

'I did not sack Salleh Abas' - Mahathir prepared to swear on Quran

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Former Prime Minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad today said he is willing to swear on the Quran that he was not responsible for the sacking of former lord president Salleh Abas that foreshadowed the constitutional crisis of 1988.

At the soft launch of the "Harapan Baru; Policy Talks" question-and-answer sessions at Putrajaya today, Mahathir reiterated that the then attorney-general had used his name to sack Salleh to save the good name of the Yang di-Pertuan Agong.

"Salleh was sacked not because of me. Unfortunately, in order to save the good name of the Yang di-Pertuan Agong then, my name was used as though I had given the instruction to sack Salleh, but I didn't interfere in the matter.

"I am willing to enter the mosque and swear on the Quran that I didn't give any such instruction. Salleh said that I had instructed his sacking but it was the Agong who gave the instruction," he added.

Mahathir said the incident had stemmed from a letter written by Salleh (*photo*) to the Agong and Malay rulers allegedly complaining about the level of noise from renovation works at the Agong's private residence.

"But now, of course, the letter has been hidden," said the ex-premier.

Mahathir said a senior officer should seek an audience with the Agong instead of writing to all the rulers.

"The Agong was angry and asked me to sack him, I said I can't. This could only be done through a tribunal. The Agong then said 'let's do this'.

"So I was doing things which were legitimised by the Agong. I could not do it myself," he said.

According to Mahathir, the letter which could not be found contained some writings by the ruler on it.

Purported 'attacks' on the judiciary

In an [interview](#) with *Malaysiakini* last year, former attorney-general Abu Talib Othman said a meeting held among judges from the Supreme and High Courts had decided that Salleh should make a representation to the Agong, complaining of purported "attacks" by the executive on the judiciary.

The meeting was held after Mahathir submitted several constitutional amendments to Parliament, divesting the courts of the 'judicial power of the Federation' and thereby giving the courts only such judicial powers as Parliament might grant them.

In a letter addressed to the Agong, which was written by Salleh himself, the judges expressed their grievances over the executive's actions against the judiciary.

"That complaint seemed to have caused the displeasure of the Yang di-Pertuan Agong Sultan Iskandar.

"He then referred that memorandum from Salleh to the prime minister with a command that appropriate action be taken on the basis of the complaint," said Abu Talib.

A tribunal was subsequently convened which saw the removal of Abas and two other judges. A second tribunal convened a while later saw the suspension of five judges and the subsequent sacking of two of them.

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