



Persatuan Pengguna Pulau Pinang Consumers Association of Penang

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Press statement

5 June 2018

World Environment Day 2018 CAP calls for Ban on Single-Use Plastics

In conjunction with World Environment Day CAP is calling for a ban on single-use plastics. The theme for World Environment Day 2018 is “Beat Plastic Pollution” to call for concrete action to get together in combating one of the greatest environmental challenges.

Plastic bags cause many minor and major ecological and environmental issues. About 50% of consumer plastics are designed to be used only once. The throwaway items or single-use plastic objects such as carry bags, straws, water bottles, stirrers, cutleries and sachets are responsible for half of the plastic waste in the world.

In 2016 the Malaysian Plastics Manufacturers Association (MPMA) said, the average Malaysian uses 300 plastic bags per year. Thus with a population of 30 million, multiply that with 300, and the result is a whopping nine billion plastic bags Malaysians are using each year. This figure is solely based on plastic bags take away from hypermarkets and supermarkets and does not include night markets, wet markets or even from the hawker stalls.

Malaysian consumers have a habit of requesting or demanding more plastics whenever buying their favourite foods like nasi lemak, roti canai and teh tarik, and in wet markets can see free-flowing giving away of single-use plastic bags. In many circumstances using plastic water bottles or plastic cups for drinks has become inevitable in a majority of events, including government and public gatherings, meetings, festivals, parties etc.

An estimated 1 hundred million metric tons of plastic are present in the Earth's oceans. If one plastic bag can bring down birds and fish, imagine the consequences of this massive amount. The effects of plastic on marine life are so devastating that soon the planet's sea animals and birds will end up as nothing but statistics. Animals like birds, marine creatures and cattle often mistake plastic bags for food or nest-building materials, leading to poisoning, choking and entanglement and blocked intestines.

Dutch researchers have found that the marine life in the North Sea has been severely affected. It is reported that the seagull population has ingested so much plastic that an average of 30 plastic pieces can be found in one seagull's stomach. Albatross is another seabird which are vulnerable to plastic pollution. A number of studies have revealed that albatross chicks die from being fed plastic by their parents who mistake it for food.

Since there are a lot of problems associated with plastic bags, many countries in the world have banned or imposed taxes on plastic bag usage. Fifteen African countries, which take plastic consumption as

a serious issue, have implemented either bans or charge taxes on the material's use. They include Kenya, Mali, Cameroon, Tanzania, Uganda, Ethiopia, Malawi, Morocco, South Africa, Rwanda and Botswana.

In Asia, prior to the 2008 Olympic Games, China placed a ban on all thin plastic bags and began requiring retailers to charge a tax on thicker bags. Other countries in Asia that have banned or have put taxes in place include Bangladesh, Cambodia, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia and Taiwan.

Europe has been very active in its fight against plastic bags. Certain areas in Argentina, Brazil, Chile and Colombia have also taken measures to reduce use of plastic bags.

Some alarming global statistics on plastic pollution:

- ***5 trillion plastic bags used each year***
- ***13 million tonnes of plastic leaks into the ocean each year***
- ***1 million plastic bottles bought every minute***
- ***100,000 marine life killed by plastic each year***
- ***90% of bottled water found to contain plastic particles***
- ***50% of consumer products are single-use***
- ***estimated 71% of seabirds and 30% of turtles have been found with plastics in their stomachs.***

The plastic straw is another single-use plastic which is bad for the ocean. America alone uses 500 million straws every day and we can imagine the volume of straw wastage in the rest of countries in the world. Most of those straw wastes end up in oceans, polluting the water and killing marine life. If we continue using the straw by the year of 2050 there will be more plastic in the ocean than i.e.fish.

Hence the announcement by Housing and Local Government Minister YB Zuraida Kamaruddin in May 2018 that there will be a nationwide ban on plastic bags within a year is the way forward. This should be followed with bans on other single-use disposable products and microplastics.

Eliminating single-use plastic is a necessary step to decrease the amount of waste and pollution in the long term. Consumers and businesses should play their part by replacing all plastic and paper bags with reusable bags. This would mark a significant shift towards waste and pollution elimination.

No to plastic pollution. Go reusable.

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President
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