

Musa: Dr M was in KL during Memali incident
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Former prime minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad was largely absolved over the deaths of 18 people in a government assault on Memali in 1985 as he was claimed to have been on an official visit to China.

Almost three decades after that bloody incident, his then deputy prime minister Musa Hitam revealed yesterday that Mahathir was in the capital as armoured vehicles rolled into the remote village in Baling, Kedah to crack down on a religious sect led by Ibrahim Mahmud, better known as Ibrahim Libya.

"Dr Mahathir was in Kuala Lumpur, even on the second, third and fourth day after that, he was still in Kuala Lumpur," Musa told a forum in Kota Bharu last night, an **excerpt** of which has been uploaded on YouTube.

On hearing this, forum moderator Mohammad Agus Yusof exclaimed: "Oh my God."

Some 400 police officers stormed the village on Nov 19, 1985 after a stand-off where villagers refused to surrender Ibrahim to the authorities who accused him of being a deviant and they fought back.

The siege resulted in the deaths of 14 villagers and four police officers.

"I was not involved in the operation side. I did not sit there and order how many people to deploy, no," said Musa.

"That was the job of the IGP (inspector-general of police) or police. But I cannot blame anyone."

Musa, who was then also home minister, conceded Memali was a "black mark" in his long political career when asked if he regretted the bloody incident.

The incident marked the beginning of a deep rift between Umno and PAS, which declared those perished as martyrs.

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