

Mat Sabu: Tunku may not be PM if there was referendum
Malaysiakini.com
September 8,2011

Unperturbed by the criticism against his statement on independence activist Muhammed Indera, PAS deputy president Mohamad Sabu continues to draw controversy - and now says Tunku Abdul Rahman would not have been the nation's first premier if a referendum had been called then.

Mohamad, who is widely known as Mat Sabu, said the independence movement spearheaded by leftist groups, which were then banned and oppressed by the British, enjoyed higher support among the people.

"If a referendum was called for Tunku Abdul Rahman (right), (Umno founder) Datuk Onn (Jaafar) and (leftist leader) Burhanudin Helmy, definitely Burhanudin Helmy would have been Malaysia's first prime minister," the Islamic activist added.

"However, they (leftist groups) were arrested, killed and their organisations were banned," Mat Sabu told an audience of more than 500 people at a forum in Kuala Lumpur last night.

Describing the nation's independence as "Merdeka in brackets", Mat Sabu stressed that he did not deny the contributions of Umno leaders in achieving independence, but the efforts by other leaders should not be marginalised.

"The independence celebration has become like an Umno celebration. Try airing the photographs of Burhanudin, Ahmad Boestamam, Mat Kilau... only then will the people be compelled to celebrate Merdeka day.

"Now only Umno celebrates," Mat Sabu (left) quipped, to laughter and applause from the floor.

The maverick politician, who was labelled by Umno as a communist sympathiser and attacked by the Umno-owned daily, Utusan Malaysia, went further to question whether Communist Party of Malaya (CPM) secretary-general Chin Peng was a terrorist.

According to Mat Sabu, Chin Peng was responsible for the death of the then British High Commissioner to Malaya, Sir Henry Gurney, who had been involved in establishing a Jewish settlement in Palestine before he was sent to Malaya.

"Chin Peng killed Henry Gurney, a colonialist in Malaya. I want to ask, who is the good guy? Henry Gurney or Chin Peng?

"I don't want to answer. If I'm wrong, I would be dead meat by tomorrow. You think about it," said the politician who is also well known for his humour.

Also present as panellists during the forum were law professor Abdul Aziz Bari and social activist Hishamuddin Rais.

Hishamuddin (on right in picture) was more blunt in his opinion on Muhammed Indera, who was better known as Mat Indera.

"Who is Mat Indera? I know Abdul Aziz and Mat Sabu, they are nervous when associated with communists. They are scared. They say that he is a nationalist, but not a communist.

"Mat Indera was an activist with Angkatan Pemuda Insaf (API), he was with Kesatuan Melayu Malaya (KMM) and the CPM. That is clear. We don't need to be afraid of historical facts," he said.

Hishamuddin argued that the communists too were nationalists as they were involved in an armed

struggle for independence against the British.

"Look at the Orang Putih (white man) graves littered all over the place? How do you think they died? Did they die of dengue?" he quipped.

Asked whether Mat Indera was a communist as he had led the CPM in the siege on Bukit Kepong, Mat Sabu said it was merely because Mat Indera needed a platform, with the leftist movements having been banned by the British.

"Mahathir was sacked from Umno before. After he was sacked, he wanted to fight Tunku Abdul Rahman and the Alliance.

"How did he fight? He used PAS as a platform. Sometimes if you want to fight, it doesn't matter whose stage you get on," Hishamuddin said.

The Malays in the CPM, he said, were not godless, pointing out that Mat Indera was a religious scholar and a pious Muslim.

"Last time there was a menteri besar who visited the camp of (former communist) Rashid Maidin in southern Thailand, to help him. When he went in, he was surprised to see a surau there," he said.

Mat Sabu also criticised history professor Khoo Kay Kim for suggesting that Mat Indera did not fight for independence and that he originated from Indonesia.

"There is no need to talk about where he (Mat Indera) came from. The person who is saying this, where did he come from as well? It's not appropriate. When we live here, we are all Malaysians, and at that time, Malaysians," he said.

Meanwhile, Abdul Aziz (left) pointed out that several Umno leaders were arrested under the Internal Security Act in the 70s and 80s for allegedly being involved with communists.

"Speaking of communists, some may have forgotten that many Umno leaders were arrested for allegedly having links with the communists. One of them was (former deputy minister in the Prime Minister's Office) Abdullah Ahmad.

"Then, in 1979, Sidek Ghouse, political secretary to (former prime minister) Mahathir Mohamad, was also arrested for having connections with the communists in Moscow.

"So, from what I see, more people in Umno have been arrested for being communists than on this (PAS) side," Abdul Aziz added.