

Mat Sabu claims trial, bail set at RM15,000
The Malaysian Insider
September 21, 2011

BUTTERWORTH, Sept 21 — PAS deputy president Mohamad Sabu has claimed trial to a criminal defamation charge of glorifying communist guerrillas at the Sessions Court here this morning.

The court set bail at RM15,000.

If found guilty of the offence under Section 500 of the Penal Code, the PAS leader face up to two years jail and/or a fine.

Mohamad, who is popularly known as Mat Sabu, was alleged to have defamed policemen and soldiers who defended the Bukit Kepong police station in a 1950 attack by communists.

The maverick politician also faces an alternative charge of defaming family members of the policemen and soldiers.

Mohamad had also surrendered himself to police at 8.30pm last night and was released on police bail half an hour later.

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.

Twenty-five policemen were killed in the attack on the Bukit Kepong police station in 1950.

The daily and Malay hardliners in Umno have repeatedly called for Mohamad to be charged over the comment with some even insisting that the PAS leader be stripped of his citizenship.

Mohamad denies glorifying communists, saying he never mentioned "communism" in his speech.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak announced a raft of reforms last week to give Malaysians more freedom but Mohamad's prosecution may spark fears of a crackdown against dissent.

The charge of criminal defamation was also used in 2008 against controversial blogger Raja Petra Kamarudin who claimed that Najib and his wife were involved in the murder of Mongolian woman Altantuya Shariibuu.

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