

I did not mind being called 'bomoh', says Mahathir
MalaysiaKini.com
Aug 19th, 2016

Dr Mahathir Mohamad does not deny claims he had a penchant for coming up with "rude nicknames" for members of the cabinet when he was prime minister - and said he too did not mind being given a nickname.

He said this in response to former deputy prime minister Musa Hitam, who in his biography titled 'Frankly Speaking' described Mahathir as a "belligerent and contemptuous individual" who liked to poke fun at people and give rude nicknames.

Musa had given an example of Mahathir calling a minister "Mat Bulat" (Fat Mohamed) while other ministers retaliated by calling Mahathir "Tok Bomoh" (shaman).

In a blog posting yesterday, Mahathir went ahead and revealed that the minister he described as "Mat Bulat" was Mohamed Rahmat, who served as information minister under him from 1987 to 1999.

"Yes, I did call Mohamed Rahmat 'Mat Bulat' because he was stout.

"I did not mind people calling me 'bomoh'. I thought it was a friendly reference to my profession," he said in reference to his practice as a doctor before joining politics.

However, Mahathir took issue with other claims made by Musa in his book, including accusing the prime minister of 22 years of demanding absolute loyalty.

"Musa's book 'Frankly Speaking' makes interesting reading. Speaking frankly does not mean speaking truthfully.

"And when talking of things which happened 30-40 years ago, the accuracy of incidents and conversations is affected by current situations," he said.

Mahathir said Musa, in his book, appeared to be out to blame him for every wrong that took place.

"'Frankly Speaking' seeks to blame me for everything that happened in Umno and the government over all these years.

"Musa naturally does not blame himself for anything. He is as innocent as a newborn child. Which explains why he is so popular," said Mahathir.

Musa served as deputy prime minister under Mahathir from 1981 until 1986.

Musa said he resigned after Mahathir accused him of wanting to be the prime minister.

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Source: <http://www.malysiakini.com/news/352862>