

Bersih's Ambiga turns up at MCA event

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By Lu Wei Hoong

For the first time today, Bersih co-chairperson S Ambiga attended a function organised by the ruling BN coalition BN, with MCA Cheras parliamentary candidate Teoh Chee Hooi.

Speaking to a 50-strong crowd at the Cheras MCA service centre this afternoon, Ambiga stressed on the eight demands of Bersih during her entire speech, and also criticised MCA-controlled English daily The Star.

She said that The Star has been playing up on political violence on its front page and that this was equivalent to creating fear among the citizens.

"It shouldn't do that. The press has to be more responsible... The Star can change its policy from now and do the right thing," she said in response to a question from the audience.

Last Saturday, The Star published a report titled 'Surge in political violence', in which instances of political violence that took place between the BN and Pakatan parties were also compiled.

Pointing out that the press does have a great influence, Ambiga urged The Star and the other mainstream media to stand with the people and report the truth during the election.

"To be fair, it is not the reporters' problem. I think they do stand up. If 20 of you say, 'Sorry, we are not going to allow our reports to be abused in this way,' then maybe something will change."

She also urged the National Union of Journalists to stand up and defend the interests of journalists.

"We must draw the line when there is a misrepresentation. We must draw the line when the report turns out to be a lie."

Ambiga also said that she had stopped buying The Star for a long time, except for the weekends, "as I couldn't get The Malay Mail then", to which the crowd broke out in laughter.

Regarding allegations that MCA had put up slanderous advertisement against its opponent DAP, Teoh said he will bring up the matter to the party central leadership.

However the final decision, he added, is up to the leadership.

He also concurred with Ambiga that journalists should not report based on personal emotion.

'BN shouldn't use 1Malaysia logo'

During the question and answer session, a member of the audience alleged that the BN has abused the 1Malaysia logo, to which Ambiga agreed.

Owing to the government funding to build up the 1Malaysia programme and activities, Ambiga said BN should not use it to campaign, saying "It is our money!"

She also slammed the Election Commission for failing to take action against vote-buying.

Despite it being an MCA event, there were fewer party members compared to activists and members of the public.

The audience threw tough questions at Teoh, but the latter responded with smile.

However, there was a minor scuffle when the audience did not agree with Teoh's statement on whether MCA is afraid of Umno.

"If there is fair play, you should let me speak," he said, while urging the audience to calm.

Questioned later, Ambiga was surprised that there had been no tough question to her from MCA members as expected.

"I thought I would be under the spotlight and I am happy to take tough question from the floor."

However, she appreciated Teoh's invitation and hoped they could have another round of discussions.

Unperturbed at possible party action

Asked about the small turnout of MCA members, Teoh explained that most of the

members have been going campaigning.

Despite being a BN candidate, he agreed that there should be clean and fair elections, but not street demonstrations.

As such, he said he is unperturbed on whether the party leadership would take action on him for inviting Ambiga.

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