

Must we eat low-class counterfeit beef?

PRESENTLY, Malaysia imports 73 per cent of its beef. Aside from the prime cuts imported from the United States, China, Australia and New Zealand, private cartels are importing cheap Indian buffalo meat that is passed off as beef to the unsuspecting consumer.

Shockingly it amounts to an estimated 80,000 metric tonnes annually — which means Malaysians by and large have been eating inferior low-class counterfeit beef.

Beef imported from India is actually buffalo and Agriculture and Agro-based Industry Minister Datuk Seri Noh Omar had been honest to say this in an interview with Bernama. The minister said the "Indian beef" referred to as *daging kotak* in Malaysia, is cheaper than local beef.

According to the industry journal *Meat Trade News Daily*, Indian imports are the Carabeef buffalo. It added that Malaysia was the second largest export market of Indian carabeef in 2010. During January to April

2011, Malaysia imported 24 per cent more beef from India, with Indian buffalo meat representing 82 per cent of total beef imports.

"People should not be confused over the use of the term "Indian beef" as India has laws banning the slaughter of cows", our Agriculture Minister told reporters.

However, to the unsuspecting consumer, the term "Indian carabeef" seems to suggest it is a beef of sorts when in actual fact it is buffalo.

But what is more seriously disconcerting is whether these buffaloes reared by Indians of the Hindu faith in India are *halal*. The principle of good governance in *halal* is that every step of the way, from "farm to fork", the livestock must be fed *halal* fodder and slaughtered correctly.

What are the buffaloes fed with in India? Who slaughters them in India? If the Indian buffalo farmers' primary objective is to sell the lucrative buffalo hide and then as a second-



ary objective sell the carcass, it really begs the question if this is *halal* in the eyes of Jakim. Muslims know that meat from the carcass of animals is considered *haram*.

But sadly, Indian carabeef is widely sold at our wet markets and utilised at low-end food service. The majority of consumers are most times ignorant. In contrast, quality Australian beef is served at high-end food service and modern retail outlets in Malaysia.

As we move towards developed nation status, should Malaysians be made to eat counterfeit beef, buffalo meat to be exact?

The solution is simple. Malaysia needs to beef up its local beef production. Currently the small time farmers have not been able to produce beef beyond their means. Local breeders should be shown the way to go big time and help meet self-sufficiency.

Provide incentives to grow the

BEEF SUBSTITUTE: A herd of buffaloes in Allahabad, India — AFPpic

livestock industry. The government's National Feedlot Centre programme to nurture high-end breeds is a good measure and needs to take high and urgent priority. Malaysians must have genuine *halal* beef and it should be from our local farmers.