



Persatuan Pengguna Pulau Pinang Consumers Association of Penang

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Press Statement

15 June 2019

CAP is not shocked by the contaminated bottled mineral water

When the Singapore Food Agency (SFA) directed the recall of Malaysia's "Starfresh" bottled drinking water on 12 June 2019 because of bacterium *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* contamination, the Consumers' Association of Penang (CAP) was not the slightest surprised.

In view of the findings in Singapore, a similar recall should also be done in Malaysia if the product is being sold here.

The bacterium is found in faeces, soil, water and sewage. According to SFA, the bacterium can cause "a range of infections but rarely causes serious illness in healthy individuals". That is serious enough for a recall.

CAP has been firm in our conviction over the decades that it is still the best to drink boiled water in a glass or cup. Besides driving the chlorine from the water by boiling, we kill any bacteria that remained in the water or kettle. The glass or cup that we drink from can easily be washed and, unlike plastic bottles, it does not contain plasticisers that can disrupt the body's endocrine system, responsible for cancerous tumours, birth defects, and other developmental disorders.

From another perspective, in 2017, a million plastic bottles are bought around the world every minute. Ninety-one percent of these will be discarded and they are the ones that cause environmental problems. It is not just a case of 'out of sight, out of mind' situation because plasticisers from these bottles are going to leach into the environment before finding their way into our food and water system.

The design of bottled drinking water containers does not allow easy cleaning of the bottle and thus offer pockets of safe sanctuaries within for bacteria to reside and multiply.

Why do we need to drink bottled water when under most circumstances boiled drinking water is easy to prepare in an office or at home? Otherwise, it is possible to bring along your own container of water, thus cutting down on the need bottled drinking water. The problem lies with us being brainwashed by marketing strategies into parting with our money in exchange for 'convenience' (walk into a convenience store to buy) and enjoy 'safe, clean drinking water' (which often isn't always the case).

We would like to know what will become of the recalled bottles of the Starfresh water: Will the water be sterilised before disposal?

We also call on the Ministry of Health to conduct an immediate check on the premises of all producers of bottled mineral and drinking water to verify where the water is being sourced from.

Mohideen Abdul Kader
Acting President
Consumers Association of Penang