

Pua: Ministry admits some Kedai Rakyat items not up to the mark
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By Melissa Chi

PUTRAJAYA, Dec 2 — The DAP today said the Health Ministry has admitted that some of the products sold at Kedai Rakyat 1 Malaysia shops failed to meet legal requirements although it did not take any action against the supplier.

“(They admitted we were right) except the sweet creamer, the 10 per cent fat content, there is a bit of discrepancy, they will check but the rest, they are all considered (to have failed to meet the legal requirements),” DAP publicity chief Tony Pua said today after meeting Health director-general Datuk Dr Hasan Abdul Rahman at the ministry here.

File photo of Pua (left), Dzulkefly (centre) and Nurul Izzah with Kedai Rakyat products at a KR1M store in Bandar Tun Razak, Kuala Lumpur on November 11, 2011. — Picture by Choo Choy May

“@tonypua is accusing us of a mistake he made which he refuses to admit. MOH welcomes the dialogue and is prepared to meet and guide him in whatever way possible,” Health Minister Datuk Seri Liow Tiong Lai had said in a Twitter post last week although he did not show up for today’s meeting.

The meeting was also closed to the media.

PR lawmakers, led by Pua, PKR’s Nurul Izzah and Dr Dzulkelfy Ahmad of PAS, had claimed seven products sold at the government-backed thrift store are of substandard quality, with some failing to meet legal requirements.

These include Growing Up milk powder, which the opposition said contained excessive amounts of vitamin A, which could lead to liver problems and reduced bone density in children.

Dr Hasan admitted that the issues brought up by the opposition MPs were legitimate at the time of complaint but pointed out that some of the mistakes have been corrected while the supplier has been “advised” to comply with food regulations.

Among the disputed items were products affixed with the label “ice cream” which has now been revised to read “frozen confection” to reflect their absence of fat content; fruit jam which do not carry an ingredient list on their bottles; and evaporated milk or unsweetened condensed milk, which should have been labelled as “evaporated milk creamer”.

Nurul Izzah, who was also at the meeting, said Dr Hasan had admitted that three out of every five cans of sardines do not comply with the regulated fish content.

As for the Growing Up milk powder, Pua said Dr Hasan admitted its product label was misleading as it says low-fat milk solids in Malay but “instant whole milk powder” in English.

“We say that this milk powder lacks nutrients according to follow-on milk’s legal requirement. It is clear that it says follow-on milk is for six months to three years.

“Growing Up milk sold by Kedai Rakyat is for one year and above. So there is obviously an

overlap of two years," Pua said.

He said Dr Hasan told them that they are in the process of formulating the legal requirements for Growing Up milk as the vitamin A content is three times above the recommended content for children aged between one and two.

Liow had declared last week that the milk is safe for consumption after testing by the Health Ministry and berated PR for allegedly misleading the public with its claims.

"So given that they have accepted (today), I hope the minister does his work and ensures compliance in all these products and others that we didn't test. I can't be testing every product," Pua said today.

When asked who should be held responsible for the Kedai Rakyat products, Pua said the labels say all the products are packaged and distributed by Juta Bersih Sdn Bhd, although he does not know who the suppliers are.

He pointed out that the ministry had "advised" the suppliers to comply with the regulations although he was not aware if they have been slapped with fines.

"The minister, in his announcement, ... only accepted one fault which is the oyster sauce. The rest was given the all-clear which was what upset me.

"I came and I discussed and there was nothing they could do to rebut. They just said 'Ya, the only thing is the legal definition of follow-on milk versus the other milk,'" Pua said.

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