



#Hashtag

BITTER TRUTH

STEVIA CASE 'A WARNING TO FIRMS'

Health Ministry will monitor sale of sugar substitutes to ensure safety, says Subra

ZAHRATULHAYAT MAT ARIF
LENGGONG
news@nst.com.my

THE legal action that will be taken against Pure Stevia, a product manufactured by VJS Cosmo Enterprise, will serve as a warning to other companies that misrepresent their products.

Health Minister Datuk Seri Dr S. Subramaniam said the ministry would continue to monitor the sale of stevia products to ensure that sugar substitutes came from genuine ingredients and not from a combination of dangerous chemicals.

"The ministry's Food Safety and Quality Division has conducted a thorough research and checked on 14 or 15 stevia manufacturers in the country.

"So far, only one company has been identified as selling fake stevia product. The company's stevia product labels are wrong, but they claim to be authentic.

"This is a clear violation of the law," he said.

Dr Subramaniam was met after the opening of the Lenggong



Sultan of Perak Sultan Nazrin Muizzuddin Shah and Raja Permaisuri Perak Tuanku Zara Salim visiting exhibits after opening the Lenggong Health Clinic yesterday. PIC BY L. MANIMARAN

Health Clinic here yesterday.

The clinic was officially opened by Sultan of Perak Sultan Nazrin Muizzuddin Shah.

He said, as such, the ministry had ordered the company to recall its product from the markets and if convicted, they would face punishment under the Food Act 1983.

"Under this act, if there is contamination, the sale of imitation food products or wrong informa-

tion related to any type of food, offenders face action.

"A fine will be imposed, depending on the court's decision, perhaps prison time as well.

"We hope that the other companies will take heed of this action and be more cautious about their products and labels," he said.

Health director-general Datuk Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah yesterday revealed the ministry's

Food Safety and Quality Unit had ordered the firm, VJS Cosmo Enterprise, selling stevia products under the brand Pure Stevia, to recall all of its products in the market after their discovery.

Last month, a Malay daily reported that laboratory tests done by Universiti Tun Hussein Onn Malaysia and Universiti Putra Malaysia showed that the 10 stevia products in the country did not contain the plant extract,

but instead, a combination of dangerous chemicals.

Malaysian Medical Association president Dr John Chew said the country needed a systematic monitoring of food products.

"We need a systematic monitoring of our food products to know exactly what we are putting into our bodies.

"The Health Ministry should also impose stricter food labelling laws," he said.