

**Chin Peng contributed to Merdeka, argues DAP parliamentarian
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In the middle of a very divisive debate over the merits of the late communist leader Chin Peng, the DAP's Klang MP Charles Santiago (pic) has waded in, saying that Chin Peng contributed to the wellbeing of Malaysia.

"His armed struggle against the Japanese and British helped expedite Merdeka for Malaya," he said when contacted by The Malaysian Insider today.

Santiago had been among the first to pay his respects to the former Communist Party of Malaya secretary-general.

He said he had gone to Bangkok for a meeting with non-governmental organisations and later dropped by the temple where the late Chin Peng's remains were, to pay his respects.

He was seen kneeling and holding a joss stick at a floral dais inside the air-conditioned hall, where the sealed casket bearing Chin Peng's remains was placed, The Star online reported.

Santiago was accompanied by Selangor DAP committee member and former senator S. Ramakrishnan and Aliran exco member Sarajun Hoda. Jelutong MP Jeff Ooi and PKR Batu MP Tian Chua have also paid their respects, but at a different time.

Santiago told The Malaysian Insider upon arrival from Bangkok, "Allowing his remains to be brought back and interred in his hometown in Sitiawan must be seen as a healing process."

He added, "Let history judge Chin Peng."

Santiago was on the outskirts of the Thai capital to attend a conference but attended the wake service at Wat That Thong Temple on Friday.

The leaders of Malaysia, he said, must show the international community that they were magnanimous in doing what was expected of them, since it was the existing government that had signed a peace pact with the Communist Party of Malaya in 1989.

"The Thai army generals who fought Chin Peng and the Communist Party of Malaya have said let bygones be bygones. It is time to move forward. Malaysia should adopt a similar attitude," he said.

He said many in Bangkok wondered why Malaysia took such a tough stand against Chin Peng when the government had diplomatic ties with China, which is communist.

"We have also excellent ties with Japan which once occupied this country and whose soldiers caused untold misery to the people," he noted.

Santiago noted that Chin Peng fought an ideological war with the Japanese and later the British to liberate Malaya.

"Can Umno and the present government deny this?" he asked.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak has said Putrajaya would block the remains of Chin Peng from Malaysia and challenged those unhappy with the decision to take it to the courts.

"The government has decided, and those unhappy with the decision can challenge it in court," Najib said.

Chin Peng, 88, died in a hospital on Monday and his remains are to be cremated in Bangkok tomorrow. – September 22, 2013.

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