

# Sincere move to heal wounds

The Star - 18/4/2008

## Abdullah pays tribute to Salleh and Supreme Court judges sacked in 1988

**KUALA LUMPUR:** It was a dinner for lawyers and friends graced by former judges and the guest of honour was the Prime Minister, but it turned out to be much more than a gathering for a meal.

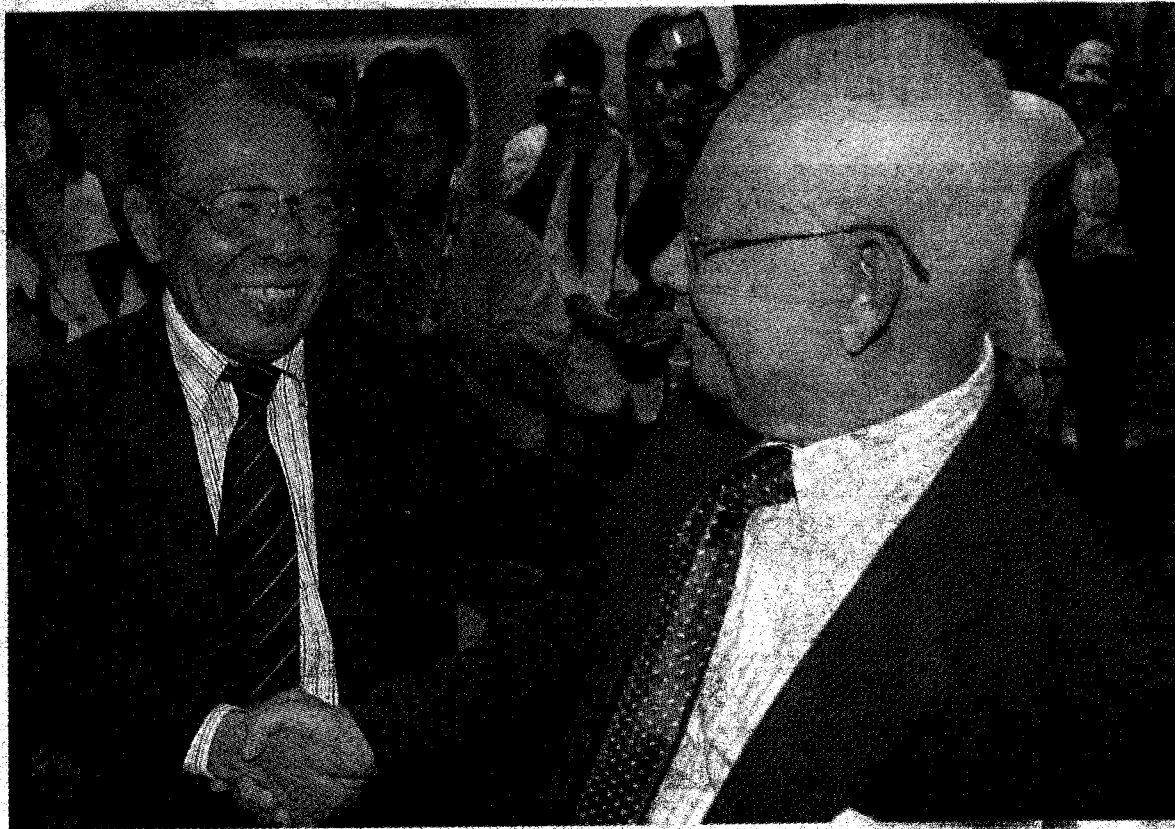
The Malaysian Bar Council dinner saw the closure of a very painful chapter in the history of the country's judiciary and, hopefully, the start of a new one to renew the public's trust in the courts.

Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi announced several measures to reform the judiciary but to many in attendance, what was more important was when he paid tribute to six Supreme Court judges who were sacked in 1988, which he described as a legacy that still haunts the nation.

Turning to former Lord President Tun Salleh Abas, Tan Sri Azmi Kamaruddin, Datuk Seri George Seah, and the families of the late Tan Sri Wan Suleiman Pawan Teh and Tan Sri Eusoffe Abdoolcader, the Prime Minister said the Government wanted to recognise "their commitment towards upholding justice and to acknowledge the pain and loss they have endured".

The fourth surviving judge, Tan Sri Wan Hamzah Mohamed Salleh, could not attend the dinner.

The late Wan Suleiman was represented by his wife Puan Sri Siti Nurhayati and son Wan Noor Azli,



**Jubilant mood:** Salleh being greeted by Chief Justice Datuk Abdul Hamid Mohamad at the Bar dinner last night in Kuala Lumpur.

and Eusoffe by his granddaughter Brenda Lim and her husband.

Stopping short of an apology as suggested by his de facto Law

Minister Datuk Zaid Ibrahim a few weeks ago, Abdullah said: "For me and for many other Malaysians, these towering judicial personalities

represent a very different era for the nation's judiciary. Many felt that the judiciary then was a venerable institution which could be trusted to

deliver justice.

"Some even hailed Malaysia's judiciary as a model for other countries - independent and credible.

"This level of trust and respect for the judiciary, we must all admit, is simply not as strong as it was before."

Abdullah also announced goodwill ex-gratia payments to the six sacked judges and their surviving families as recognition of their contribution but quickly added: "I do not presume to equate your contributions, pain and loss with mere currency, but I hope that you could accept this as a heartfelt and sincere gesture to mend what has been."

He also addressed the need to renew the public's trust in the nation's judiciary and "to ensure that justice is consistently delivered".

Abdullah urged the judiciary, lawyers and the nation to move on, as it was not "wise or helpful to revisit past decisions as it would only serve to prolong the sense of crisis - something our nation can do without".

At the end of his speech entitled "Delivering Justice, Renewing Trust", Abdullah was given a standing ovation. Salleh was among the first to get off his seat and warmly shake the Prime Minister's hand as he got down from the stage.

In Abdullah's words - the time has come to write a proud and new chapter.