optic cables to provide their broadband service. Timedotcom provides its own cables but only serves condominiums and apartments which have high demand for such services. So the vast majority of consumers are at the mercy of the monopoly enjoyed by TM.

Broadband Internet should no longer be considered a privilege of a few but a necessary utility like water and electricity for our day-to-day living. Therefore, the Minister of Communications and Multimedia, YB Gobind Singh Deo, and the Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission should ensure that these issues are expeditiously addressed by TM, rather than harp on the roll out of 5G and the roll out of 500Mbps to high-impact areas soon.

On the question of 5G, is Malaysia in a position to adopt this new technology? The fifth generation of cellular technology, or 5G, is the next great leap in speed for wireless devices. This new technology will be an umbrella for 3G, 4G and 5G. This technology is designed to support the *Internet of Things* where all electronic devices will be interconnected. To accomplish these speeds, the rollout of 5G requires new technology and infrastructure. There will be a massive number of antennas under each base station to serve users. Poles, traffic lights, street furniture and buildings will be targeted as antennas.

With 5G there will be new issues with safety, security, liability, lifecycle of products, complaints redress, and ownership and use. New safety standards have to be adopted for the products as well as the system.

During our market surveillance, CAP staff have come across electrical and electronic products working on 240Volts with no certification. We also found new electrical products in the market, which could not be classified under any existing mandatory safety standards as required by law. Suruhanjaya Tenaga could not give a credible explanation for the oversight. If our regulators are unable ensure safety of our products in the current situation, how can they be expected to do better with 5G technology, which demands stringent control and enforcement?

With 5G we will be living in an electromagnetic smog of a wide range of frequencies. What are the health hazards that we will face? Has any study been done?

Looking at the overall picture we are still lagging in many of the requirements to ensure a safe environment for the adoption of 5G. Therefore, CAP calls on the authorities to heed the needs of the consumers as follows:-

- > Do not embark on any ambitious projects such as 5G and leap into the unknown;
- > Improve our current infrastructure and services for those in the shadow areas and underserved areas where the broadband speed is below 20Mbps;
- > Improve technical expertise to deal with the current issues on Internet facilities;
- > Develop or adopt safety standards for new evolving technologies;
- > Increase market surveillance on electronic and electrical goods and ensure manufacturers, importers, retailers and advertisers who do not conform to the laws are penalized;
- > Improve on new issues related to security, liability, lifecycle of products, complaints redress, and ownership and use of 5G;
- > Conduct studies on the range of electromagnetic waves generated by 5G, in collaboration with other countries which use this technology, to find out what are the possible health hazards and make the findings public.

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