

PM TO CHAIR REVIVED HALAL COUNCIL

It will monitor execution of policies by Jakim, says Zulkifli

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THE Malaysia Halal Council that was reactivated in the wake of the meat cartel scandal will be temporarily chaired by Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin.

Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Seri Dr Zulkifli Mohamad Al-Bakri said members of the council comprised representatives from several ministries, professionals and

experts on halal products and from the halal industry.

"The council was set up several years ago, and the meetings were usually chaired by the deputy prime minister.

"However, the council did not convene any meeting last year. Hence, I have instructed the Department of Islamic Development (Jakim) and the prime minister has been informed.

"From my understanding, the council will be chaired temporarily by the prime minister," he told a virtual press conference yesterday.

Present were his deputy, Ahmad Marzuk Shaary, and Jakim director-general Datuk Abdul Aziz Jusoh.

It was reported on Sunday that Zulkifli had instructed Jakim to reactivate the council.

The reactivation of the council, which was abolished under the

previous administration, was among the demands made by the Malay Consultative Council to the government to protect Muslim consumers in guaranteeing the distribution of halal meat in the country.

"The ministry will forward proposals to elevate matters related to halal products as well as the halal industry.

"Our aim is to turn the council into an umbrella body that will monitor the execution of instructions as well as policies implemented by Jakim," Zulkifli said.

Earlier, after delivering his special address during the ministry's monthly gathering, which was also conducted virtually due to the Movement Control Order, Zulkifli officiated at the soft launch of the procedure for the recognition of foreign halal certification bodies for this year.

The move was among efforts introduced by the ministry to improve procedures involving the recognition of foreign halal certification bodies, thus protecting the welfare and interest of Muslim consumers in the country.

"I learnt that the procedure will be opened for public comment and available at the www.halal.gov.my portal for two weeks.

"This is to allow stakeholders, such as foreign halal certification bodies or foreign embassies, to provide their views and reviews," said Zulkifli.

Zulkifli, in his speech, also urged the agencies not to use procedures as an excuse to delay assistance to the needy.

"Yes, there are procedures (that agencies have to follow) but do not use it as an excuse that leads to a delay in delivering assistance to the needy.

"There are people out there who are hungry and require assistance. Let us use our good consideration to ensure assistance is delivered immediately to them. This is what has been reminded by the prime minister," he said.

Zulkifli also urged agencies within his ministry to beef up their corporate communication units in addressing issues in the mainstream and social media.

"Social media can be the 'echo chamber' for us to disseminate authentic information as well as news, creating a positive perception of our agencies.

"I am sure there are many of you who look up to (philanthropist preacher) Ustaz Ebit Lew. We want the community to know that there are people in our agencies who also have the heart and soul similar to Ustaz Ebit Lew," he said.