

Johor MB dishonest about Mat Indera, says constitutional expert
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KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 9 — Professor Abdul Aziz Bari has accused Datuk Abdul Ghani Othman of hypocrisy after the Johor menteri besar insisted that Ahmad Indera was not a freedom fighter but a communist.

The International Islamic University (IIU) don said that as a former academic himself, Abdul Ghani's statement had damaged the credibility of his own office and that of the state government which published a 2004 book titled "Pengukir Nama Johor" which names Ahmad, better known as Mat Indera, as a prominent Johor figure.

"It is not proper seeing as the book was published by the state government. It damages the state government... as menteri besar, he should know the contents of the book. It is shameful and foolish," Abdul Aziz (picture) told The Malaysian Insider.

Abdul Ghani had himself written the foreword to the book that lists several freedom fighters and leading figures from the southern state.

But the Johor menteri besar said last night that Mat Indera had planned the 1950 attack on the Bukit Kepong police station— which resulted in 25 deaths — and tried to convince Malays to join his "illegal activities" in the Communist Party of Malaya (CPM).

He had also claimed that historical facts showed that Mat Indera was a leader of the 10th Regiment under the communist terrorists who threatened the safety of the public at the time.

The Johor Heritage Foundation (JHF) had also claimed earlier that although Mat Indera was listed in "Pengukir Nama Johor", he was never acknowledged as a freedom fighter.

It said that the content on Mat Indera was from two writers with differing viewpoints, one of whom had claimed that Ahmad was a Malay communist leader who perpetrated acts of terror on his own people.

Abdul Aziz said today that Abdul Ghani should have taken the same tack and said that the contents of the book were only the views of the writers and did not represent the stand of the administration.

"His statement has damaged the credibility of Umno, Johor and also Putrajaya," the constitutional expert added.

The raging debate over the role of those who attacked the Bukit Kepong police station was sparked after Umno's Utusan Malaysia highlighted a ceramah by Mohamad Sabu, accusing the PAS deputy president of glorifying the communists.

But Mat Indera's family have insisted that he was not a communist and have demanded that the government clear his name.

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