

Should Nation's History Be Rewritten?

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KUALA LUMPUR -- PAS is adamant in wanting a review of the nation's history in Parliament following the controversy triggered by party deputy president Mohamad Sabu's remarks over the Bukit Kepong tragedy in 1950.

Party vice-president Salahuddin Ayub said it was urging the government to establish a committee in the coming Parliament session scheduled for October to review the country's pre-independence history, claiming that the present history book did not reflect the realities.

Mohamad Sabu (better known as Mat Sabu) created an uproar by claiming that those who attacked the Bukit Kepong police station during the pre-independence communist insurgency and killed 25 people were the actual "freedom fighters".

Writing and rewriting history must be based on an in-depth scientific research and not based on shallow reading, coffee shop conversations or empty talk.

Mat Sabu twisted the Bukit Kepong incident by praising communist insurgents and glorifying Ahmad Indera or Mat Indera, who led the attack, and undermined first prime minister Tunku Abdul Rahman and Alliance leaders who obtained the country's independence from Britain without a bloodshed.

Prime Minister Najib Tun Razak on Sunday warned certain quarters against changing the nation's history and reminded the people not to allow anyone trying to hail communist insurgents as heroes.

Despite over 600 police reports lodged against Mat Sabu, PAS tried to justify Mat Sabu's remarks by claiming that the struggle for independence did not start with efforts led by Malaysia's Independence Father Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra but by several left-wing leaders.

PAS travelled back in time by claiming that Malay warriors like Tok Janggut, Tok Gajah, Datuk Bahaman, Dol Said and Datuk Maharajalela were not prominently featured in history texts unlike Tunku Abdul Rahman. This despite their roles had never been disputed by the government and Umno.

Pushed to the wall, Mat Sabu cited a book published by the Johor Heritage Foundation (YWJ) in 2004, "Pengkukir Nama Johor", which described Mat Indera as a Johorean hero of independence, among 21 other independence fighters.

In his response, YWJ director Muhammad Fuad Radzuan said it was up to the people to judge a chapter on Mat Indera written by Sahgidon Dirham by reconciling with another chapter written by Bajuri Haji Siraj, which described Mat Indera a Malay communist leader who had used violence against his own people.

Given a free rein by PAS, which stated that it rejected communism, Mat Sabu continued his outbursts, including by claiming left-wing leaders were more popular than Tunku Abdul Rahman had a referendum been held.

The question now is whether the nation's history needed to be rewritten on the insistence of Mat Sabu and PAS?

Historian Prof Dr Ramlah Adam is against the idea as there was nothing wrong with it.

"History books for schools are not detailed in contrast with literature for universities and research purposes, which are in-depth," she told Bernama.

She said in writing history, a lot of resources were used and facts were argued before they were adopted while ensuring that the resources gathered were authentic and not misleading.

PAS wanted the nation's history to be rewritten just to have its name mentioned in the struggle for independence but the Alliance led by Tunku Abdul Rahman won the 1955 general election while Pas suffered a debacle by winning only one seat.

"PAS did not contribute to the struggle for independence. It was Tunku who set the direction for the country's independence. PAS' role, if any, was merely as an opposition, even then it was only after 1955," she added.

Dismissing PAS' insistence as a political psychology, Ramlah said, however, the contribution by Dr Burhanuddin Al-Helmy, who led Parti Kebangsaan Melayu Malaya was recognised and many history books had been written about him.

"I had written one about Dr. Burhanuddin entitled 'Burhanuddin Al-Helmy - Suatu Kemelut Politik (a political turmoil) published by Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka in 2003 which had been reprinted three times. Has PAS read it? This is the problem of being lazy to read," said Ramlah.

Malaysian Historical Society's Executive Committee chairman Omar Hashim said there was no need to rewrite the nation's history as improvements were being made continuously.

"Changes are made through improvements. If there are new information or evidence, we will study its veracity whether additions needed to be made. History is a dynamic knowledge," he told Bernama.

For example, he said recently there was an evidence that Melaka existed since 1272AD although it had been known to have evolved since 1400AD.

"Therefore, if proven true and valid, then changes will be made in the history of Melaka," he added.

(Bernama)