

Najib nominated for 'Aiyoh... Wat Lah?!' award
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The Joint Action Group for Gender Equality (JAG) today released its list of nominees for the 'Aiyoh... Wat Lah?! Awards 2013' for the most sexist, misogynistic, homophobic, and transphobic remarks made - and Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak is also in it.

JAG also called on members of the public to take part in the voting, which will end on April 5.

Inaugurated last year, the 'Aiyoh... Wat Lah?! Awards' is an annual event organised by JAG, a coalition of nine NGOs, to raise awareness on what constitutes sexism, misogyny, homophobia, and transphobia and to encourage higher standards of public discourse on gender and sexuality by public figures and institutions.

The awards focuses on public statements and actions, not on individuals or institutions.

Last year Perkasa chief Ibrahim Ali and Obedient Wives Club were among those given the 'Aiyoh... Wat Lah?! awards.

Selected from media reports in 2012, the nominees will be listed under one of seven categories: "Foot in Mouth", "Insulting Intelligence", "Policy Fail", "Cannot Ignore", "Least Helpful to the Sisterhood", "Enough Already!" and "Right on Track".

A statement by Najib is once again in the limelight as a nominee under the "Insulting Intelligence" category.

This is for the prime minister's reported statement that there is "no need for a women's rights movement in Malaysia" because equality has been given "from the start".

JAG pointed out that the statement was contrary to the fact that Malaysia fared poorly in the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report 2012, ranking 100 out of 135 countries.

Perpetuating discrimination of LGBTs

It said the shortlist of nominees for 2012 saw the perpetuation of discriminatory attitudes towards the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) community in particular.

This was reflected under the "Enough Already!" category, which highlights statements and acts that repeat sexist, misogynistic, homophobic or transphobic messages.

Three of the four nominees under this category this year targeted the LGBT community, either through organising forums and publishing guidelines to identify symptoms of

homosexuality in order to stop their "spread" or by demonising LGBT as a source of social ills and an offence to religion.

The fourth nominee was the harassment of Bersih 2.0 co-chairperson Ambiga Sreenevasan (left).

"It is sad to see religion being used to propagate prejudice against LGBTs," Hew Li-Sha of the All Women's Action Society (Awam) said of this apparent trend.

"All religions preach tolerance and acceptance. We must be wary of the use of religion to spew hate and deny individuals their constitutional liberties and human rights," Hew said.

Other contenders include statements by the prime minister's wife Rosmah Mansor, MIC Wanita chief Komala Krishnamoorthy, and former women, family and community development minister Shahrizat Abdul Jalil.

These three secured a spot in the "Least Helpful to the Sisterhood" category by respectively downplaying gender discrimination faced by women on a daily basis, implying that women politicians are not as committed as their male counterparts, and placing on on married women alone the burden of keeping their families together.

Besides the six categories that focus on discriminatory attitudes, the 'Aiyoh...Wat Lah?! Awards' include the "Right on Track" category.

Positive actions to be recognised as well

"We thought it is important to recognise positive statements and actions, as well as the individuals and institutions that take these progressive steps," said Yu Ren Chung of Women's Aid Organisation (WAO).

This category awards public statements or actions deemed particularly helpful in fighting discrimination on the basis of gender and sexuality.

"These nominees are extremely encouraging to us, and we hope that highlighting them in the awards will serve to encourage others as well," Yu added.

The winners of the 'Aiyoh...Wat Lah?! Awards' will be crowned at a public ceremony on May 26.

Ribena Berry, a character played by actor and writer Jo Kukathas (left), will return to host the awards presentation.

"I'm glad to be a part of the 'Aiyoh... Wat Lah?! Awards' once again. Clearly the nominees take pride in being laughing stocks and making the headlines for all the wrong reasons. Let's not deny them the 'recognition' that is their due," Kukathas said.

Members of the public are encouraged to visit aiyohwatlah.tumblr.com to see the full list of nominees and to vote for the most ridiculous, cringe-worthy and nasty displays of sexism, misogyny, homophobia, and transphobia.

Besides Awam and WAO, other members of JAG are Sisters in Islam, Perak Women for Women Society, Persatuan Kesedaran Komuniti Selangor (Empower), Persatuan Sahabat Wanita Selangor, Sabah Women's Action Resource Group, Tenaganita and Women's Centre for Change, Penang.

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