



Persatuan Pengguna Pulau Pinang Consumers Association of Penang

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Press Release

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CAP calls for Elimination of Lead in Paint Dangerous Lead Levels Widely Sold in All Developing Regions of the World

The Consumers' Association of Penang (CAP) reiterates our call to the Malaysian government to take immediate steps to eliminate lead in paint. CAP's analysis of lead in new enamel household paints in Malaysia found that more than 60 percent of 39 paint samples tested contained exceedingly high lead levels.

CAP's call is in conjunction with the International Lead Poisoning Prevention Week of Action (ILPPWA), October 23 -29, 2016, co-led by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the World Health Organization (WHO).

A report, Global Lead Paint Report released this week by IPEN (which can be accessed at <http://ipen.org/documents/global-lead-paint-report-2016>), also as a part of ILPPWA, found that many decorative paints sold in over 40 low- and middle income countries where studies have been conducted contained dangerous levels of lead, sometimes in direct violation of national regulation.

The health impacts of lead exposure on young children's brains are lifelong, irreversible and untreatable. "We are limiting our children and our nation's future intellectual development even though safe and effective alternatives are already in use and widely available globally. We must reduce this critical source of lead exposure to young children," said CAP President, S.M. Mohamed Idris.

"Continued use of lead paint is a primary source of childhood lead exposure," said Dr. Sara Brosché, IPEN's Global Lead Paint Elimination Campaign Manager. "Children – especially those under 6 years of age – ingest or inhale lead through exposure to dust or soil contaminated with lead-based paint and normal hand-to-mouth behavior or when they chew on toys, household furniture or other articles painted with lead paint. Governments should set mandatory limits on lead in paint, but paint companies do not need to wait for regulation; they can and should act now."

In a statement prepared for this year's ILPPWA, Dr Maria Neira Director of the Department of Public Health, Environmental and Social Determinants of Health for the World Health Organization (WHO) said: "Exposure to lead poses a significant hazard to human health, especially for children. . . There is no need to add lead to paint - safer alternative chemicals can be used. The best way to ensure the availability of lead-safe paint is for countries to put in place laws, regulations or mandatory standards that prohibit the manufacture, import, export, sale or use of lead paint."

In Malaysia, there is currently no regulation in place limiting the amount of lead in paint for household and decorative use. We only have mandatory safety standards stipulating maximum acceptable migration of lead in paint of not more than 90 parts per million (ppm) in toys intended for children below 14 years old.

This is not adequate because Malaysia's measure on children's toys provides only partial protection as it does not address domestic paints, which are paints most likely to contribute to childhood lead exposure.

Most highly industrial countries adopted laws or regulations to control the lead content of decorative paints — the paints used on the interiors and exteriors of homes, schools, and other child-occupied facilities — beginning in the 1970s and 1980s. The strictest standard, 90 parts per million (ppm) total lead content in decorative paint, is common in many countries, including the Philippines, Nepal and the United States of America.

Reducing the adverse health effects from lead paints necessitates controlling exposures. A ban on the manufacture, import, sale, distribution, use and export of lead paints are far more cost-effective in reducing exposure risks than any future remediation programmes.

Hence there is an urgent need for legally binding restrictions on the use of lead in paint and other sources of childhood lead exposure. We hereby urge the Malaysian government to promulgate and enforce regulation to eliminate lead in paint.

S. M. Mohamed Idris
President
Consumers Association of Penang

Note:

1. CAP's report titled "Lead in New Enamel Household Paints in Malaysia" published in March 2016 can be accessed at <http://www.ipen.org/documents/lead-new-enamel-household-paints-malaysia>
2. IPEN is an international NGO network comprised of 700 organizations in 116 countries that work to reduce and eliminate hazardous, toxic substances internationally and within their own countries. (www.ipen.org)