Time to take notice of Bersih 4's demands

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As the build-up to this weekend's Bersih 4 rally rises to a crescendo, the Joint Action Group for Gender Equality (JAG) lends its voice to urge everyone in Malaysia, especially women, to support this initiative and join us on the streets on Aug 29 and 30.

Bersih 4 rallies are being held in Kuala Lumpur, Kuching, Kota Kinabalu, as well as dozens of locations globally, at this critical juncture in Malaysia's history.

As citizens, we have witnessed all kinds of allegations in recent months: of theft, corruption, and wrong-doing by our country's political leaders. The official responses to these allegations have been patronising and vague. A thinking nation cannot accept uncritically, unclear answers to these allegations.

More worrying is that those who have dared to question have been harangued and attacked. All this has taken place against a backdrop of the plummeting ringgit, rising prices, and great uncertainty and worry about our economy's future.

As Malaysians, we deserve better. We deserve a government that champions justice and equality, and one which has integrity and practices good governance. We deserve an open and accountable government, one that treats people with dignity and respect and does not insult our intelligence.

We deserve a government which upholds our rights and freedoms, and holds true to its promise of democratic transformation. We deserve a government that works towards peace and harmony, and stops artificial divisions and violence.

We at JAG are constantly in touch and working with women who are facing poverty, struggling to survive with low wages and poor working conditions, and experiencing violence.

The government's misplaced priorities, ineffectual policies, weak implementation and wastage of national funds has not only failed to address the problems thousands of women face but has often exacerbated the situation. Good governance and a transparent government are not unattainable ideals; they are the minimum requirements of any functioning, competent government.

We need a government which will prioritise the needs of the people, and which is willing to provide the necessary infrastructure, human resources and policies to address our nation's needs and issues.

JAG supports the five demands of the Bersih 4 rally, namely (1) Clean Elections, (2) Clean Governments, (3) Right to Dissent, (4) Strengthening Parliamentary Democracy, and (5) Saving Malaysia's Economy.

The time has come for the government to take notice of these demands

Endorsed by the Joint Action Group for Gender Equality:

1. All Women's Action Society (AWAM)

2. Association of Women Lawyers (AWL)

3. Perak Women for Women (PWW)

4. Persatuan Sahabat Wanita Selangor (PSWS)

5. Persatuan Kesedaran Komuniti Selangor (EMPOWER)

6. Sabah Women’s Action Resource Group (SAWO)

7. Sisters In Islam (SIS)

8. Tenaganita

9. Women’s Aid Organisation (WAO)

10. Women’s Centre For Change (WCC)