

Mahathir finally refutes judge's allegations

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Dr Mahathir Mohamad has admitted that 'work camps' were organised for the judiciary, but denied having threatened judges at a 1997 conference.

MCPX

After a week of silence, the former premier finally responded to shocking revelations by Justice Ian Chin (right) that judges were issued a 'thinly-veiled threat' of removal at a conference, if they decided unfavourably against Mahathir's administration.

ian chin ian hn chin judgeChin, a high court judge for Sabah and Sarawak, said he had also been sent to an indoctrination 'boot camp' where participants were pressured into making pro-government decisions.

In his blog, Mahathir said he needed time to recall events that has happened more than a decade ago and to find documents which may give credibility to his explanations.

He said the work camps were nothing like the 'boot camp' that Sabah and Sarawak High Court judge Ian Chin had described in his allegations.

Mahathir said the government did organise tata negara (national creed) work camps where speakers explained Malaysia's political system with reference to the Barisan Nasional concept, ethics and moral values and democracy.

"Participants included civil servants, corporate leaders, politicians and university staff. I suppose judges also attended," he stated.

The retired politician explained that the participants stayed at the camps and followed certain programmes for three to five days.

chedet mahathir blog 210508"This included getting up very early in the morning (for prayers for Muslims), physical exercises and many hours of lectures," he wrote.

"One of the chores was to wash your own dirty plates after a simple meal. When I gave talks at these work camps I too washed my dirty dishes. It was part of leadership by example.

"Thousands of people from all walks of life attended these work camps. There were hardly any complaints."

Mahathir said a judge who was in the same batch as Chin said he absconded before the course was over.

"Perhaps he did not like getting up early and washing his own dirty plates. The course clearly did not have a positive effect on him," he said.

Only two topics discussed

Mahathir denied issuing any threats at the 1997 judges' conference and expressed gratitude

to other judges for refuting Chin's claims.

He referred to a News Straits Times report quoting retired senior judges Mohamed Dzaiddin Abdullah, Lamin Yunus and Shaik Daud Ismail, who said they did not remember the incident and disputed Chin's version of the event.

judges conference with mahathir 110608 "It seems that except for Chin, no one else heard the 'threat'. I attended only one judges' conference and I remember I talked on two subjects - the mandatory death sentence on drug traffickers and litigation," he said.

Mahathir elaborated that he had explained the need to deter drug trafficking by implementing the most severe punishment, as there were more than 200,000 addicts in Malaysia then.

"They were practically the living dead and indeed many died prematurely. They were involved in drug-related crimes, including murder, rape and even matricide (killing one's own mother).

drug abuse "Malaysia needed to reduce drug addiction but judges were reluctant to pronounce the death penalty. That was why it was made mandatory," he explained.

On litigation, Mahathir said he did not want huge sums to be awarded by judges for alleged malpractice and negligence on the part of doctors, like in America.

"As a result, doctors would order costly laboratory and other tests to avoid accusations by the claimant's lawyers that they had neglected to give the best service to the patients.

"To cover all these tests, medical charges are very high in America and the poor cannot pay. Insurance premiums for doctors are also very high and the patients may be bankrupted by high medical fees.

"I did not want this to happen in Malaysia. At no time did I issue any threat against the judges."

More to come on Chin

Mahathir expressed disgust with de facto law minister Zaid Ibrahim, Malaysian Bar president S Ambiga and senior lawyer Karpal Singh for assuming the truth of Chin's allegations.

"Zaid even went so far as to say this is normal, as if I threatened judges all the time," he said.

After Chin went public with his allegations, Zaid had said he was "not surprised" as he had heard similar stories of judicial interference previously.

ambiga sreenevasan Ambiga had urged the authorities to conduct a thorough and comprehensive investigation into the matter of executive interference and judicial indiscretions.

Karpal had lodged a police report against Mahathir for allegedly threatening judges during his premiership.

Mahathir also said he will be writing more about Chin "so that the public will become more acquainted with him".

"Suffice for me to say for the present that Chin has a police report against him for hiding his past when hearing a certain case. The public can then pass judgement on me.

abdullah ahmad badawi karpal singh parliament 100604"But of course if I have to be charged by Karpal, the ardent supporter of (Prime Minister) Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, that is fine. The world will then know what kind of government we have," he added.

Mahathir has been blamed for triggering the 1988 judicial crisis when a tribunal was convened to hear charges of misconduct against then lord president Salleh Abas, who was subsequently sacked.

Supreme court judges Seah and Wan Suleiman - who had ruled that the tribunal was convened unconstitutionally - were also sacked after being found guilty of misconduct by another tribunal. Three others - Azmi, Eusoffe and Wan Hamzah were suspended.

The current government has refused to tender an apology, but has offered Salleh and the other judges an undisclosed "goodwill ex-gratia payment".

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