

## I've never threatened judges, says Dr M *The sun - 19/6/2008*

**PETALING JAYA:** Former prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad yesterday denied having at any time threatened judges, as alleged by Justice Datuk Ian Chin earlier this month.

In a posting on his blog *www.chedet.com*, he said he had not responded immediately to Chin's allegations as he needed time to recall events which happened more than a decade ago and to find documents which may give credibility to his explanations.

Chin had made the "revelation" in open court on June 9, before hearing an election petition challenging the results of the Sarikei parliamentary seat which was won by the Barisan Nasional by 51 votes.

He claimed the "thinly veiled" threat was made at a judges' conference in April 1997 after he handed down two judgments - a libel case involving M.G.G. Pillai and Tan Sri Vincent Tan, where he refused to give what he considered an astronomical award, and an election petition where he ruled against BN candidate Mong Dagang.

Chin claimed the then prime minister, who had expressed unhappiness with what he termed the "Borneo case", had threatened to remove judges by referring them to a tribunal, and stating that "though it may be difficult, it was still done".

In his blog yesterday, Mahathir noted that some judges and former judges had refuted what Chin said about his threatening judges, quoting Singapore's *The Straits Times*, which reported that Chin's colleagues were stunned by his statements.

"There was nothing like that at all. It would have been so shocking that I would have remembered it," he quoted the paper as reporting.

"Those contacted by the Straits Times did not remember him (the ex-PM) issuing a threat to sack judges who did not take his view". Nor did retired senior judges Tun Mohamed Dzaiddin Abdullah, Tan Sri Lamin Yunus and Datuk Shaik Daud Ismail, who were quoted in the *New Straits Times*," said Mahathir, adding that several judges have since disputed Chin's version of the event.

Mahathir said he attended only one judges' conference and he remembered talking on only two subjects - the mandatory death sentence on drug traffickers and litigation.

"At no time did I issue any threat against the judges," said Mahathir, who went on to respond to Chin's claim that he and selected judges were packed off to a boot camp in an attempt to indoctrinate with the view "that the government interest was more important than all else".

Denying they were boot camps, Mahathir said they were courses on "Tata Negara" or "National Creed" at work camps attended by civil servants, corporate leaders, politicians and university staff where the speakers try to explain Malaysia's political system with particular reference to the BN concept, ethics and moral values and democracy in Malaysia.

"For three to five days, the participants stayed at the camps and followed certain programmes. This included getting up very early in the morning (for prayers for

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Muslims), physical exercises and many hours of lectures.

"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," said Mahathir, adding that thousands of people from all walks of life attended these work camps with hardly any complaints.

"I was told by a judge who was in the same batch as Chin that 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," said Mahathir, who also expressed his disgust with de facto law minister Datuk Zaid Ibrahim, Bar Council president Datuk S. Ambiga and DAP chairman Karpal Singh for immediately assuming that Chin was telling the truth.

"Zaid even went so far as to say this is normal, as if I threatened judges all the time," lamented Mahathir, adding that he would be writing a little more on Chin so that the public will become more acquainted with him.