

On the red carpet: Sarawak Governor Tun Abang Muhammad Salahuddin Abang Barieng and Wife Toh Puan Norkiah (left) receiving a grand welcome at the indoor stadium to grace Malaysia Day celebrations in Kuching last night.



Legitimacy not the issue, says lawyer

Question is Constitution's application

KUALA LUMPUR: Non-Malays have not questioned the legitimacy of the Federal Constitution but merely its application and implementation, said lawyer Datuk Azzat Kamaludin.

"Non-Malays are not questioning the legitimacy of the Constitution.

"What they are questioning is the application, the implementation and the continued relevance of it," he said, adding that the interpretation of the Constitution had to be relevant with the times in order for it to be "alive".

He said the Constitution was more than just the supreme law of Malaysia as it was set up by the founding fathers as a foundation on which to build a great and prosperous nation.

"The fact that we have to discuss 1 Malaysia while some talk about Malay supremacy or call citizens *pendatang* (immigrant) or for them to go back to China speaks volumes for our failure to build upon that foundation.

"The failure is not in the provisions but in their interpretation and in the abuse of their

application by those on the fringes of the political parties that we have - whether these be race-based or otherwise," he said at the National Congress on Integrity organised by UCSI University here yesterday.

Responding to a question, Azzat said there should also not be any differentiation in the status of Malaysians, pointing out that the first two lines of *Negaraku* was *Negaraku, Tanah tumpahnya darahku*.

He said young Malaysians should also be educated together and not in "racial isolation" so that they could know and learn to trust one another.

Retired Federal Court judge Datuk Seri Gopal Sri Ram said the High Court had the right to decide whether civil courts had the jurisdiction to hear cases related to Islam.

"It is the High Court that decides what the jurisdiction of the Syariah Court is," he said, adding that the Syariah Court did not have the power to interpret statutes and thus could not rule on issues that required an interpretation of the Constitution.