

Slipper jibe: Dr M says Umno leaders did worse
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While many, including his son, rushed to Dr Mahathir Mohamad's defence over the 'slipper garland' remark, the former premier however had a different take.

Recalling how he was attacked by Umno leaders during the reign of Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, Mahathir pointed out that nobody gave two hoots then. The former Umno president then zeroed in on his chief critic in Umno, Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Mohd Nazri Abdul Aziz.

"This is not the first time I have been insulted. People might have forgotten how Umno leaders insulted me. Nazri (*left*) and the previous menteri besar of Kedah (Mahadzir Khalid) wanted me expelled from Umno.

"However, then no one gave any reaction. No one dared to say anything," he told *Bernama*.

"Suddenly I have become popular. Everyone is defending me. As I said... previously when I was insulted, asked to be expelled from Umno, no one showed any reaction. Why the reaction now?"

"Then no one defended me. At least not openly. Some did on the quiet but the big names dared not," he said, adding that he was saddened that people from his own party and who sat with him in his cabinet had resorted to such action.

Mahathir was responding to the controversy surrounding MIC delegate M Sukumaran who drew flak when he said that the former premier's photograph should be garlanded with slippers.

Sukumaran, who has since been suspended by MIC president S Samy Vellu pending an inquiry into his outburst, had expressed regret and apologised to the former premier.

The delegate made the remark during the MIC annual general assembly over the weekend in response to Mahathir's criticism towards the party president.

'I am not angry'

However, Mahathir said he was not saddened or angered by the insult.

It was insults from Umno people, he stressed, that hurt him and this one from the MIC member was just like "pouring water on a duck's back."

"I have been with Umno since its formation (except for short spells when he was expelled and when he resigned as a member). The people who talked bad about me weren't even born yet," he said.

The 84-year-old statesman added that if he were back in power now, he would drop these people from the cabinet.

On Sukumaran's wish to apologise to him, Mahathir said: "Apologise also okay, don't want to apologise also don't matter. It's only when my own people hurl insults at me that I feel slighted."

He said Sukumaran now had become his own victim because of his action.

Samy: I'll tell him sorry

Meanwhile, Samy Vellu said he will personally apologise to Mahathir over the 'slipper garland' issue.



He said he will seek an appointment with the former prime minister to tender his apology.

"I will meet him personally to explain the whole episode and extend my apology," he said in a statement.

The MIC chief said he and the MIC regretted that the incident happened.

"I have always had the highest respect for Mahathir. He is a great leader and a statesman.

"He will always be respected by us and all Malaysians," he added.

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