

MCA Youth joins groups to vow support for The Heat

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MCA Youth today has joined many other opposition and NGO members in pledging support for suspended newsweekly The Heat as a group of journalists is set to launch a 'red pencil' protest tomorrow demanding press freedom for the country and for The Heat's suspension to be revoked.

Its chief Chong Sin Woon said in a statement today that his movement is critical of the suspension of news weekly The Heat, which has spurred the Angry Media Movement (Geramm) to campaign extensively to demand media freedom.

Chong joins Gerakan Youth chief Tan Keng Liang in being the only BN component members to be openly critical of The Heat's suspension.

"It is unfortunate that today, we are witnessing the government attempting to influence the press by suspending the publication licence of The Heat," Chong said.

"The suspension of the publication licence of The Heat not only set a bad precedent, it also paints a bad picture that Malaysia is a country that restricts press freedom and freedom of information," he added.

"As such, we would like to urge the government to review and retract its decision to suspend the publication licence of The Heat," he said.

Earlier today, Selangor deputy speaker Nik Nazmi Nik Ahmad had urged Malaysians to join the Angry Media Movement (Geramm)'s 'Red Pencil' protest tomorrow demanding press freedom.

The ad hoc movement, formed by a group of journalists following the Home Ministry's Dec 19 suspension of The Heat news weekly will mount the protest in front of the Bar Council building tomorrow.

Nik Nazmi hoped that authorities would "respect" the protest and its demands.

"Both the freedom to assemble and freedom of expression is guaranteed under Article 10 of the federal constitution," he said in a statement today.

The publication was suspended shortly after it ran a front-page story on Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak and his wife Rosmah Mansor's spending traits, and Nik

Nazmi said that the suspension was proof that Najib's transformation programme was merely a "cosmetic" exercise.

"Najib had claimed that Malaysia is the best democracy in the world but criticisms against him and his wife are not allowed," he said.

Police on standby tomorrow

He also said that issuing publication licences is an "outdated and irrelevant" practice.

"I urge all Malaysians who love freedom and democracy to band together for the Red Pencil protest as a sign of our solidarity," he said.

Meanwhile, deputy KL Police chief Amar Singh was quoted by theSun as saying that the police are on standby for the protest tomorrow.

"Yes, we are aware of it (the protest) and we will be there," he reportedly said.

He also claimed that the organisers have not applied for any permit under the Peaceful Assembly Act (PAA) 2012.

Tomorrow's protest is part of the continuous efforts by Geramm to demand media freedom following The Heat's suspension.

They had organised a forum last week, which, for the first time, saw many online portals banding up to speak at the same event.

However, the Home Ministry has insisted that the suspension was only "temporary" pending its review of the publication's response to the ministry's show cause letter.

The ministry further chastised "certain parties" for trying to tarnish the government's image after the The Heat was told to cease publication.

The Leboh Pasar road which is to be the protest venue will be closed in conjunction with the Visit Malaysia Year 2014 ceremony until Jan 5, but Geramm had said that they will proceed with the protest as planned.

