

Rare pro-Pakatan rally held in Komtar
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by Susan Loone

Komtar, which is increasingly known as a democracy square due to the many rallies held by anti-Pakatan forces since 2008, witnessed one of its rare moments when a demonstration was held in support of the state government today.

Initially, around 50 people had turned up for the rally, carrying pro-Pakatan banners to express their desire for the coalition to be maintained in Penang.

Later, the crowd swelled up to about 100 and turned into a mini ceramah by about seven speakers, mostly from the state PKR Youth wing and Solidariti Anak Muda Malaysia (SAMB).

Some of the banners spotted at the rally had slogans like, "Stand together (with) PKR, DAP and PAS", "Pakatan Rakyat must be given the mandate again" and "I love Pakatan Rakyat".

SAMB chief Badrul Hisham Shaharin (below) told the crowd - which were made up of mostly reporters and onlookers - that they must support a multi-racial Malaysia, with the Malay community at its base.

"If we can have a Malay base, but ensure the rights of other communities in our country, we will be more respected," he said.

Then, he told MCA and Gerakan - the two Chinese majority parties in the BN - to listen up.

"Malaysians must reject racist parties. For example, if anyone ask you to balik Kerala, tell them that nobody knows you there as you were born here," said the leader, who is popularly known as Chegubard.

"We'll just allow one person to go back to Kerala, and that is (former prime minister Dr) Mahathir (Mohamad)," he quipped.

Flourishing freedom of speech

He praised the Penang government as well for allowing freedom of speech to flourish, what with the many demonstrations held at Komtar by groups such as Perkasa.

In their brief political talks, the speakers condemned Umno and BN for all the ills of the country, including the marginalisation of the Malays.

Many of the rally participants wore yellow T-shirts and were seen clapping and cheering at the many anti-BN anecdotes shared by various speakers.

Three police trucks were stationed nearby, but had not intervened in the event.

During the session, however, many were also seen rubbing their eyes, coughing and covering their mouths due to pepper spray that had been used by several unidentified individuals.

Among the speakers at the rally include state PKR Youth chief Amir Ghazali, PKR Bayan Baru Wanita chief Latifah Hussainsa and anti-toll NGO dubbed 'Hapus' activist Zainulfaqar Yaacob.

The event ended peacefully with the crowd singing the national anthem, NegaraKu.

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