



## Persatuan Pengguna Pulau Pinang Consumers Association of Penang

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### Press Statement

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#### Confusion, Doubts & Loopholes on Halal Status

The Consumers Association of Penang congratulates the government on its effort to table the ***National Halal Council Bill***, which will deal with all aspects of the *Halal* industry.

The new Act should help to ensure that producers act more responsibly in labelling food and products as *Halal*, rather than place the burden on consumers to determine the *Halal* status of the product. The Act should clarify also the proper and allowable use of the word “Non-*Halal*” as a warning to Muslims. This term should encompass not only meat and products containing pork but also all other products that are prohibited in Islam such as slaughtering methods etc.

Indonesia is set to make *Halal* labelling mandatory for consumer goods and services this year with the government assuming greater control of the certifying process. Under a law passed in 2014, the country will implement compulsory *Halal* labelling latest by Oct 17.

Presently, Halal matters in the country are governed by piecemeal legislation. This leaves much room for cheating by unscrupulous businesses. For example the Muslim community in our country is still dealing with the issues of *Halal* certificate forgery, food processing issues that are not in accordance with Islamic law, the issue of uncertain food ingredients and cleanliness.

Since 1977, CAP has been testing and checking on *Haram* products and informing the public about them. Our studies show that industries prioritise profits over religious obligations. Questionable animal by-products such as gelatine may be used by the food industry as food additives and ingredients in processed food. Sometimes animal by-products are being used to adulterate foods which are of plant origin.

In spite of CAP’s calls for the government action to be taken, many remained unsolved and new issues have surfaced.

For example we found capsules including multivitamins that did not declare the presence of gelatine and whether it is *Halal*.

Muslims who are taking medications in the form of capsules may be unwittingly consuming gelatine from animal sources which are *Haram*.

The use of animal by-products and antibiotics in animal feed has raised concerns about the safety and the Halal integrity of meat raised with such feed. Since 2006, repeated incidents of improper feeding practices have been reported by the media. For example, fish being fed with animal by-products (pig intestines) shocked Muslims in the country.

The current legal framework on animal feed in Malaysia completely ignores the *Halal* issues and antibiotics in them. It is time that they must incorporate *Halal* requirements and bans the use of antibiotics in animal feed.

The stunning of animals before slaughtering is unacceptable in Islam. Numerous medical studies have shown that stunning leads to the retention of a significant amount of blood in the meat and causes death in animals before they are slaughtered. The consumption of blood and the meat of animals which have died (carcasses) before slaughter are prohibited in Islam as it is harmful.

However, the *Muzakarah Khas Fatwa Majlis Kebangsaan Bagi Hal Ehwal Ugama Islam Malaysia* on the 29th September 2005 has allowed the use of electrical and water bath stunning as well as the use of drugs and carbon dioxide.

Stunning of animals before slaughtering should not be allowed. It has been shown that the conventional Islamic way of slaughtering is the least painful.

On the issue of the use of *Halal* logo in Malaysia, Trade Descriptions Act of 2011 only allows one (1) *Halal* logo to be used, i.e. the Malaysian Halal Logo. For imported food products, only the Halal logo issued by the foreign Halal operators recognized by JAKIM can be used.

However lately media reports on fake *Halal* logo, expired *Halal* certification and *Halal* logo from foreign unrecognised authorities highlighted the certification problems. The present *Halal* logo should include some features such as Hologram and serial numbers that would make it difficult to be duplicated.

The use of other Islamic symbols should also be controlled. Unscrupulous businessmen are using Islamic symbols to promote their products, some were found to contain harmful substances. Recently the Health Ministry banned a supplement marketed under the name of Al-Sunnah because it contained steroids. Al-Sunnah was used as brand name to appeal to Muslim consumers. Surprisingly, the product also carried the *Jakim Halal* logo. This harmful product was allowed to be sold here until recently although other countries have banned it earlier.

The above examples show that under the present piecemeal regulation, Muslim consumers here are not assured that the food and products in the market conform to Syariah/ Islamic laws.

It is hoped that the proposed Act will deal with all aspects of the *Halal* industry. This will enable Muslims to consume and use products whose Halal status is guaranteed. Consumer confidence in the *Halal* products will boost the Halal food industry both locally and abroad.

The demand for *Halal* products and services globally is huge and is set to grow between US\$3 trillion (RM12.55 trillion) and US \$4 trillion in the next five years, from the current US2 trillion.

Given the above scenario, the Consumers Association of Penang calls on the government to expedite the tabling of the ***National Halal Council Bill*** in parliament and at the same time the authorities should:

- Educate the public to file complaints related to Halal abuse to the authorities.
- Set up an independent committee to monitor the effectiveness of the agencies entrusted to deal with *Halal Haram* matters in Malaysia.

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