



Persatuan Pengguna Pulau Pinang Consumers Association of Penang

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Press Release

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Bring Your Own Bag, Say No to Plastic Bags

In conjunction of Plastic Bag Free Day on 3rd July, the Consumers' Association of Penang (CAP) distributed free cloth bags made from discarded t-shirts to market-goers in Bagan Ajam Market in Butterworth, Penang. The event to mark the global day of action was a joint action with SMK Convent Butterworth and Majlis Perbandaran Seberang Perai.

As a symbol of our disposable consumer society, single use plastic bags which is a plague to the environment, are still being widely used although there are certain prohibitions in place. For instance Penang was the first state in Malaysia to launch the "No Free Plastic Bag" campaign in July 2009. The ruling on no free plastic bag applies to a number of shopping outlets but exempts hawkers and wet markets.

Hence we still see a lot of plastic bags everywhere. Easily picked up by the wind plastic bags are a significant source of plastic pollution in the ocean, but they also cause major problems on the land, blocking drains and contributing to devastating floods. Consumers must realise that eliminating plastic bags is necessary to decrease the amount of waste and pollution.

The first step for consumers is always to bring reusable bags. Cloth bags made from old t-shirts are handy and can be washed and reused. To purchase wet items such as meat or fish, consumers can bring their own containers. Supermarkets should also allow customers to bring their own bags for purchasing vegetables, and not hand out thin plastic bags for each item that is purchased, as currently practised.

CAP calls for more rigorous implementation of existing prohibitions on plastic bags. We also need nation-wide ban on plastic bags as implemented in several countries. For example in Rwanda, it is illegal to import, produce, use or sell plastic bags and plastic packaging, except within specific industries like hospitals and pharmaceuticals.

The tough ban on plastic bags in Kenya since August 2017 has been successful in cleaning up the country, so much so that other east African nations Uganda, Tanzania, Burundi and South Sudan are considering following suit. In China a ban on thin plastic bags has led to a 60-80% reduction in their use in supermarkets. In Denmark and Finland the average annual consumption of lightweight plastic bags is 4 per person!

Life without plastic bags is possible, as observed in countries that have imposed strict bans. There is no excuse! It is time we get rid of single-use plastic bags for good!

#breakfreefromplastic #plasticbagfreeday

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