

Be pro — pro the law

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KUALA LUMPUR, Tues. — Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today made clear that the authorities did not expect the judiciary to be pro or anti-Government — only pro the Constitution and pro the law.

He said: "The Government always considers the Constitution and the law carefully before we do anything, so we expect the judiciary to be free to judge our alleged trespasses without fear or favour but in accordance with the Constitution, the law, the law of evidence and procedure, justly and fairly.

"We shall always respect their judgements but the right to make laws must necessarily be that of the legislature."

The Prime Minister was speaking at the opening of the Asean Law Association general assembly at the University of Malaya.

Rights

The assembly is attended by 750 delegates from all the Asean countries and observers from Japan, Sri Lanka and Brunei. Some of the more distinguished guests included the Attorneys-General and Ministers of Justice of the participating countries.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir stressed that he believed in the supremacy of the Constitution.

Hence, the Malaysian Government will perform its duty as prescribed by the Constitution and will respect the

rights guaranteed by the Constitution — rights guaranteed to the different component parts of the federation, to minorities, citizens and in some cases, to non-citizens also.

However, the Prime Minister added that since the Constitution was not infallible, it provided for amendments to make it compatible with time.

"But the conditions for amendments are such that the Constitution cannot be trifled with at all."

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir also referred to the Bar and said: "I always respect the Bar and their independence. I promise that no member of the legal profession will ever be penalised in the course of discharging his duties."

The Prime Minister also told the gathering that although he is not a

lawyer, he is "aware of the importance the law plays in protecting the life and limb, liberty and property of the citizen".

"No man is above the law, not even those in power. Those in power are in fact trustees and their duty is to promote the public good, not self-enrichment."

The Prime Minister then drew a parallel between the time frame to harmonise the different laws on some subjects in Malaysia and the commercial laws of Asean.

Laws

In this respect, he said he believed the process in harmonising the commercial laws of the Asean countries too would be slow.