

Najib defends Ismail Sabri, says comment meant for 'all traders'
The Malaysian Insider
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Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak today defended Datuk Seri Ismail Sabri Yaakob's Facebook comment on Chinese traders, saying the Umno minister was not targeting any specific race.

The Prime Minister's Department in a statement said the Cabinet was told that Ismail's post was a reminder for all businesses to lower the price of their goods.

It said the comments were "meant to rebuke traders who refuse to lower the price of goods" despite lower fuel price.

"The rebuke he made was targeted to all traders and not just traders from a particular race. Besides that, he suggested consumers use their purchasing power to force traders to reduce their price of goods," the statement said.

It added that Najib had reaffirmed the government's commitment to protect the interests of all races.

"Hence, any dispute that could lead to racial polarisation should not be dragged any further as it will only lead to harm," said the statement.

The Prime Minister's Department added that the cabinet wanted all traders to be responsible and considerate when fixing the prices of their goods and services, and take into account the reduced fuel price.

"Aside from that, consumers must be smart and use their purchasing power to persuade traders to set a reasonable price," it said.

The prime minister's statement follows a gathering by 92 Umno division chiefs in Putrajaya earlier today, to show support for Ismail Sabri.

Ismail Sabri courted controversy after he wrote in a Facebook post that Malay consumers had a role in helping Putrajaya fight profiteers by using their collective power to lower the price of goods.

"The majority of consumers are Malay, Chinese are a minority, if the Malays boycott their businesses, they will surely have no choice but to reduce their prices," he wrote on his Facebook page.

He also singled out the OldTown White Coffee chain owned by OldTown Bhd, saying DAP MP Datuk Ngeh Koo Ham owned shares in the company.

"As long as the Malays don't change, the Chinese will take the opportunity to oppress the Malays," said Ismail.

Ismail Sabri had confirmed with The Malaysian Insider that he posted the statements on his Facebook account.

His comments drew flak from DAP, MCA and Gerakan leaders, who took the minister to task for singling out the Chinese as profiteers.

Gelang Patah MP Lim Kit Siang earlier today urged the Cabinet to take a stand over Ismail's "racist" comments during its meeting today, and called on them to not be "half-past six Cabinet or deadwood ministers", or "moral pygmies and political monsters".

The DAP veteran leader had questioned as to whether the "rabid racist" should remain a minister, claiming that Ismail had resorted to lies and falsehood to incite racial hatred.

Ismail was questioned by the police today to aid in their investigation over his Facebook post.

Inspector General of Police Tan Sri Khalid Abu Bakar said police would also summon the MCA, Gerakan and DAP members who had lodged the police reports against Ismail Sabri, so that an amicable solution could be reached. – February 4, 2015.

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