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Dr M questions need to pay judges in 1988 crisis

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■ From Zaharah Othman in Manchester

FORMER prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad said there was no reason why payment should be made to the sacked or suspended judges in the 1988 judicial crisis.

He said the ex gratia payment was just a political ploy by the government to regain popularity.

Dr Mahathir said this in response to the government's announcement on Thursday that the six former judges — Tun Salleh Abas, Tan Sri Eusoffe Abdoolcadzer, Tan Sri Wan Suleiman Pawan-
teh, Tan Sri Azmi Kamaruddin, Tan Sri Wan Hamzah Mohamed and Datuk George Seah — would be given the payment for the suffering they endured.

"It is all political and not sincere at all," he said after speaking to more than 200 Malaysians at the University of Manchester on Saturday.

Dr Mahathir, who was accompanied by his wife Tun Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali, was invited by a group called Kumpulan Prihatin Malaysia UK to a two-hour event called *Sejenak Berama Tun Dr Mahathir. Jasamu Dikenang*.

"There is no reason why you should compensate because everything was done in accordance with the law.

"If they can show me the re-

moval of Tun Salleh Abas was against the procedure as prescribed by the law... so far they have not shown me," he said.

He said this was another move to tarnish his name.

On the setting up of a judicial appointments commission as announced by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, Dr Mahathir said it would require a constitutional amendment.

"He cannot just announce this by decree. The prime minister has no right to change the provision of the Constitution without going to parliament."

Most legal experts say that a panel to advise the prime minister on recommendations for the appointment and promotion of judges would not need a constitutional amendment.

However, de facto Law Minister Datuk Zaid Ibrahim had said the government was willing to go to great lengths, including getting opposition support, to amend the Constitution and implement its judicial reforms.

Dr Mahathir, who left for Cuba yesterday, had spoken on the fate and future of the Malays and the country.

He said the disappointing general election results did not reflect that the voters preferred the opposition but instead that they had lost confidence in Barisan Nasional leadership.