16 Oct 2007 IT was shocking to read that sausage and burger makers have been given a three-month period to clear their stocks containing the banned "Red 2G" food colouring. <table border="0" cellspacing="3" cellpadding="0" width="200" align="right"></table> The Health Ministry's Food Safety and Quality Division director, Dr Abdul Rahim Mohamad, said: "For now, we won't be going around confiscating (food containing the substance). Once the grace period ends, ministry officials will carry out checks on shops and fast food eateries" ("Fast food outlets not using cancer-causing colouring" -- NST, Oct 13). How can the authorities allow a "grace period" before acting on a cancer-causing product? Won't consumers become victims of a disease?

The director must be reminded of the banned anti-arthritic drug Vioxx which caused heart attacks in users. Once this was known, Vioxx was banned and taken off shelves immediately.

This is what a responsible first-world government did and would do. It is beyond my understanding why "Red 2G" should be treated any differently now that it has been condemned as a dangerous substance.

The public may be led to think that the move smacks of patronage of big companies by the authorities.

"Red 2G" must be immediately taken off the shelves and destroyed. The question of giving notice does not arise.

The director must instruct his enforcement officers to conduct checks and confiscating any "Red 2G" found without delay.

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