

Mat Sabu charge dampens 'best democracy in the world' aspirations
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KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 22 — The prosecution of PAS Deputy President Mohamad Sabu for criminal defamation should dampen the euphoria sparked by the prime minister's latest gambit to make Malaysia the "best democracy in the world", a DAP leader said today.

"The malicious and selective prosecution of Mat Sabu for criminal defamation has come as a reminder that if Malaysia is to progress towards a more democratic society, upholding human rights and the rule of law, it is equally important to end the gross abuses of power so rampant in the present system," DAP parliamentary leader Lim Kit Siang (picture) said today in a press statement.

Mohamad claimed trial yesterday to a criminal defamation charge of glorifying communist guerrillas and defaming the policemen and soldiers who defended the Bukit Kepong police station when it came under attack in 1950.

The prosecution comes a week after Najib announced a raft of reforms to give Malaysians more freedom, prompting opposition politicians to believe that the Najib administration will continue to prosecute its rivals despite the prime minister's reform pledges to replace the Internal Security Act with two new security laws.

"There must not only be far-reaching reforms to abolish draconian and undemocratic laws but also a restoration of the independence, professionalism and integrity of key national institutions if Malaysia is to become a normal democratic country," added Lim, who is also Ipoh Timur MP.

Lim also said that Najib's proposals to set up a parliamentary select committee on electoral reforms, to repeal the ISA and to amend various laws have not been able to stand up to close scrutiny.

"The proposed parliamentary select committee will only be meaningful if it results in changes to the electoral system to ensure free and fair elections as envisaged in the eight demands of Bersih 2.0.

"Most important of all, that such reforms are all effected before the dissolution of Parliament and the holding of the next general elections," he said.

Umno's Utusan Malaysia had first accused Mat Sabu of glorifying Ahmad Indera in an August 27 report that quoted him as saying that the communist leader was a true hero.

Opposition leader Datuk Sri Anwar Ibrahim had pointed out that Ahmad was recognised in the 2004 book titled "Pengukir Nama Johor" published by the Johor government which names the leader, better known as Mat Indera, as a prominent Johor figure.

Johor Mentri Besar Datuk Abdul Ghani Othman had written the foreword to the book that lists several freedom fighters and leading figures from the southern state.

But the Johor mentri besar recently said that Mat Indera had planned the 1950 attack on the Bukit Kepong police station— which resulted in 25 deaths — and had 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.

Mat Sabu faces two years in prison and a fine if convicted.

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