



Persatuan Pengguna Pulau Pinang Consumers Association of Penang

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Letter to the Editor

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***KABALI* GLORIFYING BLOOD AND GORE**

Malaysia seems to be out of step in allowing the Tamil movie *Kabali* to be filmed and shown here as well, albeit well received by Ranjinikanth fans. The movie glorified violence and the life of gangsterism surrounding the movie's main character, don Kabaleeswaran alias *Kabali*, throughout the show.

Ironically, while Malaysia is trying so hard to clamp down on gangsterism and violence, the government had allowed the movie to be shot here in late October 2015 and it had its premiere on 21 July this year.

Malaysia's Film Censorship Board (LPF) chairman Datuk Abdul Halim Abdul Hamid said that only a few seconds of each of several scenes in *Kabali* were censored; all of which totalled a mere five minutes of the movie. It was nothing to boast about because it features a violent scene in about every 3.5 minutes of the movie and they include:

- *Kabali* deliberately driving his car into a drug smuggler, killing him instantly.
- One of *Kabali*'s men, Jeeva, was chopped up by 43 gang boss Tony Lee who then send Jeeva's arm in a box to *Kabali*.
- *Kabali* blasted Tony's hand using a pump gun.
- *Kabali* plunged a knife into one of Tony's henchman's throat.

Abdul Halim added that the LPF only shortened the duration of violent scenes. The objective of toning down the violence is to enable more Malaysians to watch the movie. In doing so, *Kabali* was also given a P13 rating, meaning that children under the age of 13 are able to watch under parental or guardian supervision.

How are parents going to supervise their children when the adults are already engrossed in the movie? In other words, the children will still be left on their own even with the movie ratings.

The impact of media violence on viewers has been extensively studied. In July 2016, the American Academy of Paediatrics stated that "the immersive and inescapable way children and teens are exposed to violence in their 'media diet' on social media apps, video games and movies can make them more aggressive and fearful."

The Consumers' Association of Penang (CAP) is aghast that the movie promoted *Kabali* as a philanthropist gangster who does not deal in drugs and prostitution. But the disconcerting fact is that

Kabali kept killing in the movie and the message imparted is that criminal activities are alright as long as a person is a philanthropist. CAP is concerned that the lessons taught to our impressionable youths are:

- It is alright to be a gangster as long as you run philanthropic programmes or disguise them as Corporate Social Responsibility (*Kabali* supports the Free Life Foundation).
- Instead of being rejected by the people, you earn respect and live a flamboyant life style. Imagine that when *Kabali* was released from prison, about 3.5 minutes of the movie time was dedicated to an air of festivities by his gang members and the people to welcome him.
- That Malaysian police are crooks as the movie suggested.
- That gangsterism and violence are endorsed by our political leaders and supporters who attended the premier in Kuala Lumpur on 21 July 2016.

Probably because the movie was largely shot in Malaysia, it became the first Tamil movie to be dubbed into Bahasa Malaysia and screened in several theatres. This is going to propagate the fallacious Malaysian values to even wider audiences.

CAP, however, is of the opinion that Malaysia is promoted negatively by exposing more of our youths to a glamorous life of crime, revenge, and violence.

Moreover, CAP is concerned about the part of the movie that conveyed the message that Malaysian police are engaging criminals as hitmen. Judge for yourself what you could have perceived of this scene:

Towards the end of the movie, a police officer was shown passing a gun to Tiger in an interrogation room while a senior police officer watched behind the one-way window. Tiger was later shown in a hoodie walking towards *Kabali* at a Free Life Foundation function. The screen cuts to black and there is the sound of a gun clicking.

Although the Film Censorship Board had requested an alteration in the movie to insert a “moral lesson that crime does not pay”, the more influential bulk of violence in the movie buries this little lesson. There was a statement on the black screen at the end of the movie that said: “Finally *Kabali* surrendered to the police” but it is not convincing at all. That statement is only seen in Malaysian cinemas but not elsewhere in the world. Does it suggest that Malaysian police advocates extra-judicial executions?

CAP demands for a complete ban of all movies that embody sex and violence because they do not serve any lesson in morality but leading the society towards decadence. CAP had made numerous calls over the years to get rid of the media that spawn societal problems.

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