

Defence minister's 'sexist joke' shocks activists
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Women's rights activists who were at Parliament House to campaign for a clean government today were shocked when Defence Minister Ahmad Zahid Hamidi made a 'sexist joke'.

"Can't feel the wife if (I) touch her with gloves (pakai sarung tangan pegang isteri nanti tak terasa)," was the remark Zahidi (left) allegedly made, when the activists gave him a pair of white gloves to symbolise their demand for a corruption-free government.

An activist who overheard Zahid posted the remark immediately on the official Twitter webpage of Wanita Suara Perubahan (Wanita Super MY), the coalition which is organising the campaign.

"Sexist!" commented Women's Aid Organisation executive director Ivy Josiah through her Twitter account.

She had been in the delegation to Parliament House.

Contacted later, Ivy told Malaysiakini that her colleague had heard and jotted down Zahid's remark, and then reported it on the Twitter page.

"Although he was joking, this kind of sexual innuendo is unacceptable... this is downright rude. We were pretty shocked," she said.

'Najib silent'

The delegation had made its way to Parliament to muster support for its rally on Sunday.

Nazreen Nizam, a representative of Tenaganita and spokesperson for the coalition, called on all the MPs to take part in the rally from 2pm.

The meeting points are the Asia Jaya and Taman Jaya LRT stations, and the Tun Abdul Aziz Mosque in Section 14 in Petaling Jaya.

The destination is Padang Astaka, Petaling Jaya.

MPs from Pakatan Rakyat vouched their support for the event which is expected to draw some 10,000 participants.

"Women cannot stay away from politics, they need to show some interest," said Kota Raja PAS MP Siti Mariah Mahmud.

The rally, pressing for a government free from graft; decent wages for workers; better quality of life; cessation of all violence against women; repeal of the Peaceful Assembly Act 2011; and a clean and fair general election, is "championing for a noble cause", said Tawau Independent MP Chua Soon Booi

Association of Women Lawyers president Meera Samantheer earlier handed out a pair of white gloves to Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak.

Meera told Malaysiakini that she had extended an invitation to Najib, encouraging him to attend the Sunday rally in conjunction with International Women's Day.

However, Najib did not reply, said Meera.

Ivy revealed that fewer than five MPs had refused to accept the white gloves including Gerakan Wanita Chief Tan Lian Hoe, who is also the Deputy Minister of Domestic Trade, Cooperatives and Consumerism.

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