

Mukhriz: I defied Najib to contest 2013 Umno VP post

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By V Anbalagan

The Umno president wanted all top posts in the party to be uncontested, which is against democratic practice, says the sacked leader.

KUALA LUMPUR: Mukhriz Mahathir said he contested the post of Umno vice-president in 2013 despite not getting the blessings of its president as he wanted to see democracy thrive in the party.

He told the High Court today that Najib Razak wanted to see all the top posts in the party won uncontested.

“Najib and his deputy (Muhyiddin Yassin) were returned unopposed. He also wanted to see the three incumbent vice-presidents retained,” he said when cross-examined by lawyer Jahaberdeen Mohamed Yunoos.

Mukhriz said he finally offered himself for the post when the the president only wanted him to contest a seat in the Umno supreme council.

“I was against this culture of preventing contest in the party election,” he said, adding that former Negeri Sembilan menteri besar Mohd Isa Samad and ex-Melaka chief minister Mohd Ali Rustam had also contested.

The three vice-presidents posts were won by Ahmad Zahid Hamidi, Shafie Apdal and Hishammuddin Hussein.

Muhyiddin and Mukhriz were sacked from the party while Shafie resigned as the three were critical of Najib over the 1MDB issue.

Mukhriz is the first witness in his defamation suit against Tengku Sariffuddin Ahmad, the prime minister’s press secretary.

On May 3 last year, Mukhriz filed the suit over four media statements issued by Tengku Sariffuddin on April 15, 20, 23 and 26.

Mukhriz’s complaint was that Tengku Sariffuddin’s alleged defamatory statements gave the impression that Mahathir Mohamad was grooming him to become prime minister.

In his defence, Tengku Sariffuddin said he had never defamed Mukhriz in any of his media statements, seeking to clarify issues and untruths spread about Najib.

Tengku Sariffuddin said the statements were published based on qualified privilege and without malice.

He said his media statements were made in his official capacity to prevent rumours or political allegations against the prime minister.

Re-examined by his lawyer Mohamed Haniff Khatri Abdulla, Mukhriz, who is now deputy president of PPBM, said he scored a moral victory despite losing in the contest for the post of vice-president.

“I got more popular votes but Hishammuddin won the last slot because more Umno members were in favour of him,” he said.

He said the achievement was credible since Mahathir, his father and the former prime minister, had left office 10 years ago.

“When Mahathir was party president, he did not allow me to contest,” Mukhriz said, adding that he only won a seat in the Umno Youth wing in 2004, a year after his father had left office.

Mukhriz said it was Najib who had suggested that he be appointed Kedah menteri besar should BN recapture the state in the 2013 general election.

“I was then the deputy state Umno liaison chief and was asked to lead the election machinery although the head was Ahmad Bashah Md Hanipah,” he said.

He said two days before the polling date, Najib proposed his name for the post, which caught PAS off-guard. PAS was then heading the Pakatan Rakyat government in Kedah.

Mukhriz said Bashah was made senator and later appointed deputy minister to prevent political conflict in the state Umno.

He said he had entered politics to serve the people although his father did not encourage him. He added that Mahathir was his role model.

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