

'I would have expelled Musa if I demanded absolute loyalty'

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Dr Mahathir Mohamad said he would have expelled Musa Hitam from Umno when he resigned as deputy prime minister in 1986 if he was a prime minister that demanded absolute loyalty.

He said this in response to Musa Hitam, who in his biography titled 'Frankly Speaking', said Mahathir demanded absolute loyalty when he was prime minister.

"If I wanted absolute loyalty, I would have expelled him, as Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak did for those he thought were not loyal enough to him," Mahathir said in his blog posting yesterday.

Instead, the former prime minister added, he accepted the Umno supreme council's decision to allow Musa to stay on as Umno deputy president even though he had resigned as deputy prime minister.

"Musa was obviously not loyal to me at all. But I accepted his decision to return as deputy president of the party. Later, he was to show even greater disloyalty," said Mahathir.

Musa in his biography said he resigned as deputy prime minister after Mahathir accused him of wanting to take over as prime minister.

'Mahathir was influenced by rumours'

Musa claimed that Mahathir was influenced by rumours spread by then ministers Anwar Ibrahim, Daim Zainuddin and Sanusi Junid.

This claim was later confirmed by former Utusan Malaysia chief editor Zainuddin Maidin, who went on to become information minister.

However, Mahathir disputed this, stating: "Zam or Zainudin Maidin, editor of Utusan, may remember. But I wonder if Utusan carried out an investigation. It often reports hearsay."

Mahathir claimed Musa later went to Switzerland to convince Tengku Razaleigh (photo), his arch rival, to contest for the Umno presidency.

"Despite all this, I did not take any action against him. When he did not join Tengku Razaleigh's Semangat 46, I appointed Musa as special envoy to the United Nations with ministerial rank.

"Does this make me sound like a man who cannot and would not tolerate anything but

absolute personal loyalty, as alleged by Musa?" he said.

Mahathir was also not convinced by Musa's denial that he conspired with Tengku Razaleigh and had no ambitions to be in the government had Tengku Razaleigh become prime minister.

This was despite Musa contesting as Tengku Razaleigh's running mate for the position of Umno deputy president.

"It is absurd. Why contest for deputy president, who traditionally becomes deputy prime minister, if he had no intention to be a part of the government as deputy prime minister?" said Mahathir.

'I also reappointed past enemies'

Furthermore, Mahathir said, his track record showed he had also reappointed past enemies into the government.

"The record will show that I reappointed Syed Hamid Albar and Kadir Sheikh Fadzir as ministers in my cabinet. Later, I appointed Abdullah Ahmad Badawi and Rais Yatim into the cabinet.

"I even chose Abdullah as deputy prime minister when Anwar Ibrahim left the party and eventually Abdullah became prime minister upon my resigning.

"Is this how a man, who cannot tolerate disloyalty, treat people who were obviously disloyal to him?" he asked.

As such, Mahathir said he was not like Najib, who demoted, removed and expelled leaders for even mildly questioning him about 1MDB and the billions in his personal bank accounts.

"He does not allow contests for president, as I did when Musa and Tengku Razaleigh challenged Ghafar Baba and me.

"Anyone not fully supporting him (Najib), be they ministers or civil servants, were removed or transferred or medically retired.

"He is not tolerant as I was. I reserve a right to criticise his intolerance of opposition," said Mahathir.