

Mat Sabu charge was AG's call, IGP says
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KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 21 — Tan Sri Ismail Omar pointed out today that it was the Attorney-General's (AG) decision to charge Mohamad Sabu for criminal defamation, and brushed aside accusations of police involvement in stifling free speech.

The inspector-general of police said the responsibility of the police was limited to investigating complaints made against the PAS deputy president.

"We sent our report to the AG chambers for his decision to prosecute. So there are two separate entities here, that is investigation on my part and the decision to mete out justice, another separate entity actually," he told reporters.

Ismail stressed that the police's role was to investigate reports made, and to send their findings to the AG's chambers.

"As I've said, I work on procedures and the provisions of the law. We've received more than 1,000 reports on (the issue) and we deemed it fit to be investigated and we investigated with an open mind within the framework of our system," he said.

Mohamad, popularly known as Mat Sabu, claimed today to a criminal defamation charge of glorifying communist guerrillas and defaming policemen and soldiers who defended the Bukit Kepong police station when it came under attack in 1950.

Umno's Utusan Malaysia had first accused the maverick politician of glorifying Ahmad Indera in an August 27 report that quoted Mohamad as saying that the communist leader was a true hero.

The PAS leader denies the accusation, saying he never mentioned the word "communism" in his speech.

He faces two years in prison and a fine if convicted.

Human rights groups nationwide earlier today condemned the authorities for charging Mohamad Sabu, calling the move a clear violation of human rights and free speech.

The groups said the use of the antiquated law sparks concerns that the government was not serious in implementing legal reforms, even after Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak's announcement last week that the Internal Security Act (ISA) along with other security laws would be repealed to give Malaysians more freedom.

Despite Najib's raft of reforms, Mohamad's prosecution has renewed fears of a crackdown against dissent.

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