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GEORGE TOWN: The Consumers' Association of Penang (CAP) has called for the sale of samsu to be banned. CAP president S.M. Mohamed Idris said the alcohol content in the cheap liquor was alarmingly high, ranging from 17 per cent to 48 per cent. Samsu is a locally brewed, potent alcoholic drink popular with the low-income group. The drink has also been linked to diseases such as cancer, liver disorder, and cirrhosis of the heart as well as liver.

A recent CAP survey showed that samsu, once commonly consumed by estate workers, has now become a trendy drink among those in urban areas.

"The samsu addiction has brought untold damage to families and communities. Not only are the drinkers affected, women and children also suffer due to the drinking habits of their husbands and fathers. "This drinking habit will cause social problems which can lead to violence, child abuse, traffic accidents, suicides, divorce and homicide," Idris said. He urged the authorities to take immediate measures to stop the sale of samsu and tackle the addiction to it. There are currently more than 100 locally produced brands of samsu available in the market. They are priced between RM1 and RM5 per bottle and sold illegally in over 50 sundry shops throughout the state. Idris said CAP had in the past made several reports to the Customs Department about the illegal sale of samsu but no action had been taken. Under Section 32(1) and 33(1) of the Excise Act 1976, no person can sell (either wholesale or retail) intoxicating liquor either for use within a premises or outside without a licence. Mohamed also lashed out at some of the manufacturers who had resorted to misleading health claims about the samsu they produced. "One brand recommends it for anaemia, loss of appetite, indigestion and healing properties. "All the claims are rubbish. We hope the government will step up checks on the liquor."