

'Stand up to any injustice, even under Pakatan'

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By Sara Ghazie

The people must maintain their courage to speak out against evil governance, even if it is coming from a new government like Pakatan Rakyat, said PAS's deputy president Mohamad Sabu.

"When people get power, it is very hard to shake it away. This is why groups fighting for human rights (need) to continue to exist and remain strong, no matter who rules," he said.

The PAS leader, better known as Mat Sabu, was speaking at the forum last night, 'ISA: The Perfect Torture' attended by over 100 people.

He posed a question to the audience, if Pakatan gets to power, would there be a tendency for it to continue making cruel decisions, similar to the previous government.

"What if the citizens rise to advice and go against us? Are we going to look for a way to shut their mouths, to be disciplined, (telling them) to be useful citizens (and) not to change the government?" he asked.

"(Would Pakatan also) use the television stations to ask the citizens to be grateful, (and) continue supporting Pakatan which is always bringing development?

"Maybe that will be the phrase used," he quipped, to applause and laughter from the audience.

'Use ABU with care'

Mat Sabu warned the people and civil society to show courage against abuses by the government of the day.

Otherwise, the next government, especially Pakatan, "might find ways to implement laws that are sometimes even worse than the previous government" to defend their power.

"This is why PAS' slogan about replacing Umno is quite dangerous.

"I'm worried that they will (really) continue with Umno's attitude. If that happens, it is the NGOs job (to go against them)," he continued.

Mat Sabu urged informal groupings like 'Asalkan Bukan Umno' (Anything But Umno, ABU) to be the 'pressure group' in criticising the government's policy because in the history of governance, it is very hard for leaders to give up their power since it is in their nature.

"Because, it is easy for us to say before we get the power. When we already have it, we start to threaten people - you have revealed this (information), I will prosecute you under the Official Secrets Act (OSA).

"Whereas what we are trying to do is destroy this OSA," he said.

Thus, Mat Sabu encourages NGO Abolish ISA Movement (GMI) to work hard in raising people's awareness and uplift their courage to fight against the Internal Security Act (ISA).

"I hope that GMI will grow stronger and not just during this government's ruling but also during another government's rule because the potential to stray has always been there," he advised.

'ISA's true objective as a political weapon'

Besides Mat Sabu, activist Hishamuddin Rais, an ex-detainee's wife Norlaila Othman and religious figure Wan Ji Al-Bakistani were the other panellists during last night's forum.

Hishamudin , in his speech, said the ISA's true objective was to be a 'political weapon' for the ruling party, to spread fear among the people close to the detainees or political parties, and was aimed at scholars, students, activists and religious leaders, to deter any political obstacles.

"It is an effective instrument so that the people will fear the ISA. Actually, the scary part is within us, not ISA. It is the fear that we have fight," he said.