

Concerns Over Food Safety Of 1Malaysia Products Proven

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by Tony Pua

The developments over the past few days, including the dialogue between the Health Ministry with the Member of Parliament for Lembah Pantai, Nurul Izzah Anwar and myself have proven that there are serious concerns over the food safety of 1Malaysia products.

The Health Minister, Liow Tiong Lai has finally confirmed the presence of e.coli bacteria in the 1Malaysia fresh milk yesterday. However, he had attempted to downplay the incident by claiming that most of the other 13 products were withdrawn over “labelling” issues and not over food safety concerns. The list of products included all the products which we have raised which had quality issues or failed to comply with Food Regulations 1985 – fresh milk, ice-cream, evaporated milk, sweetened creamer, ghee, fruit jam, oyster sauce, tinned sardines and curry chicken.

He was quoted in The Star as saying “the products were removed due to non-compliance with food regulations such as incomplete labelling, he said, stressing that it was not due to food safety matters.” In fact, most shockingly The Star had made absolutely no mention of the e.coli find.

Various strains of the E.colior Escherichia coli bacteria produce potentially lethal toxins which causes common food-related illness such as diarrhoea, and at its worst, even deaths have been recorded.

Instead of giving a severe warning or even taking punitive action against the supplier of the harmful food products – where under the Food Act 1983 the supplier is subjected to a “fine not exceeding RM100,000 and/or imprisonment for a term not exceeding 10 years”, 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. The fact that the stores were selling all of the above products over the past 6 months proved that the Minister had failed in his role, most likely because these products were sold under the “1Malaysia” brand which was heavily promoted by the Prime Minister and the Government.

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 Tiong Lai must not try to downplay the incident or deflect responsibility by trying to put the blame on us instead.

On the other hand, we would call upon the Minister to make the public announcement to be printed in ALL mainstream newspapers for all consumers who have purchased the products to return the items to Kedai Rakyat 1Malaysia stores for a full refund. That is the very least the Minister could do for the ordinary Malaysians, if he has decided not to take further action against the supplier(s) of the offending products.

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