

KR1M's defence ducks E coli milk poser
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Kedai Rakyat 1Malaysia (KR1M) today defended the integrity of its products, accusing its critics of trying to destroy the livelihood of its suppliers who are local small-medium sized enterprises (SME).

In a statement today, KR1M said that the criticisms were unjustified, because health ministry checks on several 1Malaysia products pointed to the main source of the problems as related to mis-labelling issues.

"Most of the non-compliance is in terms of product composition and labelling, and not from the aspect of food safety," read the statement.

However, despite admitting that not all products passed the health ministry's food safety standards, at no point in KR1M's statement did it name the products in question.

Health Minister Liow Tiong Lai's revelation yesterday that lab tests had confirmed E Coli bacteria contamination in the KR1M fresh milk samples that the ministry had obtained, was also not addressed in the statement.

E coli is a harmful bacteria that causes diarrhoea that in extreme cases can lead to death.

'KR1M helping SME'

However, KR1M did state defective products have been identified and suppliers have been advised to correct the errors, and that the products will be given a chance to re-enter the market after the Health Ministry's review.

KR1M said that meanwhile, it has instructed all the suppliers of its 250 products to run periodic laboratory tests on product samples.

The tests, costing up to RM300,000, will be borne by the suppliers and manufacturers themselves.

"To do this is not cheap and easy... These will not be funded by the government, or by the NGOs, nor by the management of KR1M - but it will be entirely borne by the manufacturers and suppliers of 1Malaysia products themselves whom are majority of the rakyat themselves," read the statement.

KR1M said it was committed to helping local SMEs and guiding them in overcoming difficulties.

"Let us not be like some politicians who value their self-interest more than the rakyat and proving that the Malay proverb of 'gajah sama gajah berjuang, pelanduk mati ditengah-tengah' (the elephants battle it out while the mousedeer dies in the centre) is valid," read the statement.

Instead, KR1M said that Malaysia must support local SMEs to help them contribute to the supply chain so that Malaysia can achieve a developed country status by 2020.

KR1M is Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak's brainchild, aimed at addressing criticisms of rising costs by working with private company Mydin Mohamed Holdings Bhd to provide cheaper consumer goods at specific outlets.

However opposition politicians have been hot on the store's tail to attempt to show that cheap has allegedly come at the expense of quality.