

Umno exploiting ex-servicemen to attack Mat Sabu, says PKR
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By Clara Chooi

KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 4 — PKR today accused Umno of exploiting the country's ex-servicemen by recruiting them to join a nationwide roadshow aimed at vilifying PAS and its deputy president Mohamad Sabu.

PKR vice-president Nurul Izzah Anwar said the ruling party was insincere in its bid to "champion" the fate of Malaysia's veterans and was merely using the group to incite suspicion and hatred in the country and shore up its own power.

Instead of focusing on the much needed work to recognise and further assist our beloved veterans and serving men and women, Umno Youth only seems interested in vilifying PAS and Mohamad Sabu," she wrote in a statement today.

Nurul Izzah (picture) was referring to Umno Youth's announcement yesterday on its plans to mount an attack on Mohamad by gathering all former servicemen to join a nationwide roadshow called the "Patriot Stage".

The PAS deputy president, popularly referred to as "Mat Sabu", triggered controversy recently when he told a recent ceramah that the attack on the Bukit Kepong police station in 1950, which killed 25, was by 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 has now armed itself for war.

Nurul Izzah said the controversy and the relentless debates it had triggered only proves that the formal version of Malaysia's history in textbooks has not gained universal acceptance.

"Indeed, it seems to be causing great unhappiness amongst many groups and communities, and has made the divisions in our society all the more bitter," she said, adding that Umno should instead be facilitating debate on the issue and resolve all grievances with national reconciliation.

The Lembah Pantai MP also told Umno that instead of mounting the roadshow, it should concentrate its time, money and effort on assisting the former servicemen through national bodies like the Lembaga Tabung Amanah Tentera (LTAT).

"One also wonders why these so-called 'patriots' have thought that holding roadshows will be more beneficial than supporting, monitoring, and giving feedback on the national bodies concerned with the welfare of our veterans and servicemen, such as LTAT and the various veteran organisations?

"Working with these organisations — to fight to purchase Exxonmobil assets in Malaysia, for

instance — will probably do more to help our heroes and further the national interest than embarking upon narrow partisan political activity,” she said.

She suggested that Umno offers aid to Malaysia’s World War II veterans, claiming that some have yet to be compensated for their services and sacrifice.

Nurul Izzah also pointed to Bersih 2.0’s suggestion to scrap the postal ballot system by according the country’s security personnel with equal voting rights with regular Malaysian citizens. The current system, she said, is tantamount to denying this group an equal voice in the very country they are serving.

She also reminded the government that it has yet to revoke the four emergency declarations used on the country during times of turbulence although Malaysia has gone through 54 years of independence.

“In fact, isn’t Umno indirectly demeaning and dishonouring our beloved veterans by saying that despite all the sacrifices they have made, Malaysia is still not safe and secure enough after all these years, justifying the need for these four emergency declarations?”

“Or is Umno contented with continuing use of these emergency declarations to keep its stranglehold on power?” she said.

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