



Persatuan Pengguna Pulau Pinang Consumers Association of Penang

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Press Release

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NGOs SUPPORT CALL FOR TEMPORARY CLOSURE OF CHEMICAL FACTORIES IN PASIR GUDANG

The Consumers Association of Penang (CAP) and Sahabat Alam Malaysia (SAM) express our support for the call made by the Pasir Gudang Member of Parliament Hassan Karim, for the temporary closure of the factories suspected of being responsible for the spate of ill health among students and teachers in the area, including kindergarten kids.

Under Regulation 24 of the Clean Air Regulations 2014, the Director-General of the Environment (DG) has powers to order the closure of any premises from further operations until remedial measures are put in place, in the event of an 'undesirable occurrence,' which includes pollution that seriously threatens the environment, or public health and safety that warrants an immediate halt.

The purpose of this provision is to safeguard public health, safety and welfare, and given the significant number of victims impacted by the pollution, it is urgent for the DG of Environment to act accordingly.

It is clear that the ill-health in the area has been due to chemicals in the air, with at least some of them having been detected. So, although the exact source of the air pollution, meaning which particular factory or factories has yet to be determined, it is highly probable that the pollution must be coming from the chemical factories.

We agree with the MP for Pasir Gudang that the onus is on the factory operators to show that they are not responsible for the environmental problems in the area.

It has been reported in the media that there are 250 chemical factories and 111 primary and secondary schools in the Pasir Gudang area.

It is indeed unacceptable that students including young children and teachers have to suffer the continued pollution, while waiting for the authorities to find the actual source of the problem. Parents and teachers of the schools must be living in fear and anxiety and it is most unfair to subject them to such mental torture, suffering and to endanger their health.

Moreover, the frequent closure of schools will affect the performance of the students in their studies. The public have suffered enough. It is time for some drastic action.

Hence, we call on the Minister of Energy, Science, Technology, Environment and Climate Change (MESTECC) and the DG-Environment to act urgently and close the chemical factories temporarily, until remedial measures are in place and ease the anxiety and suffering of the public.

We must put public health and safety ahead of the profits of companies who endanger the environment and public health.

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