

Firm fined over contaminated dates

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KOTA KINABALU: A company was fined RM5,000 by the Magistrate's Court here for importing semi-dry dates containing insect frass and an object pupa with a damage percentage of nine per cent. Syarikat Classic Sales Sdn Bhd represented by its representative pleaded guilty before Magistrate Wan Farrah Farriza Wan Ghazali to having imported HB Semi Dry Dates Grade A food which contains incidental constituent - insect frass and one object pupa with a damage percentage of nine per cent. The offence took place at the company's warehouse at KKIP here at 12.50pm on Feb 14. The company had violated Regulation 37(3) of the Food Regulations 1985 and had committed an offence under Regulation 397(1) of the same Regulations which is punishable under Regulation 397(2) of the same Regulations which provides for a fine of RM10,000 or jail term of up to two months. Health prosecuting officer Arnila Ahmad told the court that enforcement officers from the Sepanggar Port Health Office went to the premises and took food samples randomly and divided them into three parts with each part, weighing not less than 1kg and sent the samples to the laboratory of the Department of Chemistry in Johor Bahru. The analysis result received on March 16 stated that one of the samples was found to contain incidental constituent namely insect frass and one object pupa with a Damage percentage of nine per cent. Counsel Debbie Lim applied for a lower fine. Arlina submitted among others that the company imported one lot of dried dates that contained substances known as "incidental constituents," which are insect frass or in simple language insect excrement and object type pupa, a type of cocoon. She said the Food Regulations 1985 were introduced to protect the well-being of the population to ensure that the food that reaches the table is nutritious and safe to eat. "Insect excrement can carry a variety of harmful bacteria, pathogens and pollutants. "Taking contaminated food brings serious risks to public health and is not something to be taken lightly," said Arnila. She added that the health and well-being of the people depend on strict compliance with food safety regulations. The presence of cocoons indicates a weakness in the import company's quality control process. No due diligence is done to ensure that the product meets the required standards before being introduced to the market. The company's actions show a disregard for public safety and well-being. Their negligence has endangered the health of the people, said the prosecution. The company paid the fine.