

Pua: Health Ministry 'covering up' KR1M milk powder issue
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By Clara Chooi

KUALA LUMPUR, Nov 21 — DAP MP Tony Pua accused the Health Ministry today of colluding with suppliers of the allegedly unhealthy growing up milk powder sold at Kedai Rakyat 1 Malaysia (KR1M) to protect the government's 1 Malaysia brand.

The Petaling Jaya Utara MP said this was because the ministry had failed to order a nationwide recall although the product is currently being tested for its shortcomings, nor did it warn the public against consuming the product.

"To date, the KR1M has only announced on its website that they will stop selling the product temporarily pending checks.

"However, this announcement, which is made on its website, falls far short of what is ethically required and global best practices to protect the interest of the people and consumers," Pua said in a press conference in Parliament today.

The DAP national publicity secretary added there was no need for the ministry to conduct any laboratory testing on the milk powder as its shortcomings were clearly disclosed on the product's label.

He said it "would not take more than 30 minutes" for the ministry's officials to discover the discrepancies.

"Hence the remarkable silence from the health minister smacks of cover up and collusion with the supplier to ensure that the 1 Malaysia brand is not negatively impacted.

"This is extremely irresponsible as (Health Minister) Datuk Seri Liow Tiong Lai is placing political interest above that of the young children," he said.

Pua, along with several Pakatan Rakyat (PR) lawmakers, recently claimed the 1 Malaysia Growing Up Milk Powder did not contain at least 15 of the legally required essential fatty acids, vitamins and minerals, and is seriously deficient in calcium and iron content.

They also claimed the product carries 6,012 international units (IU) of Vitamin A per 100kcal, which is 802 per cent above the permissible limit.

Excessive amounts of Vitamin A can lead to liver problems, reduced bone mineral density, skin discolouration and hair loss, Pua had said.

Following the expose, Liow said his ministry was testing the milk powder and added that officials found that the product had already been taken off the shelves.

But Pua said today the government must immediately order a recall and warn the public against consumption, citing similar moves by foreign food companies like Kellogg's, Nestle and Nature's Promise.

Nature's Promise, he said, had issued a voluntary recall of several of its organic bagged salad items due to the potential for contamination in January.

Nestle in Philipines, he said, had recalled two batches of Maggi beef and chicken flavoured noodles in May this year.

Last year, added Pua, Kellogs had done the same for select packages of Kellogg's Corn Pops, Honey Smacks, Froot Loops and Appli Jacks cereals due to an odd smell.

Another example, he said, was Similar Abbott Laboratories, he said, which recalled up to five million containers of its Similac infant formula for similar reasons.

KR1M, operated by hypermarket giant Mydin, offers 250 generic products like rice, oil, flour, bread, eggs, milk powder and diapers at prices 30 to 40 per cent lower than market rates, as well as branded goods.

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