

Pua accuses The Star of lying over DAP ad, seeks apology
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By Ida Lim

SKUDAI, May 3 — The DAP's Tony Pua today accused The Star of lying about its rejection of the party's advertisement and urged the English-language daily to apologise to all Malaysians.

"Apologise to Malaysians for publishing lies especially its readers who bought their paper," the DAP publicity secretary told the MCA-owned paper in a press conference here today.

Pua slammed The Star for allegedly lying that the DAP had failed to comply with its requirements when seeking to publish an advertisement linking the MCA to Malay rights group Perkasa.

In his rebuttal, Pua said the DAP had booked the advertisements for May 3 and 4 "well within" the three-day notice requirement, and not 24 hours as reported in The Star on Wednesday.

Showing reporters the email correspondence between DAP headquarters' publicity director Chu Yoon Ming and The Star's advertising official on April 29 and 30, Pua said no mention was made about the need to put the DAP's logo on the advertisement.

He said the DAP subsequently placed its logo on its print advertisement featuring Perkasa chief Datuk Ibrahim Ali and Perkasa vice-president Datuk Zulkifli Noordin, who is contesting on the Barisan Nasional (BN) ticket in Shah Alam.

Pua pointed to an email where The Star said it would accept the advertisement but asked for the removal of the "keris", saying that the DAP had changed the advertisement and resubmitted it without the Malay ceremonial dagger before the cut-off time.

But Pua said the paper did not accept the advertisement in the end, pointing to a line in a brief email which said: "After taking into several consideration, we regret to inform you that we are unable to run the requested ad at this time."

The DAP's advertisement, which first appeared in the Sin Chew Daily and China Press on Wednesday, shows Ibrahim, who is contesting in Pasir Mas as an independent in a straight fight against PAS, holding up a keris. It did not carry the DAP's logo.

Local Chinese papers today carried a slightly different version of the DAP's advertisement stating that a vote for the MCA is a vote for Perkasa, with a photograph of Ibrahim gesturing without a keris and with the logos of the parties from the opposition Pakatan Rakyat (PR) pact.

In an exclusive interview published with The Star today, the Star Publications (M) Bhd

executive deputy chairman Datuk Vincent Lee defended the paper from attacks over its publishing of BN advertisements.

"We make no distinction about accepting advertisements from any side of the political divide," Lee said, saying that advertisements that "conform to the advertising code of ethics and guidelines" will be accepted.

"So long as the advertisements are not racial in nature, and do not incite racial tension or provoke anti-nationalistic sentiments, we will accept them," he further said.

Lee directly addressed the issue of the DAP print advertisement, claiming that Pua had "conveniently omitted the crux" of the reason behind the paper's rejection of the advertisement.

"It was rejected on the basis that DAP had not wanted to use its logo, which is a breach of the guidelines."

"The ad also had elements that could provoke sentiments of hate which could lead to a divisive society," he said.

He then went on to say that the DAP "could not verify" where the photograph of the keris-holding Ibrahim was taken, adding that The Star had to "be clear if the photograph was doctored or not".

But Pua today denied that the advertisement was intended to incite racial tension.

"We are trying to point out that BN is the one trying to incite racial tension," he said, referring to the fielding of Perkasa leaders by BN in the May 5 polls.

The DAP's advertisements appear to be an attempt to counter the MCA's full-page advertisements in The Star and Chinese papers that allege that PAS will implement the controversial hudud penal law if PR wins federal power.

In the run-up to polls, MCA's advertisements state that a vote for the DAP is a vote for PAS and urge voters to vote for BN instead.

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