



Persatuan Pengguna Pulau Pinang Consumers Association of Penang

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Press Statement

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CAP Calls for Total Ban on Plastic Waste Imports to Protect Public Health and Our Environment

The Consumers' Association of Penang (CAP) calls for a total ban on imports of plastic waste to protect public health and our environment. This call is made in response to the announcement by Housing and Local Government Minister Zuraida Kamaruddin that a levy would be imposed at RM15 per tonne of plastic waste after Oct 23, when the freeze on approved permits (AP) on plastic waste import ends.

CAP is very frustrated with the Malaysian government because it does not recognise the scale of the problem. Upon learning China's notification to WTO last year regarding the country's intention to impose a ban on plastic waste imports, and anticipating cascading problems to Malaysia, on 25 July 2017 CAP had written to several Ministries and the Department of National Solid Waste Management (DNSWM) to impose a ban on import of plastic waste.

The DNSWM responded that the department has formulated specific rule to control plastic waste imports and will impose stringent requirements on premises and import licenses. However, the control measures and enforcement are proven not adequate, based on the current situation of pollution and mushrooming of illegal recycling factories in many parts of Malaysia.

The government now thinks by imposing a levy, the environmental problem can be curbed. We view otherwise. The global production and trade of waste plastic has grown tremendously over recent decades. However, much of this plastic is single-use and of little or no recycling value, destined for processing in recycling operations.

Until January 2018, China was the main recipient of the world's plastic waste, and was forced to burn or bury the residual trash from other countries that couldn't be recycled, leading to massive environmental pollution and public health impacts in host communities processing imported plastic waste. China has responded to calls to clean up its act by banning the importation of plastic waste and focusing on the collection and recycling of plastic waste generated domestically.

Now that China has closed its borders to foreign waste, we are discovering that massive volumes of the same have started to arrive in the ports of Southeast Asian countries, including Malaysia where illegal factories to recycle plastic waste have mushroomed. We understand from reports that many errant recycling firms, many of which are from China and operating without permits, are burning residual waste that cannot be recycled or illegally dumping them.

The dangers that plastic pose to the environment and human health are well established. Plastic is now found in all major water systems. In its visible form plastic poses a huge threat to marine life and

in its broken down form (i.e microplastic and nanoplastics) it enters the food chain and eventually accumulates in human bodies.

When burned, plastic releases persistent organic pollutants, a multitude of toxic emissions, and greenhouse gases. When proper protections are not in place, not only neighbouring communities but recycling workers are also exposed to dangerous and unjust working conditions, and must risk their lives and health.

We can no longer allow such a dangerous material to be shipped across the world to Malaysia for processing and dumping. The cost and burden to public health and the environment far outweigh the revenue gained by the Malaysian government from the levy imposed on plastic waste imports. We already have plastic waste generated domestically which needs to be recycled safely.

Therefore we urge the Ministry of Housing and Local Government and the Department of National Solid Waste Management (DNSWM) to stop issuing APs for importing plastic waste. The local authorities should take stringent action to ensure there are no more illegal premises operating. The authorities should also find ways to manage the existing plastic waste that has been dumped in our country.

Malaysia is not a dumping ground. Ban plastic waste imports.

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Consumers Association of Penang