

Perkasa threatens boycott, Star suspends two staff
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The youth section of right-wing Malay NGO Perkasa will organise a boycott of MCA-owned English-daily The Star if the Home Ministry does not take stern action against the newspaper for allegedly insulting Islam.

"If there is no stern action from the ministry, we shall stage a nationwide roadshow to boycott The Star," Wira Perkasa chief Irwan Fahmy Ideris told reporters in Putrajaya today.

He said this after handing over a memorandum to a senior representative from the ministry's administration division, in which Wira Perkasa calls for strict action against The Star or a suspension of its printing licence.

The issue involves the newspaper's publication of a picture of American singer Erykah Badu with a body art that included the Arabic word for Allah.

"The Home Ministry should suspend The Star's printing permit or take stern action to ensure that this does not happen again," Irwan said.

In another development, two editors from the English daily were suspended today in connection with the use of an offending picture, according to sources.

No other detail was immediately available.

The daily apologised on its website on Monday, the day the photo was published, and in the print version the following day.

Perkasa is part of the chorus lambasting the daily for publishing the picture of the soul singer Badu (left) sporting the body art Muslims consider offensive.

"They don't seem to respect the sensitivities of Malays and Muslims, who are the majority in the country.

"If they are like this, they shouldn't be in the business. We, at Wira Perkasa, will no longer compromise with The Star," Irwan lashed out.

He reiterated that this was the second time that the MCA-owned daily had committed such a blunder, pointing out that the newspaper had put a pork dish on its pages promoting food during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan last year.

Badu was today quoted by the Associated Press as saying she held no grudge against the government for barring her from performing following the controversy.

More than 1,500 people had bought tickets to watch the Grammy award-winning American singer at a Kuala Lumpur auditorium today.

"It's sad, because we travelled a long way," Badu was quoted as saying in Kuala Lumpur today.

"But I'm totally understanding of (the government's) protection of the laws and its people. He doesn't want anything to happen.

"I'm good with that."

Another news agency, AFP, reported that Badu expressed sadness at the decision to ban her show.

Razman Razali, managing director of event organiser Pineapple Concerts, said The Star should have been more responsible.

Rahman said government approval for the concert was given in December.

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