



Persatuan Pengguna Pulau Pinang Consumers Association of Penang

檳城消費人協會 பினாங்கு பயனீட்டாளர் சங்கம்

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Press Statement

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Ensure Labelling Compliance of Imported Food Products

CAP urges the Ministry of Health and Ministry of Domestic Trade and Cost of Living to take immediate action against the sale of imported food products that do not comply with our laws.

A recent survey conducted by the Consumers' Association of Penang (CAP) shows that many foreign food products from China, Thailand, Bangladesh, Japan, Vietnam and Korea do not comply with the Food Regulations 1985 Part IV (Labelling) and the Trade Descriptions Act 1972 Part 11 Section 6(1) accordingly.

The labels on these products do not have the name and address of the importer, distributor and some have no ingredients contained within the products. Moreover, the language used on the labels also uses the language of the respective country rather than in Bahasa Malaysia or English as required under the Acts.

Consumers may assume that products sold are safe to consume but there are things that we may overlook. We have to ascertain if the food products do not contain ingredients that may be harmful to health.

For example, a person may collapse and die from anaphylactic shock if he or she accidentally consumes a food product that contains an ingredient that he or she is allergic to. The label serves no purpose if the ingredients are declared in a foreign language which Malaysians are unable to read. For this reason, he or she may end up hospitalised or dead.

The label serves as an important source of information that helps us to make wise and safe dietary choices.

Even though E-numbers are accepted to be used as codes for food additives within the European Union, Malaysian consumers are not familiar with the codes. For example, manufacturers may have stated E102 instead of the yellow compound tartrazine which some people might be allergic to, particularly those who are intolerant to Azo dyes.

Consumers may not know that E249 is the E-number for potassium nitrite and E252 for potassium nitrate. These chemicals are used mostly in preserved meats and they can be converted into nitrosamines by the digestive system. Most nitrosamines are carcinogens.

We need to have better control and efficient monitoring over the importation of food products to ensure compliance with Malaysian laws.

CAP urges the authorities to ensure that food products that have labels solely in foreign language are taken off the shelves and for retailers to ensure that such products are not sold at their outlets. Otherwise, it will be making a mockery of the law.

Mohideen Abdul Kader
President
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