

Mat Sabu: Only Mahathir can reverse 'Malay supremacy' mindset

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By Nawar Firdaws

Saying a major obstacle to the opposition capturing Putrajaya is Malay fear that they'll lose their rights, the Amanah president adds, it was during Mahathir's time that 'Ketuanan Melayu' became firmly entrenched.

PETALING JAYA: Fear that the rights of the Malays will be taken away if the opposition comes to power is one of the hurdles standing between Pakatan Harapan and Putrajaya.

Amanah president Mohamad Sabu said the "damned mindset" had been prevalent since the nation gained independence and that it needed to be changed immediately.

And the only person capable of doing that, he said, was former prime minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

"It is definitely difficult (to change this mindset). Only Mahathir can do it because it was during his era that the 'Ketuanan Melayu' (Malay supremacy) idea was greatly indoctrinated.

"So only he can reverse the indoctrination of the belief that if the Chinese get on top, the Malays will be destroyed."

According to Mohamad, who is better known as Mat Sabu, the belief is not only prevalent in the rural areas, but also embedded in the minds of Malay academicians and urbanites.

On what the 92-year-old Mahathir could do to change this, Mat Sabu said he could instil confidence in the Malays by assuring them that no matter what happened, they would be safe.

"The majority (of the population) is Malay. And the most important thing to me is that the present government must be brought down," he added.

Mahathir was well-known as a champion of Malay rights during the more than two decades he was the leader of the country. His predecessors, including Malaysia's first Prime Minister Tunku Abdul Rahman, labelled him an "ultra Malay".

A 2009 article published in The New Yorker described Mahathir as being "obsessed with race, and the modern era of Malaysian politics can be traced to his book 'The Malay Dilemma', published in 1970, a decade before he came to power".

Political analyst James Chin wrote in an article in 2015 that during the 1980s and 1990s, the time of Mahathir's reign, major infrastructure projects were awarded to Malay companies with ties to Umno, the backbone of the ruling party.

Such projects included the North-South Expressway, Petronas Towers, and the planned city of Putrajaya, wrote Chin, who is the Asia Institute director at Australia's University of Tasmania.

But Mahathir's public stance has changed since he left Umno last year to subsequently become the chairman of Parti Pribumi Bersatu Malaysia.

While the new party caters specifically for the Bumiputera, being part of the opposition has placed the former prime minister in close proximity with the DAP.

The party that he demonised in the past as being made up of Chinese chauvinists he now praises for being a multicultural outfit that will uphold Malay rights.

Mat Sabu, meanwhile, called on the people to work towards putting an end to the Barisan Nasional's long reign. He acknowledged that people were wary of change and that they felt uncertain if the opposition would be able to do better at running the country.

"There are those who ask, what if Pakatan Harapan becomes the government and the corruption proves worse?

"But the rakyat, once they have brought down a government, will find it easier to take down another if the next one is worse.

"It (changing the government) is only difficult to do the first time. After that, it becomes easier.

"This is a process that will only benefit them," he said.

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