



Persatuan Pengguna Pulau Pinang Consumers Association of Penang

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Press Statement

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CAP: Halt the sale of spices from India

The Consumers Association of Penang (CAP) calls upon the Health Ministry to immediately ban the sale of two brands of spices from India (Everest and MDH) which were found to contain *ethylene oxide* a cancer-causing agent. The two affected brands of spices are widely available in Malaysia, especially on e-commerce platforms.

The affected brands of spices are exported to many regions including the U.S., Europe, South East Asia, Middle East and Australia.

In view of spices being widely consumed in Malaysia, the Health Ministry should not only conduct tests on the two brands of spices but also on other spices imported from India as spices are used to prepare hot curries locally. Malaysia has been the second largest importer of chillies from India and some of Malaysia's other main spice imports are coriander, small cardamom, turmeric and cumin.

According to Reuters, the UK's Food Standards Agency (FSA) has applied extra control measures for pesticide residues in spices from India which includes *ethylene oxide*. The United Kingdom became the first to ramp up scrutiny of all Indian spices after contamination allegations against two brands sparked concerns among global food regulators.

Nepal has become the latest country to ban the import and sale of these two popular Indian spice brands. Last month Hong Kong and Singapore had done the same after tests detected the presence of ethylene oxide in the samples tested. New Zealand, the United States and Australia have since said they are looking into issues related to the two brands.

Besides its use as a pesticide, *ethylene oxide* is used to sterilise medical equipment and as a sterilising agent in spices to prevent illnesses caused by salmonella and E Coli bacteria.

According to the US Environmental Protection Agency, regular exposure to the colourless and odourless compound increases the "risk of cancers of the white blood cells".

In view of the danger to our health from *ethylene oxide*, CAP calls upon the Health Ministry to immediately ban the sale of the two brands of spices from India which were found to contain the harmful substance.

At the same time, they should conduct tests on all types of spices imported from India for the presence of ethylene oxide and other pesticides.

Meanwhile, consumers should refrain from consuming spices imported from India until the authorities can ensure that it is safe for consumption.

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President
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