

NEW STRAITS TIMES

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> JUSTICE FOR JUDGES

# It's not Abdullah who should apologise

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AS someone who lived through the 1988 judicial crisis, I am happy that the prime minister has brought closure to this matter.

His acknowledgement of the contributions, pain and suffering endured by the sacked and suspended judges was a sincere gesture of healing a wound that has never been treated or even looked at for the last 20 years.

Some would have preferred an outright apology and others would have wanted the entire episode to be reviewed thoroughly. But, as the prime minister said, it is time for us to move on.

I am sure that for many, the government's recognition of what the judges have gone through is a sufficient gesture to bring this matter to a close.

While the prime minister was right to say that the goodwill ex gratia payments made to the judges cannot be equated to the humiliation they endured, it is nonetheless an offer made in good faith.

This is especially befitting since these judges lost out on their incomes, their full pensions and any post-retirement

appointments in the corporate sector because many of them were ostracised by the government.

I only hope the ex gratia payments reflect these losses the judges endured. I also think the question of an apology is best put to those who were actually involved in the judicial crisis.

As far as I remember, the present prime minister was sacked from the cabinet before the judicial crisis for being part of the so-called Umno "Team B" that challenged Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamed in the party election.

In fact, the roots of the judicial crisis go back to that Umno dispute which resulted in the "old" Umno being deregistered by the courts and increasing Dr Mahathir's anger towards the judiciary.

So, the question of the prime minister apologising for something that he never had a hand in does not arise.

If anyone needs to apologise to Tun Salleh Abas and his contemporaries, and arguably to the nation, for destroying the judiciary, it is Dr Mahathir. But we know that such an

apology will not be tendered.

Dr Mahathir has said that the dismissal of the judges was legal and constitutional, and will continue to hide behind this excuse, even though any informed Malaysian with a memory of the crisis remembers that it was a political move to crush the judiciary.

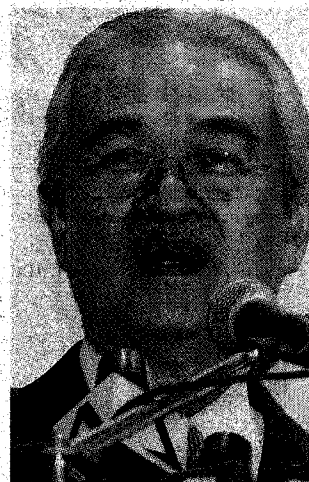
But it must not just be Dr Mahathir who apologises.

We very quickly forget that one of Dr Mahathir's strongest cheerleaders during the judicial crisis is still very much on the political stage today.

For those who remember, we will not easily forget that Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim — the self-styled champion of justice today — was one of the most outspoken politicians defending the sacking of the judges in 1988.

It is ironic and sad that his wife, Datin Seri Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail, could share a table with Salleh at the Bar Council dinner without even acknowledging that her husband, too, had a role to play in the destruction of our judiciary.

In his blog, Anwar has the temerity to criticise the government for not tendering a



Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi has brought closure to a painful chapter

simple apology. He must think Malaysians had forgotten his role in this. If Anwar is truly the "leader-in-waiting" that he claims to be, he must apologise for being a part of the attack on the judiciary.

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