



# Persatuan Pengguna Pulau Pinang Consumers Association of Penang

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**Letter To The Editor**

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## **IS MALAYSIA A DUMPING GROUND FOR CONTAMINATED PLASTIC WASTE?**

The Consumers' Association of Penang (CAP) is appalled to learn that hundreds of containers filled with plastic wastes and scrap tyres have been shipped to and left abandoned at Port Klang.

Despite imposing stringent measures, it was reported that at the height of the problem, the port had almost 800 containers of such waste and had to clear them over the years until 280 of such containers remained.

Consequently the port was saddled with the astronomical costs of keeping such trash amounting to some RM25 million. It also raised the concern that some of these plastic wastes were found to be contaminated with chemicals. Moreover, given the amount of waste plastic materials and scrap tyres, Malaysia has to worry about disposing tonnes of such environmentally unfriendly, non-biodegradable materials.

Some of these wastes were imported for recycling by genuine shippers but ended up abandoned because of unpaid freight charges by local consignees. These wastes are shipped from countries such as the United Kingdom, United States of America, Germany and Japan.

However if the imported waste is contaminated with hazardous waste, then it is bound by the provisions of the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal, of which dumping is prohibited.

The National Solid Waste Management Department (JPSPN) is responsible in issuing import permit for plastic waste. Customs (Prohibition of Imports) (Amendment) Order 2015 has placed plastic waste with HS 3915 tariff code in Part I, Second Schedule where all imports to Malaysia are prohibited except with Approved Permit (AP).

Without such permits, cargoes cannot be not cleared and the port is stuck with cargoes which may have contaminated plastic wastes. Does the port authorities has a solution to this problem of dumping and abandoned cargo and what possible action can Malaysia take against importers who failed to obtain import permits, follow the guidelines, or bring in contaminated waste materials?

CAP is gravely concerned of the immense quantity of waste plastic material that Malaysia has been exporting and importing. In 2016, based on UN Comtrade Database, Malaysia exported 163,622.4 tonnes while imported 287,673.3 tonnes of plastics waste, parings and scrap.

We are concerned that not only Port Klang is targeted but other ports in Malaysia may have become dumping grounds for hazardous wastes such as contaminated plastics and metals, electronic waste, oily parts of discarded vehicles and other hazardous waste. There are also other ports in the country such as Johor Port, Port of Tanjung Pelepas, Kuantan Port, Penang Port and Bintulu Port which we do not know the extent of the problem facing them.

CAP's recommendation is to ban the import of plastic waste so as to curb the possibility of Malaysia being a dumping ground and hub for the transshipment of plastic waste.

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