

Forgive but not forget
Malaysiakini.com
Apr 23, 2008
Charles Chia

I refer to the Malaysiakini report PM unveils judicial reforms but no apology.

Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi's overture towards the six wrongfully treated judges is to be applauded. Short of a formal apology, he admitted that we have done them wrong. By this act he has closed the chapter that started off the darkest hours of our judiciary till today. Pak Lah has taken the first step; let's open up the way for him to reform our judiciary system.

The idea of an apology mooted by minister Zaid Ibrahim is an excellent one and recalls to mind two historical events in France.

Whilst under German Occupation during the Second World War, the French Government, through its police force with the collaboration of some French citizens, wittingly helped the Hitler regime expel thousands of Jews by deporting them to the concentration camps. The Jews in France, and those in Europe at large, wanted France to acknowledge this fact. However, it was not until July 1995, more than 50 years later, that Jacques Chirac, the then newly-elected 'right-wing' president admitted France's 'collective error'..

He proclaimed, 'These dark hours forever sully our history and are an insult to our past and our traditions.' With these words, he did away with an issue that had divided France for a long time.

This proclamation was telecast and for many French people, it was a moment of purification that washed away the guilt and shame that had haunted them for decades.

It was France who drafted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. When Chirac made the apology, the French nation felt proud that they had lived up to their name.

The other case in point took place in September 1984 in Verdun, in the north-east of France. Two heads of state, French President Mitterrand and German Chancellor Helmut Kohl, stood solemnly before the mass graves of soldiers killed during the 1st World War.

They were dressed in dark suits and stood hand-in-hand to pay their respects on behalf of the two nations to all the German and French soldiers who had lost their lives in the two wars.

This moving scene marked the reconciliation between the two peoples. It was a way of saying 'sorry' to each other. Was it important to determine then who was right and who was wrong and who started the wars? What was more important was the sincerity of two towering figures in history to reconcile for the greater love of a lasting peace in Europe.

It takes a good leader to admit mistakes but it takes a great leader to correct them and effectuate change. Which category does PM Abdullah Ahmad Badawi belong to? Only his future actions will tell.

Source : <http://www.malaysiakini.com/news//81830>