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FEATURE

Enjoy Hibiscus Festivity Responsibly

It's again Hibiscus time, which many consumers look forward to for mouth-watering take-away, a range of shopping items, entertainment and amusement rides for the young and the old.

The Hibiscus festivity manifests beyond the grounds as many stores around the city offer sale, attracting many consumers including the children who are on school break.

In all the buzz and excitement, it is easy to let your guard down and you may end up getting a raw deal.

But consumers should know that goods sold during trade fair shows can be returned or replaced if the product turns out to be faulty or defective. Consumer's right to seek redress remains intact at all times. Both, consumers as well as the traders who have booths at the grounds, are urged to be mindful that no matter where, what or how consumers buy, they are entitled to a fair deal and reasonable satisfaction.

Consumers should take full advantage of bargains but they must remain conscious and not be distracted by loud music or large crowd when purchasing items that are on sale or on special - after all a sale is a reduction in price of goods not in quality.

Generally such sales are a great time for shops to take advantage of gullible consumers. You may think you are a smart consumer but you might still be tricked into buying products which you think you need or it's cheap, through pressure from the sales person.

Consumers are also advised to demand for receipts which act as a proof of purchase. If the toys you buy turns out to be faulty, you have the right to get it repaired, replaced or money refunded. In the past, we have seen cases where consumers have purchased items without testing them. In one case, a man purchased a high-tech toy for his son during the festival. He paid for the item without testing it and upon taking it home, found that the item was not working. Unfortunately, he did not have a receipt. It is difficult to seek redress without a receipt.

Those consumers, who are planning to take advantage of the zero-dollar deposit deals and purchase items on hire purchase during the Hibiscus-hyped sale, are advised to thoroughly check for the availability of back-up service, spare parts and read the contracts before signing. Be mindful of the interest which is charged by the hire purchase companies.

Mobile handsets and other electronic gadgets will be up for grabs as well so buyers must be wary of what they are paying for – be assertive, ask questions as to whether the item is refurbished, counterfeit or branded; does the phone battery and the charger have warranty; what all is covered under warranty, etc.

Packed food and beverages are also expected to be on sale during this time. Consumers are urged to check the expiry dates and the quality of the item as some traders will use the opportunity to clear their old stock.

If you are going for barbecue, decide which stall you want to visit by assessing the cleanliness and how the meat is kept, thickness of the chops etc. Last thing you want to experience is eating un-cooked meat. Be wary of stale food being served by some stall holders.

Also be alert when buying kebabs on skewers /meat balls as some food stall holders may be using meat dust to prepare them. It may be difficult to know but you have a right to question the trader about the type and quality of ingredient used. While, you cannot expect gourmet meals, prepared by professional chefs, using the finest and freshest ingredients, you must still receive food which is hygienically prepared at the food stalls.

Fiji's Food Safety Laws and Regulations have clearly defined standards on the quality of food items that must be sold and it prohibits the sale of damaged/expired and foul smelling food products.

Enjoy the festivity by being a conscious-spender.