

## **Mat Sabu's 'Wow' moment: Plotting BN's downfall with Mahathir**

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**By Nawar Firdaws**

**Amanah president thinks Mahathir is touched by the fact that many people who were jailed under the ISA by his administration are now with him.**

PETALING JAYA: Amanah president Mohamad Sabu spent more than half his time in politics fighting against Dr Mahathir Mohamad when the latter was prime minister and leading Barisan Nasional.

Now he is sharing the same stage as the man he once vehemently opposed, and whose administration jailed him twice under the Internal Security Act.

Today, they speak against the ruling BN and work together under one opposition coalition – Pakatan Harapan (PH).

Just two weeks ago, Mohamad, better known as Mat Sabu, chaired PH's first meeting since PPBM officially became a member. Among those present was Mahathir, the man who had led Umno for over two decades.

“When I looked to my right, Mahathir was next to me. And on the other side, there were Lim Kit Siang and Lim Guan Eng.

“This is a new phenomenon in politics,” said Mat Sabu in an interview with FMT on Wednesday.

Mahathir's switch to the political opposition surprised many, including Mat Sabu.

It came after more than a year of battling Prime Minister Najib Razak, who Mahathir claimed had tarnished the country's image and made Umno a Najib-centric party.

In July last year, Mahathir announced the formation of a new political outfit, Parti Pribumi Bersatu Malaysia, and just last month, this party became PH's fourth component.

“I actually never thought I would see Mahathir becoming an opposition member, or to still go down to the ground every night,” added Mat Sabu.

“After seeing Mahathir himself criticise the current government, which he once led, I think it is strange if we are not with him.”

Mat Sabu was detained twice under the now-repealed Internal Security Act (ISA). Both detentions were extended by two years, after the initial 60 days.

Asked if he ever reminded Mahathir of it, Mat Sabu said “yes” but the latter never responded.

“Maybe he is touched, seeing so many former ISA detainees are now with him,” he said, adding that being put behind bars was just part and parcel of his political struggle.

And despite the arguments and disagreements the opposition had with Mahathir during his administration, Mat Sabu said Mahathir’s success on the international platform could not be denied.

“We admit that he has brought glory to the country. His speeches in the United Nations were admired by the then presidents of the United States, China and even (Cuban leader) Fidel Castro, among others.”

Jokingly, Mat Sabu said, there were occasions when he “felt hot” (angry) when those whom he met from outside the country asked him to send their regards to Mahathir.

“They didn’t know I’d just got out of ISA.”

But Mat Sabu is clear about one thing: The past is the past, and it will not stop their partnership with Mahathir, especially in the fight against BN.

“Islam teaches that we should fight draconian leaders, not someone who has retired.

“His (Mahathir) influence as a former prime minister will increase public support (for the opposition).”

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