

Give judiciary a chance, critics told

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Judges are human beings and have weaknesses too, says Dr M

PUTRAJAYA, Thurs: Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has asked critics of the country's judiciary to give the newly-appointed chief justice and attorney-general a chance to improve the administration of justice.

"Yes, I think so, but people must give some leeway," the prime minister said when asked if the appointments of Tan Sri Mohamed Dzaiddin Abdullah as Chief Justice of the Federal Court and Datuk Ainum Mohd Saaid as the AG recently could restore public confidence in the judiciary.

Dzaiddin was reported as saying on Dec 20 that restoring public confidence in the judiciary was his first priori-

ty and his immediate task was to "put our house in order" through interaction, discussions and consultations, coupled with mutual respect among the judges.

Criticism against the judiciary, including from international organisations, had centred around the question of its independence.

In an exclusive interview with Bernama on Tuesday, Mahathir said the critics had attacked the judiciary without realising that the judges were human beings too and had weaknesses.

"There may be charges (against the judiciary) but they (judges) are not angels. They are not people who are

perfect. They have their problems," he said.

The prime minister said the people must be flexible in their thinking on the performance of the judiciary.

Yesterday, at a press conference during the Hari Raya open house at Seri Perdana, Mahathir said no one person in the country is above the law.

"The law in Malaysia applies to anyone; even if you a minister or a royalty, you will not be exempted from the law. Anybody who breaks the law will be dealt with according to the law," he said.

He was responding to questions on the recent arrest of opposition leaders in

connection with the Lunas by-election, during which opposition party members stopped several buses carrying Barisan Nasional supporters to polling centres.

"These are the very people who talk about the rule of law but they seem to think that the rule of law should be applied to other people and government personnel and not them ... they are above the law," he said.

"There is no privileged opposition in this country, nor is there any privileged government in this country ... I think that point should be understood by people who talk so much about the rule of law," said Mahathir.