

NGOs blame 'Red Bean Army' for its boycott calls

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A group of Muslim NGOs, led by the Muslim Consumers Association of Malaysia (PPIM), which called for a boycott of purportedly pro-Pakatan Rakyat companies, said today it was DAP's supposed 'Red Bean Army' which first started such boycotts.

"Some of the slander against us is that we are ruining the economy, that we are extremist and much more.

"But I would like to share that the 'Red Bean Army' is the one that started it first. They started systematically in 2011," PPIM executive secretary Nadzim Johan told a press conference in Kuala Lumpur today.

According to Nadzim, the "Red Bean Army" started an online campaign in 2011 calling for the boycott of breadmakers Gardenia.

"They said boycott Gardenia because it is an Umno brand, it is linked to politics, but I do not know when Gardenia became an Umno brand.

"Their purpose is just to demonise and dislodge Umno," he said.

'Our boycott is justified'

The Red Bean Army is supposedly a team of 200 cybertroopers hired by DAP at a cost of RM108 million over the last six years, widely reported in Umno-owned Utusan Malaysia and Umno-linked New Straits Times.

DAP said that the group was a figment of Utusan's imagination while pointing out that the numbers quoted in such reports just don't add up.

NONEGardenia, partially owned by Syed Mokhtar Albukhary was caught in a vicious online campaign with racial undertones since 2011, accusing it of being a crony company with calls to support rival Massimo bread by Robert Kuok.

Gardenia Bakeries (KL) Sdn Bhd had in Nov 2011 issued a statement, stating that it was a "Malaysian company" and hired people "regardless of race of religion".

Nadzim also read out several online comments on the boycott which he said was

translated from Chinese, which had derogatory references such as the word "pig" which is deemed highly offensive among the Malay community.

"Our boycott is justified, but their boycott (Red Bean Army) is to sow hatred. If Malays were to read this what would happen?"

"This is what is said to be sowing disunity. Whoever read this would surely be upset," he said.

Nadzim called on the Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission, Home Minister Zahid Hamidi and Inspector-general of police Khalid Abu Bakar to take action against those responsible for the boycott and comments.

'We're not aiming the Chinese'

He also clarified that the coalition of NGOs' boycott was not racial in nature but was merely to send a signal for the companies against supporting street demonstrations.

"We only boycotted eight products and we were not boycotting Chinese products, don't be mistaken.

"The eight products came from (five) companies, which according to our information, is supporting street demonstration.

"So I want to make it clear, we are not boycotting all Chinese products. There is no reason for us to boycott all Chinese products," he said.

He pointed to the series of Black 505 rallies organised by Pakatan Rakyat which he said has inconvenienced the public.

"We feel it should not happen, the election is over and they've had seven or eight rallies and yet they are still not done, that is why we are boycotting," he said.