

**Dr M described Karpal Singh "most contemptible of politicians", reveals lawyer's biography**

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Karpal Singh (left) was described as contemptible by Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad in a letter to the veteran lawyer who asked the former premier to apologise to three ex-judges who had been removed from office.

The DAP leader wrote to Dr Mahathir on 27 March, 2007, some 20 years after former Lord President Tun Salleh Abas and six Supreme court judges were tried before two tribunals for judicial misconduct.

During the 1988 judicial crisis, Karpal was held in Kamunting under the draconian but now repealed Internal Security Act.

This was revealed in his soon to be released biography, Karpal Singh: Tiger of Jelutong. Karpal said the judiciary never regained its standing as one of the finest in Asia following the incident. He believed the judges were unfairly removed from office.

Karpal had then called on Dr Mahathir to make an unqualified and unconditional personal apology to Salleh and Supreme Court judges, Tan Sri Wan Suleiman Pawanteh and Datuk George Seah, and their families.

In the book, written by New Zealand journalist Tim Donoghue, Dr Mahathir offered no apology nor did Karpal expect one.

Dr Mahathir said Karpal would never believe him no matter what he said.

In a letter dated April 3, 2008 to Karpal, Dr Mahathir wrote: "You are moved by pure hatred and I cannot respond to people who can never accept reality... My conscience is clear. I have done what was my duty and I owe nobody any apology. I am sure you will make use of this letter to dirty my name further. That is your right. I think you are the most contemptible of politicians and individuals."

Karpal, 73, never made public the letter until now.

In 1988, Salleh was brought before a tribunal convened on the advice of Dr Mahathir (pic, right) on grounds of misconduct.

Salleh filed a suit in the High Court to challenge the constitutionality of the tribunal chaired by Tun Hamid Omar.

While proceeding with the suit, Salleh applied for an interim stay against the tribunal but it was denied.

Later however, five judges of the Supreme Court - Tan Sri Mohd Azmi Kamaruddin, Tan Sri Eusoffe Abdoolcader, Tan Sri Wan Hamzah Mohamed Salleh, Wan Sulaiman and Seah - convened and granted Salleh an interim order against the tribunal.

Soon after, the five were also suspended and a tribunal was formed to try them.

Salleh, Wan Suleiman and Seah were later removed from office. The other three judges were reinstated.

The 325-page biography, the third book on Karpal, will be available on the market soon.

Karpal said the book was supposed to be released in 1999 but it was held back after he lost the contest for the Jelutong parliamentary seat in the general election that year.

"Since I had lost the seat, I thought it was not suitable to launch the book then," he said when met at his office in Kuala Lumpur.

The book traces his humble beginnings and the many legal and political battles he has fought over the last 40 years.

Karpal said the book, published by Singapore's Marshall and Cavendish, will be launched in Malaysia next month.

He said he first met Donoghue in Penang in 1987, soon after Kevin Barlow, his client, and fellow Australian Geoffrey Chambers went to the gallows for drug trafficking.

Donoghue was the New Zealand Press Association's Hong Kong-based Asia correspondent at the time.

He was also a frequent visitor to Malaysia between 1986 to 1990 when he covered the drug trafficking trial of New Zealand mother and son Lorraine and Aaron Cohen in Penang.

Karpal was their lawyer. The Cohens were sentenced to death but their sentences were later commuted to jail terms. - August 18, 2013.

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