

WHY THE SENATE IS SO USEFUL — BY MAHATHIR

N.S.T. 14 DEC 1977

KUALA LUMPUR, Tues. — Deputy Prime Minister Dato Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad refuted today an allegation that the Dewan Negara is a politically patronised instrument.

He told the Dewan Rakyat he was of the opinion the Senate was very useful to the nation because its members, being appointed by the various State Legislative Assemblies and the Yang Di-Pertuan Agung, were experienced people of high calibre.

Dato Seri Dr Mahathir was replying to Mr Ngan Siong Hing (DAP-Kinta) who asked whether the authorities would consider taking steps to amend the Federal Constitution to abolish the Senate as it had been abused as an instrument of political patronage

over the years.

"The Senate also gives an opportunity to minority groups to voice their opinions because they might not be able to win in any elections," Dato Seri Dr Mahathir said.

The Government, he said, had no intention to amend the Federal Constitution to abolish the Dewan Negara.

"The present Government is satisfied with the role being played by the Dewan Negara," he said.

To another question by Dr Chen Man Hin, Dato Seri Dr Mahathir said the Government had no plans at present, to set up a "think tank institute" of independent experts to solve problems like national unity, poverty and education.

The Government, he added, already had several Min-

istries and departments to study and solve the problems raised by Dr Chen.

The authorities, he said, also had regulations and methods to enable officers and experts from local universities and individuals with specific expertise to exchange ideas and opinions on problems that needed to be studied.

"It should be remembered that other countries who have 'independent think tanks' are not more successful in solving their problems because the 'think tanks' are not committed and are too academic," he said.

However, Dato Seri Dr Mahathir said, the Government was always prepared to accept proposals or opinions from anybody regarding national problems.