

# PM: I shall defend the independence of the judiciary

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**KUALA LUMPUR:** Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim has vowed to defend and protect the independence of the judiciary at all costs, saying he has never encroached "a single inch" into the institution.

Dismissing notions that the executive arm was interfering with due process and strong-arming the judiciary, the Prime Minister made this declaration at the 14th Asean Law Association (ALA) General Assembly 2023 yesterday:

"There is not one iota of truth in these scurrilous allegations, which are now being repeated ad nauseam on social media.

"Let me reiterate what I have said before: As Prime Minister,

not only have I not encroached upon even a single inch of the sacred terrain of the judiciary, I shall defend, at all costs, the independence of the judiciary."

Also present were the Minister in the Prime Minister's Department (Law and Institutional Reform), Datuk Seri Azalina Othman Said, and Chief Justice Tun Tengku Maimun Tuan Mat.

The Prime Minister said there was a time in Malaysia's history when certain black sheep of the judiciary, working hand in glove with certain powers that be, committed gross transgressions against its very institution and fed the virulent spread of tyranny and arbitrariness on the other.

The government and those who

wield power must be held accountable for their decisions and actions, he added.

"The government must be transparent, and that is imperative under the principle of open government. Hence, shady dealings and dodgy decisions cannot be used to pull wool over the people's eyes in the name of the Official Secrets Act.

"Then, there is the doctrine that laws must be fair and just and that all must have access to the hallowed halls of justice," Anwar remarked.

The Prime Minister also called

on lawyers to be champions of justice, fierce advocates of the marginalised, and torchbearers of equality.

"We must strive to ensure that justice is not a commodity only available to those with financial means but rather a universal right accessible to all, irrespective of their socio-economic status."

Speaking on the Asean initiatives, Anwar said its members must champion policies that promote and uphold gender equality across multiple spheres, including education, employment and leadership.

He said it was also important for Asean to give voice and weight to women's contributions, recognising their potential and providing them with equal opportunities to lead and innovate.

He also praised the initiatives pursuant to the Asean Roadmap on the Elimination of Worst Forms of Child Labour by 2025, a region-wide framework of cooperation that complements the commitments and actions against child labour globally.

"While the implementation of the optional protocol's ban on child pornography differs between jurisdictions, the commitment to fighting it is evident through domestic laws that prohibit this atrocious crime.

"The role of parents in protecting their children cannot be overstressed. The law should progress in tandem with this moral duty to ensure that parents honour and fulfil the trust incumbent on them for the wellbeing of their children," Anwar concluded.