

Zaid : apology to Salleh to be considered
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Newly-appointed de facto

law minister Zaid Ibrahim said that an apology to former Lord President Salleh Abas and other Supreme Court judges who were sacked in the fall out of the 1988 judicial crisis was still being considered by the government.

"I've presented my view to the cabinet that we should apologise to the judges. But I'm afraid that the view is still to be considered," said Zaid in Putrajaya today.

zaid ibrahim interview 140308 05 "There are many people more experienced and wiser than me. So we have to wait for a decision. And I don't think I want to add any more yet," said the minister in the prime minister's department.

Asked if an apology was to be made, which government (Abdullah Ahmad Badawi or Dr Mahathir Mohamad's) should make it, he said it was an unimportant point.

"You can't expect Dr Mahathir to do that. That administration is gone. Karpal (Singh) is just being naughty.

"When Kevin Rudd became Prime Minister of Australia, the first thing he did was to apologise to the aborigines for what the whites had done to them in the 50s and the 60s. The South Africans have made a similar apology for the apartheid system.

"It is something we can do if we want to. It is up to us (the government) of which I'm one of them."

After it was reported on Sunday in Kota Baru that Zaid had said an apology was in order, DAP national chairperson Karpal Singh said that Mahathir should be the one to apologise as it was during his rule that the tribunals were convened to dismiss Salleh and the other judges.

judiciary forum lingam tape 171107 salleh abbas palace of justicIn 1988, Mahathir had convened a special tribunal to try Lord President Salleh on charges of misconduct and for questioning constitutional amendments that seriously eroded the powers of the judiciary. Salleh was subsequently sacked.

Supreme Court judges George Seah and Wan Sulaiman - who had ruled that the tribunal was convened unconstitutionally - were also sacked after being found guilty of misconduct by another tribunal.

Three other judges - Azmi Kamaruddin, Eusoffe Abdoolcader and Wan Hamzah Mohamed Salleh were suspended.

Some have described the dismissal of the top judges from the Supreme Court - then the highest court, now renamed the Federal Court - as Malaysia's darkest hours in its judicial history.

Preserving separation of powers

The de facto law minister also said that while judicial reforms were on the way, no time frame had been set.

"I will try to introduce the changes one at a time. More importantly, the cabinet has reaffirmed the need for reform," said Zaid

"The reform we are talking about are far reaching and fundamental as it would not be meaningful if only cosmetic changes were applied. It requires a fundamental shift in our minds and our values.

"I can't specify anything for the moment but I will try one by one. My interest is in fundamental changes to preserve the separation of powers (between judiciary and executive) so that there is check and balance," he added.

Asked if another royal commission was necessary to facilitate with reforming the judiciary, he said it was not necessary.

"We just need the government to facilitate the process. We don't need another royal commission."

Recently DAP leader tan Seng Giaw urged Zaid to establish a royal commission to clean up the judiciary.

Anti-hopping laws

Also in consideration is an anti-hopping law, although this would take time as it may involve amending the constitution.

"I've not prepared a detailed proposal yet but I believe that party hopping and lompat-melompat encourages corruption. It also betrays the trust of the people who voted for you.

"But since this may require constitution amendments, other parties will need to be involved. While Pas' Nik Abdul Aziz Nik Mat agrees with it, Abdul Hadi Awang has disagreed, so we'll have to wait a bit longer," said Zaid.

abdullah ahmad badawi and idris jusoh and ahmad said and terengganu Asked to comment on the Terengganu Menteri Besar issue, Zaid said it was complicated as there were many reasons for the impasse.

"Some of the state laws are almost a hundred years old and may need to be looked into. But it is a combination of issues that caused the problem in Terengganu and I don't want to get into that."

As for Umno posts, the 57-year-old has ruled out running for any positions in the party as he prefers to concentrate on his current job.

"I joined the government to help it. I don't want to fight for any posts. I've only got so much time and I want to concentrate on this job and not get involved in fighting for

positions in Umno."

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