

PAS to call out Umno over Bukit Kepong row
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By Clara Chooi

KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 4 — PAS will soon challenge Umno to a debate on the history of the Bukit Kepong tragedy, hoping to settle the score with the ruling party over who deserves to be labelled Malaysia's "true independence fighters".

In a statement today, PAS information chief Datuk Tuan Ibrahim Tuan Man said the party will send a letter to Umno's information unit soon, inviting it to the debate entitled "Who are the true fighters for independence?"

He slammed Umno for drawing links between PAS and communism, saying it was the "biggest joke of the century" to liken the party to the ideology as they bear no similarities to one another.

"Like what our president (Datuk Seri Abdul Hadi Awang) has said, PAS is an Islamist party and we reject even the British, Japanese or the Communists," he said.

He continued PAS's defence of Muhammad Indera, better known as Mat Indera, saying his party felt "sympathetic" to the Malay communist leader and his kinsmen, claiming they had been forced to endure wild accusations in "Umno's version of history" without being given room to defend themselves.

Mat Indera was a Malay communist leader who led the guerrilla assault against the Bukit Kepong police station manned by policemen under the British administration.

Mohamad, PAS's deputy president, had purportedly told a ceramah recently that those who attacked the Bukit Kepong police station during the pre-independence communist insurgency and killed 25 people, were "freedom fighters".

The maverick politician has since been accused of being a communist sympathiser by Umno leaders and sniped at daily in Umno-owned newspaper Utusan Malaysia despite denying that he had used the word "communism" during his speech.

But Umno appears determined to use Mohamad's statement to woo support from the Malay electorate, among whom communism remains a bogeyman, and yesterday announced a nationwide campaign to attack the Islamic leader.

"There are those who have ignored several facts like the time the incident occurred, why the Johor government endorsed their struggle and why Mat Indera himself was commissioned to teach religion in Johor — to a point they label those with differing views as traitors and communist sympathisers," Tuan Ibrahim said today.

He said PAS has had a "big laugh" over the ongoing furore and accused Umno of running short on ideas to use against the opposition.

He said Umno's repeated attacks against the Islamist party has now gone on for nine days,

proving that PAS was recognised as a major threat to the ruling party in the coming 13th general election.

But Tuan Ibrahim claimed the attacks have only served to open the eyes of the country's technology-savvy youths, urging them to seek the truth for themselves.

"Apart from that, the heirs of Malaysia's independence fighters whose lives were sacrificed when fighting the British are very disappointed at being labelled as communists even though they have nothing to do with communism.

"Mat Indera's kin, when met, were very upset with the uncivilised reports in the mainstream media, linking him to communism. They are confident that only when Barisan Nasional (BN) is toppled, true historical facts will be revealed," he said

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