

Call to boycott products ineffective

Feedback shows move not affecting businesses, says minister

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KUALA LUMPUR: The call to boycott halal products sold by non-Muslims has yet to show any signs of effectiveness.

Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs Minister Datuk Seri Saifuddin Nasution said this was based on feedback from traders groups following the boycott call from Muslim non-governmental organisations (NGOs) recently.

"Business associations have not indicated that the boycott is affecting their businesses," he said at a press conference after officiating the closing ceremony of the I-Keep Sales Carnival in Pantai Dalam yesterday.

"In fact, in our meetings with wholesalers and retailers associations, everything seems to be normal, the issue (of boycott) does

not arise." Saifuddin said the boycott is of no benefit to the economy and national prosperity.

He said such a move was unhealthy to the country's multiracial, multicultural and multireligious society and Malaysians should instead celebrate the societal diversity and take advantage of its strengths.

"We should understand, respect and support one another to ensure economic prosperity. It is this trait that has driven the country's economy and helped it prosper," Saifuddin said.

Previously, several NGOs had urged Malay-Muslim consumers to buy only Muslim-made products and boycott halal goods that were produced by non-bumiputras.

On Aug 30, Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad said the boycott call was a narrow-minded move that would only anger the public.

On Sunday, Finance Minister Lim Guan Eng urged PAS and Umno to condemn the call, saying a boycott was counter-productive and could jeopardise national unity.

In an immediate response, PAS deputy president Datuk Tuan Ibrahim Tuan Man said the choices made by Muslim consumers to pick



Saifuddin (Centre) and Lembah Pantai MP Fahmi Fadzil (second from left) during the closing ceremony of the I-Keep Sales Carnival at Padang Perpustakaan Awam, Pantai Dalam in Kuala Lumpur yesterday. — AMIRUL SYAFIQ MOHD DIN/THE SUN

whichever product they wanted must be respected by Lim. "Every consumer has a tendency to pick what's best for him, there is no compulsion. As such, they are more careful and selective to ensure they get the best possible product," he said in a statement.

Tuan Ibrahim urged the government to focus on immoral activities that exist in businesses, including cheating, monopoly and "black economy" instead of calling for Umno and PAS to condemn the boycott.

On a separate matter, Saifuddin said the working paper on the RON95 fuel subsidy scheme for lower income households has been completed and will soon be presented to the Cabinet.

"On our part, we have completed the paper," he said, adding that in the meantime, his ministry would keep fine-tuning the scheme's mechanism.