

Dr M: Yes, I told Salleh to go

PUTRAJAYA: Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad last night said he had asked former Lord President Tun Salleh Abas to step down.

The former prime minister said that his action was necessary to "prevent any scandal". "I called him, it's true. I told him about the problems and said that it was best that he resigned.

"He agreed... Later on (several days later), he decided that he should not step down.

Then, of course, the government was forced to take action. That's all. It was necessary to take action," he said, commenting on a statement by Salleh why the sacking of the three judges in 1988 should be reviewed by the government

Salleh's account of the meeting with Dr Mahathir is

different. He said he was summoned to the then PM's office and asked to step down after he was accused of being biased. He said that during the meeting, he told Dr Mahathir he was not prepared to resign. Following which, the former PM allegedly threatened to dismiss him by setting up a tribunal.

Dr Mahathir said he could not recall what he had offered Salleh but clearly remembered that he had asked him to resign.

He said following Salleh's refusal to do so, he was forced "to act".