



Persatuan Pengguna Pulau Pinang  
Consumers Association of Penang  
檳城消費人協會 பினாங்கு பயனீட்டாளர் சங்கம்

Websites:  
(in English, BM, Chinese,  
& Tamil)  
www.consumer.org.my

10 Jalan Masjid Negeri, 11600 Pulau Pinang, Malaysia  
Tel: 604-8299511 Fax: 604-8298109  
email: consumerofpenang@gmail.com

Letter to the Editor

6 December 2023

**CAP: Take action against those responsible for purchasing defective ventilators**

The Consumers Association of Penang calls on the authorities to take action against those responsible for purchasing the defective ventilators\* procured by the Ministry of Health (MOH) during the Covid-19 pandemic.

During the peak of the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020 the Cabinet was informed of the need for 800 ventilators, following which the Health Ministry had approved RM30 million to a company to purchase 500 units of ventilators.

Due to supply constraints, the company managed to secure only 136 ventilator units for RM20.12 million, a price reported to be four times higher than the usual rate. However, it was found that 104 out of the 136 ventilators purchased were unusable.

Earlier this month it was reported by the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) that no action can be taken over the issue as there was an absence of a written agreement between MOH and the company involved.

The PAC has failed in its duty to uncover those accountable for the purchase of the unusable ventilators. The reason that there was no formal written contract is unacceptable.

There would be documentary and oral evidence of the process leading to the purchase of the faulty ventilators which would disclose if there was any gross negligence, or even corruption, on the part of those involved in the decision-making.

The PAC should have recommended that the law enforcement agencies investigate the case and take necessary action against those culpable.

As life-saving equipment like ventilators were so vital during the Covid-19 pandemic, it is shocking that such negligence had occurred. The faulty ventilators not only wasted public funds but also put the lives of patients at risk.

The PAC report said that the culture of accountability is almost non-existent in the public procurement system where 104 out of the 136 ventilators ordered were unusable. The deals on emergency procurement of ventilators were done via WhatsApp.

Even in the face of a pandemic, the official procurement confirmation should come through a proper supply contract with clear specifications of the product, the warranties, suppliers' obligations on the testing and commissioning, deliverables, and technical support. The procurement must follow the set standard operating procedure (SOP) of the ministry.

Despite not having experience and expertise in medical equipment procurement the company was instructed to make advance payments for ventilators following its existing relationship with MOH. The deal was secured based on the visual impression that the ventilators in the brochure met MOH requirements.

According to the PAC report, the ventilators were unusable as the plug point differed from the plug point used in Malaysia. However, each ventilator had different problems in terms of hardware, accessories, and software. The procurement involved 11 ventilator models from four different manufacturers.

It is shocking that MOH had appointed the company to be a middleman to supply 136 ventilators costing RM24.1 million without a proper contract. What happened to the integrity and compliance unit within the Health Ministry, which is required to oversee all purchases, when established procedures were not complied with in the purchase of the ventilators?

CAP believes that more should be done to demand accountability from those responsible for their dereliction of duty. The different parties who are responsible for the “clear negligence” in the ventilator scandal exposed by the Auditor-General’s Report must be identified and punished.

**Mohideen Abdul Kader**  
**President**  
**Consumers Association of Penang (CAP)**

\*A medical ventilator is a machine that helps the lungs get its oxygen needs. It is a lifesaving machine in a condition that makes it hard for one to breathe properly such as in the case of a Covid-19 patient.