

KR1M: Minister refuses Pua's debate dare
Malaysiakini.com
November 16 ,2011

Domestic Trade, Cooperatives and Consumer Affairs Minister Ismail Sabri Yaakob has turned down Pakatan Rakyat's debate dare on the controversy over the Kedai Rakyat 1Malaysia (KR1M) thrift shop.

Ismail said the challenge by DAP publicity chief Tony Pua for a televised debate was not in good faith and he believes that his intentions were to cause the failure of the project.

"They are not interested in helping the rakyat. They want the shop to close and say: 'Look. BN (equates to) Barang Naik (inflation). And the government failed to keep living cost low',

"Since (Pua) clearly acted bad faith from the beginning, I am not interested. I am only interested in (debating) with people who sincerely (want to help the people)," he said.

Ismail said it would be more productive for Pua and his cohorts to approach his ministry with solutions, rather than to hold daily press conferences condemning KR1M.

"We do not compromise on quality. If KR1M had erred, we will ask them to fix it," he said, "What we do not want is slandering, such as slanders against (KR1M) prices. That is not right."

Ismail was speaking to reporters at a press conference today after launching the Students' Consumers Movement (GPS) at Universiti Malaya (UM).

Menu Rakyat, now at UM

Earlier at the launch, he said that KR1M products and Menu Rakyat low-cost meals are now available in UM.

"These will allow consumers to make choices that suit them best," he said.

The KR1M chain of thrift shops is the Najib administration's attempt to offer generic retail goods that are cheaper than branded goods sold at hypermarkets.

Homegrown hypermarket chain Mydin Mohamed Holdings Bhd is the chief beneficiary of the project. It will be supplying the products to 85 KR1M stores, which cost RM40 million in public funds.

Critics of the project claim that the government is using public funds to help Mydin make a profit while allowing government propaganda to be attached to the packaging of basic goods.

Over the past few days, Pua has zeroed in on the quality of various products sold at KR1M, alleging that some labels are misleading while others, such as in the case of milk powder, do not conform with requirements stated in law.

Mydin had refuted the majority of the allegations, saying that they were unfounded or "half-true" because Pua had compared the wrong products, or cited the wrong laws.

Previously, Ismail had claimed that Pua had racial considerations in his attacks against KR1M, because the majority of the store's customers are Malays and that Mydin is a bumiputera company.