

**OPENING OF THE LEGAL YEAR 2019
- SABAH AND SARAWAK -**

KOTA KINABALU – 18TH JANUARY 2019

SPEECH BY THE ATTORNEY GENERAL

I thank the Chief Justice and the Chief Judge of Sabah and Sarawak for the kind invitation for me to attend and speak at this morning's auspicious occasion – to celebrate the Opening of the Legal Year, 2019.

There is little doubt that much unhappiness and numerous problems have accumulated in Federal / State relations over the 55 years since the formation of Malaysia.

The new Government's commitment to resolve these matters, which it inherited, is best manifested in its decision to appoint a High Level Government Committee to review the Malaysia Agreement of 1963 – the MA63 issue.

The Government's seriousness in dealing with MA63 is demonstrated by the fact that the Prime Minister chairs the Steering Committee, which is assisted by the Technical and Working Committees.

The Steering and Technical Committees have already held their 1st meeting.

The Committees are expected to complete their deliberations in 6 months, that is, by the end of this June.

Their Final Report will follow.

Amendments to the Federal Constitution and other laws can be tabled during the October session of Parliament.

Lawyers have a major role to play in the 3 Committees because legal issues concerning the Federal and State Constitutions, and written laws enacted by Parliament and the State Assemblies, are involved.

Hence, the greatest challenge facing the legal community at large in Sabah and Sarawak as we welcome 2019 is to ensure the resolution of the MA63 issue. This is an unprecedented opportunity.

For such a resolution, lawyers must advise wisely and encourage their stakeholders to adopt a “*give and take*” approach in order to reach consensus.

Intransigence and obstinacy must be avoided. Reasonableness and prudence are key.

The diversity that brought us together in 1963 must be allowed to shine brightly under the Malaysian sun.

Our generation has been blessed with the responsibility of ensuring that the Federation our forefathers established – against regional opposition – must succeed as a strong, united, sovereign nation upholding the Rule of Law under a functioning democracy.

I invite all of us gathered here this morning to partake in this journey to true nationhood.

Thank you.

Tommy Thomas