

Lab test shows bacteria in 1M'sia milk, say Pakatan MPs

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by Nigel Aw

DAP national publicity secretary Tony Pua today revealed that fresh milk sold at the Kedai Rakyat 1Malaysia (KR1M) were allegedly tainted with E coli.

This, he said, was based an independent lab test on the product commissioned by Pakatan Rakyat.

E coli or Escherichia coli is a living bacterium that can exist in food that has not been cooked well enough and can cause serious illness or even death.

However, Pua (left) declined to reveal the two labs that were engaged to do the tests, but stressed that they were credible.

"If the (Health) Ministry requests the lab reports, we will hand them over, but we don't want the labs to get into trouble because their licences are from the Health Ministry," he said.

Also present were Lembah Pantai MP Nurul Izzah Anwar and Kuala Selangor MP Dr Dzulkefly Ahmad.

Pua, together with Nurul Izzah, had on Wednesday claimed that the government had grossly exaggerated the potential savings from buying KR1M products.

However, Domestic Trade, Cooperatives and Consumerism Minister Ismail Sabri Yaakob has denied the claim, stressing that the comparison should be apple-to-apple.

"Any comparison should be as a whole, taking into consideration weight, packaging and most importantly, quality," Sabri has been quoted as saying.

'Product can cause food poisoning'

Dzulkefly, who is a medical scientist by training, said the results were alarming as E Coli causes severe food poisoning.

"The coliform in the milk is also much higher than the permitted levels, and also causes the same effect," Dzulkefly (right in photo) said.

However, the particular product appeared to have been discontinued, said Pua.

"We wanted to do more tests but you can't find the milk any more since two to three weeks ago. Maybe they found out about it and withdrew it.

"We asked them (KR1M operator) but they said the milk was no longer available because they are changing suppliers."

Conducting a live experiment in front of the Bandar Tun Razak KR1M, Pua revealed another eight products that went against the Food Act 1983 and Food Regulations 1985.

They are:

- * Rich creamer - Lab test shows 9.07 percent of fat (the law requires at least 10 percent)
- * Ghee - Label says it contains palm oil (law requires 100 percent animal fat)
- * Ice cream - Lab test contains 8.87 percent of fat (law requires at least 10 percent)

* Canned sardines - Live experiment shows the sardine content is 37 percent of the nett weight (law requires at least 55 percent)

* Canned curry chicken - Live experiment shows chicken meat and potatoes make 54 percent of nett weight (law requires at least 90 percent)

* Evaporated milk - Label says it contains six percent milk fat (law requires at least eight percent)

* Oyster sauce - Lab test shows no oyster extract, only flavouring and protein levels at 0.6 percent (Law requires natural oyster extract and at least 2.5 percent protein)

* Pineapple jam - Lab tests shows 8.87 percent fruit (law requires at least 35 percent)

Aside from these, Tony said, several other products also breached the law or regulations by not having proper labelling.

'Health Ministry must act'

"This is not just about the Domestic Trade, Cooperatives and Consumerism Ministry; this is also a health issue. I want to ask what Health Minister Liow Tiong Lai has done about this?"

"Have his officers been conducting checks on these products? How does the government check on its own products? Of course, it will say its own products are good."

Pua further pointed out that the breaches carried fines of up to RM100,000 and jail terms of up to 10 years.

"If the rakyat suffer food poisoning, who is going to take responsibility? Can the minister be charged? The ministers have been promoting these products... there has to be ministerial accountability."

Pua called on the government not to practise double standards and to act against KR1M shops, as it would against other businesses that breach the law.

Nurul (right in photo) also took to task the Federation of Malaysian Consumers Associations (Fomca) communications director Mohd Yusof Abdul Rahman for encouraging the people to buy KR1M products, claiming that they were cheap and of quality.

"Have they done any test on the products?" Nurul asked.

She said today's revelations were not meant to score political points but were intended to assist the government in ensuring the health of the people.

"We don't want the public to be exposed to products that can endanger their health, so the government should take this positively."

Describing the products as "extremely irresponsible", Dzulkefly said the most vulnerable groups would suffer as a result of this.

"Most of the people who visit the 1Malaysia shops come from low income families... how can we serve them with these kinds of products?"

"Compromising the health of the rakyat and food quality is not the way," Dzulkefly added.