



# Persatuan Pengguna Pulau Pinang Consumers Association of Penang

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## Press Statement

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### **CAP: Ban lead in products to combat lead poisoning**

Lead is a cumulative toxicant that affects multiple body systems. It is particularly hazardous to young children, pregnant woman and all those that are exposed to it. Effects of exposure include learning disabilities, increased risk of antisocial behaviour, reduced fertility and increased risk of renal and cardiovascular disease later in life.

The World Health Organization (WHO) has recognized October 22-28 2017 as ***International Lead Poisoning Prevention Week*** and its main concern is the role of lead exposure in the development of intellectual disability in children.

The health impacts of lead exposure on young children's brains are lifelong, irreversible and untreatable, Lead is also introduced into the gastrointestinal tract when children chew on objects such as toys, household furniture or other articles painted with lead paint. Continued use of lead paint is a primary source of childhood lead exposure. Urgent measures need to be taken to reduce critical sources of lead exposure to young children.

In early 2016, CAP tested paints and we found more than 60% of the samples tested contained exceedingly high lead levels. More than one year has passed since then but the Malaysian authorities have not come out with laws on lead in paints.

The World Health Organization (WHO) calls lead paint "a major flashpoint" for children's potential lead poisoning and says that "since the phase-out of leaded petrol, lead paint is one of the largest sources of exposure to lead in children." Children are exposed to lead when painted surfaces deteriorate over time and contaminate household dust and soils. Children, ages 0-6, engaging in normal hand-to-mouth behaviors are most at risk of damage to their intelligence and mental development from exposure to lead dust and soil.

Recent studies conducted by the Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC) in California found jewellery for adults and children containing dangerously high amounts of lead in one or more component of the item. Some of the items tested were found to be practically made of lead.

In a survey CAP found similar items being freely sold in the market These items are popular among children as they are brightly coloured and decorated with cartoon characters Priced from RM 1.00 to RM3.00 it is affordable to children.

Sindoor is widely used by Hindus in Malaysia. It is a brilliant scarlet powder used during Hindu religious and cultural ceremonies. Sindoor is often used by women who wear a bindi, or red dot, on

their foreheads for cosmetic purposes. Hindu men and children also wear it for religious purposes Tests conducted in the US found dangerously high level of lead in sindoor. Some manufacturers use lead tetroxide to give it a distinctive red colour.

Of the 118 sindoor samples tested in the study, 95 were from South Asian stores in New Jersey. Another 23 came from stores in Mumbai and New Delhi, in India. Overall, about 80 percent of the samples had at least some lead, and about a third contained levels above the limit set by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration.

The FDA's limit for lead in cosmetics is 20 micrograms per gram. Nineteen percent of the U.S. samples and 43 percent of the India samples exceeded that limit. Five samples - three from the U.S. and two from India - contained more than 10,000 micrograms.

In view of the dangers of lead CAP calls on the authorities to:

- Ban lead in products,
- Test products that have been found to contain high levels of lead
- Come out with a campaign to create awareness on the dangers of lead.

Without a ban Malaysia will be a dumping ground for products with high levels of lead that have been rejected by other countries.

As lead has a strong impact on children, immediate action need to be taken to safe guard our future generation.

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