

Now PAS wants review of independence struggle

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KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 6 — PAS today urged Putrajaya to form a Cabinet committee to review the history of the nation's independence amid controversy surrounding the party's deputy president's remarks on Malaya's pre-independence freedom fighters.

PAS No. 2 Mohamad Sabu, widely known as Mat Sabu, told a Bukit Gelugor ceramah recently that those who attacked the Bukit Kepong police station — which killed 25 — during the pre-independence communist insurgency in 1950 were freedom fighters, including Muhammad Indera.

PAS secretary-general Datuk Mustafa Ali (picture) said today that Umno had lied in calling Muhammad, better known as Mat Indera, a communist, highlighting a book endorsed by the Johor state government titled "Pengukir Nama Johor".

"If he is sincere, (Prime Minister Datuk Seri) Najib (Razak) can set up a Cabinet committee to review the history of the country's independence," said PAS vice-president Salahuddin Ayub at a press conference today with Mohamad, Mustafa, party central committee member Dr Dzulkefly Ahmad and party information chief Datuk Tuan Ibrahim Tuan Man.

Mohamad 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" in his speech.

Umno Youth said recently it would gather former soldiers, policemen and kinsmen of victims of the Bukit Kepong tragedy in a nationwide roadshow — called the Pentas Patriot or Patriot Stage — to counter Mohamad's view of the fire-fight.

Umno Youth chief Khairy Jamaluddin has also accepted a challenge to debate Mohamad on the latter's remarks, although the PAS No. 2 said today that he would let the party's Youth wing debate instead.

Mohamad has previously pointed out that Mat Indera was already recognised a freedom fighter by Umno-controlled daily Berita Harian on August 13, 2010.

Mustafa said the nation's history needed to be reviewed as the official version only recognised Umno as Malaya's independence fighters.

"The fight for independence didn't start with Umno... the ones who fought the British were the Malay Nationalist Party (PKMM)," he said.

Mustafa pointed out that the PKMM was formed in 1945, while Umno was formed a year later.

He, however, acknowledged the role of Umno's leaders in the struggle for independence, saying that Umno founder Datuk Onn Jaafar and former Prime Minister Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra took the "peaceful co-operative" way by becoming officers under the British administration.

"But history was hijacked when it says that the only independence fighters were Umno. That's not accurate. Don't deny the battles of others started by PKMM," said Mustafa.

Political analysts said recently that Umno wanted to maintain its interpretation of history — which has been "propagated in schools and by the official media" — that it was the main force behind the nation's battle for independence.

Asked if the communists had contributed to the nation's independence in 1957 by fighting the British colonialists, Mustafa said: "PAS rejects communists and communist ideology."

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