

Pua: Liow downplaying E coli tainted KR1M milk find
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Health Minister Liow Tiong Lai has been accused of trying to downplay his ministry's confirmation that Kedai Rakyat 1Malaysia (KR1M) fresh milk samples confirmed E coli contamination.

Petaling Jaya MP Tony Pua said Liow did so in a press conference yesterday by emphasising that 13 other products were withdrawn not over food safety concerns, but over mislabelling.

"He was quoted in Star as saying 'the products were removed due to non-compliance with food regulations such as incomplete labelling, stressing that it was not due to food safety matters'.

"In fact, most shockingly Star had made absolutely no mention of the E coli find," said Pua.

The E coli find was confirmed by Liow a day after ministry officials met Pua (above photo, middle with Nurul Izzah on the right) and Pantai Dalam MP Nurul Izzah Anwar on Friday over their complaint on 13 KR1M products.

The duo had previously raised concerns over the quality and non-compliance with Food Regulations 1985 over KR1M's fresh milk, ice-cream, evaporated milk, sweetened creamer, ghee, fruit jam, oyster sauce, tinned sardines and curry chicken.

Pua: Public pressure crucial

Liow said Pua should have reported such matters to the ministry privately instead of going to the press as this would lead suppliers to remove their products, hampering his ministry's investigations.

In response to this, Pua said Liow should rightfully be issuing a severe warning or taking punitive action against the milk supplier and urging the public to return KR1M products that have been withdrawn.

"(Instead), the minister chose to go on a rant against me for exposing the 1Malaysia food products scandal.

"The Minister must realise that it is his responsibility to enforce the food safety and quality standards of products sold in our stores and not the role of the opposition members of parliament," said Pua.

Three other products which health ministry found problems with includes KR1M's oyster sauce, growing up milk powder and sweetened creamer.

Enforcement wanting

Pua said that since KR1M had been selling the 13 products for the past six months undetected by his ministry proves that they have failed their roles.

"Had it not been due to the exposé by the Pakatan Rakyat MPs and the subsequent public pressure, no action would have been taken.

"Hence Liow must not try to downplay the incident or deflect responsibility by trying to put the blame on us instead," he said.

E coli bacteria can produce toxins which are known to cause diarrhoea and in some cases, cause death.

KR1M, the brainchild of Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak, is aimed at providing consumers a cheaper alternative to brand name goods found in hypermarkets.

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