



Women's rally: Blackout in BM, English papers



- **Kow Gah Chie**
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Major English and Bahasa Malaysia dailies completely ignored the Women's Voice for Change rally on Sunday, which drew an estimated 4,000 people.

These dailies include *The Star*, *New Straits Times*, **theSun*, *Utusan Malaysia*, *Berita Harian* and *Sinar Harian*.

The exceptions was the newly relaunched *Malay Mail*.

In contrast, Chinese dailies provided wide coverage for the rally, complete with liberal use of photographs.

There is speculation that one of the reasons for this was because the Selangor government - administered by Pakatan Rakyat - was key sponsor for the event.

This is reinforced by the fact that there was no official representation from BN, although they were formally invited to join in.



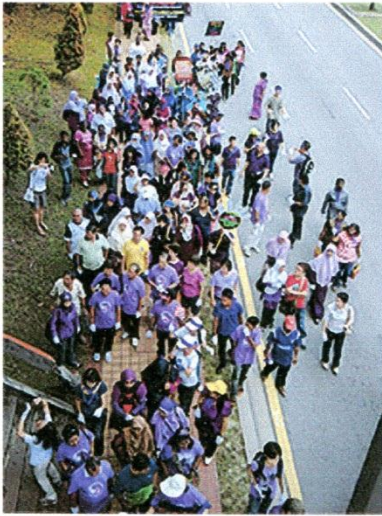
Spokesperson for the rally organisers Maria Chin Abdullah refused to speculate on why major news outlets ignored the rally and said the question should be posed to them instead.

"But I am disappointed. I don't know why they won't give us coverage. We are trying to empower women.

"They have all been informed that we would be holding this event," she said when contacted.

Sponsored by Selangor

The event saw participants marching from two different locations towards Padang Astaka, a Selangor government owned field.



A stage on the field also clearly stated that the event was with the support of the Selangor government.

Flanked by about 20 Pakatan elected representatives, Selangor exco member Rodziah Ismail also took the stage to address the crowd.

Maria Chin told *Malaysiakini* that the Selangor government was one of several event sponsors, with a contribution of RM50,000 and with no strings attached.

She said there was nothing wrong with the donation from Selangor as it was tax payers funds, while the other doners were apolitical.

"Our event is apolitical. We are non-partisan. We have tried hard to ask all parties to send representatives. We don't care which coalition they are from," she stressed.

Instead of worrying over who funded the event, Maria Chin said the press and the public should instead focus on the six demands raised in the rally.

They are: A corruption-free government, a decent living wage, improving the quality of life, ending violence against women, repealing the Peaceful Assembly Act 2011 and facilitating free and fair elections.

Asked to comment on Rodziah's speech, which called on participants to vote out BN, Maria Chin said the organisers said the former was entitled to her opinion.

She said the Selangor government was asked to provide a spokesperson to articulate on the challenges faced by women leaders.

