

Pakatan defends Mat Sabu, claims Umno rewriting history
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By Shannon Teoh

KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 2 — Pakatan Rakyat (PR) has accused Umno of erasing the contributions of others to Malaysia's independence movement in its efforts to demonise PAS deputy president Mohamad Sabu as a communist sympathiser.

The federal opposition said in a statement today that the maverick politician was highlighting "the need to appreciate historical plurality" which "Umno leaders will have no part of" as the senior partner in the ruling Barisan Nasional (BN) "offers no room for dissenting views."

Mohamad has come under attack for his remarks on the Bukit Kepong incident. — File pic
"It is in Umno's interest to maintain their version of history not only because it upholds their leaders and hence their claim to power, but also because it conceals their chicanery and Machiavellian machinations in their bid to suppress adversaries and legitimate dissent over five decades of authoritarian rule.

"Mat Sabu was not wrong in attempting to contest existing perceptions of history. What is wrong is the fact that Malaysians have been manipulated for years by the propaganda machinery of the BN government," the coalition's joint secretariat said.

Umno has gone on the offensive since its Utusan Malaysia reported last Saturday that Mohamad had described as heroes those who attacked the Bukit Kepong police station during the pre-independence communist insurgency.

PR lawmakers also told The Malaysian Insider yesterday that Mohamad's comments had allowed Umno to go on the offensive after spending months trying to contain the fallout from rising inflation and the July 9 Bersih rally for electoral reform.

Utusan Malaysia had accused him of disparaging the country's armed forces and expressing support for communists but Mohamad, popularly known as Mat Sabu, has denied the report or mentioning communists and has threatened to sue the newspaper.

But Umno leaders such as vice-president Datuk Seri Hishammuddin Hussein and even former Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad have continued to accuse the PAS man of trying to revise history and glorify communists.

PR also criticised today Umno's "systematic and decades-long effort to 'sanitise' Malaysian history so that only the contributions of those from Umno and its cohorts are recognised, while the legitimate contributions of other Malaysian nationalists and freedom fighters are conveniently erased."

It cited individuals and organisations such as Dr Burhanuddin al-Helmy, Ahmad Boestamam, Ishak Haji Mohamed, Kesatuan Melayu Muda (KMM) and Parti Kebangsaan Melayu Malaya (PKMM) as others who also contributed to the independence movement.

"The groundbreaking 'People's Constitution', crafted 10 years before Merdeka, was achieved

in 1957 by the All-Malaya Council of Joint Action (AMCJA) and Pusat Tenaga Rakyat (PUTERA).

"It was not only momentous in scope and effort, but more importantly our country's first truly multiracial coalition," PR said, in an apparent reference to the "power-sharing" model used by BN and its predecessor, the Alliance, which the ruling party says underpins its multiracial coalition.

The opposition further accused BN of "institutional fear and persecution... that saw them (Burhanuddin, Ahmad and Ishak) and many others arbitrarily arrested and detained under the draconian Internal Security Act by the Alliance/BN on trumped-up charges of, amongst others, communist complicity."

"Umno leaders will have no part of such a colourful past. History according to Umno is a monochrome version that offers no room for dissenting views.

"Our history textbooks are not only missing a chapter or two, but an entire parallel history that has now been successfully erased from official memory," it said.

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