

MS 30

CAP: Train staff on respect for disabled customers

AWARENESS about discrimination and steps to create inclusiveness and respect for those who are disabled needs to be addressed, says Consumers Association of Penang (CAP) president S.M. Mohamed Idris.

He said discrimination had become a big problem in the state with numerous reports and stories of consumers being turned away or treated badly for ridiculous reasons.

"We have heard of many cases where a person with difficulties has been discriminated.

"All customer relation officers need to be given sufficient training on how to deal with customers.

"When companies provide such training to their staff, there will be

better customer care," he said.

Mohamed Idris said if the customer was rude or aggressive, it was a different issue and could be referred to a supervisor.

"Training must be provided to all staff on how to respect and treat customers equally irrespective of his or her ethnic, religious or economic background.

"If there is discrimination, there should be law that can be used for action to be taken against the perpetrator," he said.

Recently there was a viral post on an incident in Penang where a wheelchair-bound woman was not allowed to enter a chocolate store in a mall, because the staff said her wheelchair might damage the beautiful mosaic floor

of the store.

State Women, Family Development and Gender Inclusiveness Committee chairman Chong Eng called on people to be more aware of inclusiveness and respect differences.

"We should all be aware of the disabled community and not discriminate them, just the same with anyone else, be it racial or financial.

"In the short term, this issue can be addressed with training, but in the long run, it is up to the parents to inculcate respect and inclusiveness for everyone," she said.

On the incident, Chong Eng said it was unfortunate and should not have taken place.

"I believe it may not have been the owner of the shop, but the employee who might have been overzealous."

State Welfare, Caring Society and Environment Committee chairman Phee Boon Poh said accessibility was the state policy for all wheelchair users.

"The state government fully subscribes to a 'barrier free policy', meaning a wheelchair should be allowed into the shop.

"The Seberang Prai Municipal Council has visited the shop in the mall and they have issued an apology.

"They know it is a serious matter and action will be taken if we find there is a case of discrimination," he said.