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'Support Malaysian products'

Minister: More and more people backing local goods of all races

PUTRAJAYA: Calls for "Buy Malaysian Goods" have grown louder against groups who push for a boycott of non-Muslim products.

Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs Minister Datuk Seri Saifuddin Nasution Ismail said that supporting Malaysian-made products was a more meaningful campaign to back, as opposed to boycotts.

The minister said he was pleased to see that there had been louder calls by Malaysians to support Malaysian products of all races, in a reaction to certain groupings advocating the boycott of non-Muslim businesses.

"This year, our ministry has been allocated RM27mil to spearhead the Buy Malaysian Goods campaign, so I am pleased to see that there are many who have advocated for this.

"It does not matter what race they are, whether they are Malay, Chinese, Indian, Iban, Kadazan ... as long as they are Malaysians, this ministry will fully support their products.

"This is far more meaningful and we hope all other Malaysians will also support this campaign," said Saifuddin at a press conference here after launching the Food Bank Malaysia Masters 2019 golf competition yesterday.

The minister was responding to a campaign on social media by certain quarters to boycott goods produced by non-Muslims.

Economic Affairs Minister Datuk Seri Azmin Ali, in a tweet, said the nation should not be dictated by animosity or prejudice.

"We cannot allow our economic and societal relations to be dictated by racial and religious animosity or prejudice – no divisive type of boycotts. Not in Malaysia!" he said on Twitter.

Federal Territories Minister Khalid Abdul Samad questioned the need to boycott non-Muslim products, adding that Malaysia traded with countries that were non-Muslim too.

"If within our country we want to destroy the unity between races, then how can we trade with foreign countries who are non-Muslims?"

"This thinking is very narrow-minded and it does not think about the long-term effects of such an action towards national unity and the relationship between races," he said during a press conference at Yayasan Wilayah Persekutuan yesterday.

Khalid said when Pakatan Harapan was the Opposition back in the day, they had also opposed a lot of issues.

However, he said they had focused on issues related to corruption and good governance as they wanted to build society up and unite the people.

Khalid lamented that the Opposition today had no other issues to voice out about other

than focusing on racial issues, and by pitting Muslims against non-Muslims.

"By bringing up these issues, which direction do they want the country to head to?"

"Is it so that Muslims can single out non-Muslims and non-Muslims can single out Muslims?"

Khalid said the boycott was not a constructive approach and might become a cause for dispute against races.

He added that it was instead important to work towards improving the quality of products, adding that by improving the quality, prices also had to be improved so that it remained competitive in the market.

Khalid noted that it would only destroy the creativity and the entrepreneurship of Muslim businesses if there were parties who only wanted to buy Muslim products despite the product being of poor quality and expensive too.

Meanwhile, PKR president Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim too condemned the use of race and divisive approach in calling for the boycott of non-Muslim products.

"If you want to promote halal products, it is acceptable.

"But if you want to promote this sort of bifurcation and also use contentious issues between the races, it is not healthy," he told reporters after delivering a keynote address at the Sixth International Conference on

History and Culture yesterday.

Anwar said although it was acceptable for Muslims to promote halal products, there were also products made by others, such as Chinese manufacturers, which Muslims were permitted to use.

"One can propose and support any company with justification but if the approach is negative, then it is unhealthy altogether," he said.

The racial connotation underlining the recent boycott campaign, added Anwar, was not healthy for the nation's multiracial and multireligious society.

The campaign to boycott non-Muslim products received plenty of condemnation from Malaysians, with Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad himself saying that such a call could only come from those with "shallow thinking".

MCA president Datuk Seri Dr Wee Ka Siong said the boycott was against the interest of the country and "an act of economic sabotage".

He added that it was more important that all Malaysians support "brand Malaysia", adding that locally made products should be given priority.

Dr Wee said Malaysian companies comprised workers of all races and religions.

The Ayer Hitam lawmaker also described the action of the groups as "bizarre" and "irrational".