

**Gerakan to gov't: Honour pledge to repeal Sedition Act**  
**MalaysiaKini.com**  
**July 9, 2013**

Gerakan has urged the government to honour Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak's pledge to repeal the Sedition Act 1948.

Acting president Chang Ko Youn said the "archaic and oppressive" law should not be re-modelled or used as a reference point for the enactment of another similar law.

Chang said Gerakan believes the government would be pro-active in widening democratic space for citizens by repealing the Act.

NONE "The freedom of speech as the core tenet of democracy will be diligently adhered to and duly put into practise," he said in a statement today.

"In good faith, I believe the laudable move will eventually lead society towards being more tolerant and inclusive of differences in opinion and dissenting voices."

Chang (left), who is also Gerakan's human rights and law bureau chairperson, disagreed with Home Minister Ahmad Zahid Hamidi's view that repealing the Act would see the Malay rulers being subjected to insults.

"There are adequate provisions in the Penal Code to curb open contempt towards the Malay rulers," he said.

As such, there was no need for more laws that infringe upon the human right to freedom of expression and liberty to express opinions openly, without fear and favour, he explained.

azlan "We must stop criminalising freedom of speech at the drop of a hat," Chang said.

Najib announced the government's intention to repeal the Sedition Act in July last year, and said it would be replaced with a National Harmony Act.

However, some of his cabinet ministers appeared to have second thoughts after the 13th general election, in which the BN failed to win the support of urban voters in particular.

Last Saturday, Ahmad Zahid expressed his objection to abolishing the law, arguing that there would then be no legislation against seditious content.

Yesterday, Health Minister Dr S Subramaniam said the pledge to repeal the Sedition Act was merely a "suggestion" by Najib, and that it was subject to the final decision of the cabinet.

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