

Radiation fears over Japanese goods

Written by Administrator
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Dubai: Radioactive-tainted milk, tap water and spinach discovered in tsunami-crippled Japan may spawn fears that Japanese electronic products such as mobile phones, television sets and computers shipped abroad could also be contaminated.

Retailers based in the UAE say concerns by spooked consumers could lead to a decline in demand for Japanese electronic products, at least until purchasers feel confident that the island nation's exports are safe to consume once again.

Officials with Dubai Customs couldn't be reached for comment by press time on Sunday on measures used at port to monitor Japanese imports to protect human health.

No feedback

However, a source at the Federal Customs Authority, said it did not receive any feedback from the market yet. "So far we haven't got anything on this," said the source.

Senior officials with large electronics firms in the UAE told Gulf News they were aware of the prospect of radioactive-tainted goods possibly becoming an issue with consumers in the days ahead as more reports surface.

Manish Parashar, head of corporate sales for Sharaf DG, said he wouldn't be surprised that consumers are already worried about purchasing goods given reports of contaminated food and water products in Japan.

"People might think if a product was made in Japan, there could be radioactivity in the material," Parashar told Gulf News, noting no consumer inquiries have been made to his knowledge so far at his firm's outlets. "We don't know, but there is still a level of fear. It's the fear factor, people may be scared."

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Concerns about items that are considered premium Japanese products might spark some hesitation among buyers who have reservations during uncertain times in the early stages of clean up in the country, he said.

Part of the concern is that well-known Japanese brands of higher quality than competing Asian manufacturers use "key components that are made at central plants" in Japan. One key manufacturing plant, for example, located in the same area as the leaking nuclear power plant, produces a special film coating for integrated circuits. It is apparently the only firm to make this product, said Parashar.

"It is the only factory in the world that makes this coating. It will affect all plants worldwide," Parashar said.

No fear

Gaurav Malaviya, business head with Plug-Ins electronics company in the UAE, said he isn't aware of any customer complaints about possible radioactive contamination in electronics made in Japan to date.

And he doesn't believe fears will materialise into a major consumer trend anytime soon based upon past world disasters that threatened human health.

"I don't know whether these [electronic] products would carry radioactive elements in shipping," Malaviya said. "Most of these worries are related to edible things. I never faced any customer issues about SARS or mad cow disease. I don't expect this to be a big problem."

Source : Gulfnews.com