



Persatuan Pengguna Pulau Pinang Consumers Association of Penang

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Press Statement

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CAP: Prohibit e-commerce sites from selling banned face creams

The Consumers Association of Penang (CAP) calls on the authorities to prohibit e-commerce sites in the country from selling banned cosmetics products.

In an online survey we found 9 banned face creams sold online by Lazada, Shopee and Carousell. These products were on the list of notified cosmetic products cancelled by the National Pharmaceutical Regulatory Agency, Ministry of Health Malaysia.

Among the banned products available are *FS Turmeric Cream, Deeja Cosmetic Laila Cream, Deluxe Beauty E Ultra Lightening Cream Pearl Perfect Fairness, Deeja Cosmetics Laika Cream, Dnars Gold Lifting Serum (Night), Deeja Wrinkle Cream, Fjura- Face Polish Treatment, Dnars Golden Cream and Sparkle Moon Night Cream.*

Some of these products were banned since 2019 as they were found to contain mercury and other harmful chemicals that are prohibited in cosmetics. Besides being sold individually these face creams were also sold in a set with other cosmetic products of the same brand such as soap and moisturisers.

Skin lightening cosmetics containing mercury pose significant risks to users. Mercury absorbed through the skin from lightening products can damage not only the skin, but the kidneys and the nervous system.

According to a survey conducted in selected countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America, it was reported that 41 percent of the respondents from Malaysia used skin lighteners. When asked why they used the products, 61 percent of the respondents to the survey said they felt they looked younger with a fair complexion. This survey and other similar ones have found that many women use the products for an extended period of up to 20 years in some cases.

Face creams that contained high levels of mercury claimed to prevent or improve freckles and pimples and give its users a beautiful complexion. These products are often applied to large areas of the skin, left on the skin for hours at a time, and used repeatedly for weeks, months or years.

Regular application of creams containing mercury could lead to rash, skin discolouration and blotching. Chronic mercury poisoning may result from skin contact with mercury compounds over prolonged periods. Severe abdominal pain, vomiting, ashy colouration of the mouth and bloody diarrhoea were observed in cases where large amounts of mercury was absorbed.

Mercury poisoning may also cause the teeth to loosen and a blue lining to form on the gums. In pregnant women the foetus may also be affected since mercury can diffuse through the placenta.

The World Health Organisation stated that cellular damage will be inflicted whenever mercury is accumulated in sufficient concentration. Mercury is also a potent allergen and sensitizer and irritation is common after topical application.

Most mercury in skin lightening products enters the environment through waste water and may be transformed by bacteria into methyl mercury, an even more toxic compound. Methyl mercury accumulates in fish and thus can enter human diet. The amount of mercury used in skin lightening products is minimal compared to other sources of mercury pollution; however this still contributes to the global mercury exposure.

In view of this, the Consumers' Association of Penang calls on the authorities to:

- Immediately enforce the ban of these products by taking action against the e-commerce sites to fine them and remove the product listing of the banned cosmetic products.
- Closely monitor all other cosmetics containing dangerous substances which are banned but are still widely sold in the market, including online shopping platforms.
- Strictly enforce bans on dangerous products.

Meanwhile, we call on consumers to avoid chemical whiteners. They should embrace their natural skin tone, and resist colour-based bias, prejudice and discrimination.

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President
Consumers Association of Penang