

Smooth start to 'no plastic bags day' despite a few incidents

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GEORGE TOWN: A shopper at a hypermarket here vented her anger at the cashier when asked to pay for plastic bags which are normally given out free.

I bought so much and they wanted me to pay for plastic bags! said the disgruntled shopper at Tesco Penang in Jalan Tengku Kudin here yesterday.

She promptly abandoned her packed trolley at the cashier's lane in anger.

Barring a few incidents like this one, the 'no plastic bags day' initiative kicked off smoothly in Penang yesterday.

More than 300 hypermarkets, mini-markets, department stores and other participating shops are charging 20 sen for each plastic bag given out.

A check at several participating outlets saw positive response from most shoppers, although some were not aware that the campaign had begun.

I think it's a good idea to help save the environment, said shopper Rosie Khaw, who was seen bringing four of her own reusable shopping bags to Tesco Penang.

She said it had become the norm for her to bring along her own bags if she was heading to supermarkets from home.

It's a bit difficult when you're just stopping by (a supermarket) after going somewhere else, but I guess we will just have to learn to keep some reusable bags in the car, said Khaw, who shops at least once a fortnight.

Indonesian tourist Pandi Wijaya, who was seen shopping in Gurney Plaza, said the effort to discourage the use of plastic bags was very good.

I hope Indonesia will also adopt the initiative, he said.

State Environment Committee chairman Phee Boon Poh, who announced the state's initiative of no free plastic bags every Monday with the objective of helping preserve the environment, said shoppers should not be blamed for being unnerved by the policy.

Some of them are not aware of environmental issues or the programme. This comes with education, he said when visiting Pacific Supermarket in Komtar yesterday to promote the programme.

He reiterated that all proceeds collected from the sale of plastic bags will be channelled to the Partners Against Poverty Campaign to help the poor in the state.

Several big shopping chain helped shoppers adapt to the campaign. Parkson Corporation operations manager Lily Lee said a total of 60,000 paper bags were ordered specially for the company's three outlets in the state.

Source: <http://thestar.com.my/news/story.asp?file=/2009/7/7/nation/4268345&sec=nation>