

I don't want more power

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SEREMBAN, Fri. — Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir today declared that the Constitution Amendments Bill was not an attempt by the Government leadership to get more power.

He denied accusations by certain groups that Government leaders, "namely me," wanted to seize more power.

"I pledge before you here that I have no such intention. I have enough power," he declared to thunderous applause and shouts of support from some 50,000 people who had gathered to welcome him when he arrived this morning to lay the foundation stone of the Seremban municipal building.

The people carried banners with pictures of the Prime Minister. They shouted "Hidup Mahathir" several times while he was delivering his speech which lasted some 45 minutes, to explain the issue regarding the amendments.

By **NURAINA SAMAD**

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said the power he had was for use by the *rakyat* and they could, therefore, take it away from him.

the Federal and parliamentary level "it would have certainly sparked off disturbances in the country."

He stressed that the Government did not intend to create problems when it tabled the amendments to the Constitution.

Appealing to the people to remain calm, he said the Government was determined to solve the Constitution amendments issue amicably so that all Malaysians could live happily in peace.

"We chose our parliamentary democracy when we achieved independence because we believe the system would make the *rakyat* sovereign and that they would no longer be oppressed. We accepted the system because we wanted to ensure that the aspirations of the *rakyat* would always be primary over everything else."

important: What was important was the people. As such, "I am asking the people not to idolise anyone, including me."

"The question of Mahathir is not important. What is important is the people's struggle." This was greeted with shouts of *Betul! Betul!*

He said the leadership was the tool of the people as evident in the country's system of parliamentary democracy.

The Government, he stressed, was not remiss in resolving the Constitution amendments issue as it had considered all views.

"We try our best to find an amicable solution. We do not want to cause any problem. We want our country to remain peaceful and harmonious. But, alas, there are people who are bringing up issues that ought not be raised," he added.

These people are fishing in troubled waters by misinterpreting the amendments in their own interest.

They hoped that by making such accusations against the Barisan Nasional leadership, Umno and the Barisan

He said the Government did not want to seize power from anyone as the power belonged to the people.

"Leaders come and go but the people remain," he said.

It was, therefore, unfortunate that some people chose to exploit this issue for their own political gains.

He said the confusion and doubts had been cast further with the holding of rallies by these people in two States.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said the Constitution amendments were necessary to ensure the rights of the people were not violated and ignored.

He said the Constitution was drawn to determine the fate and future of the *rakyat* and it, therefore, reflected their aspirations.

The Constitution, shaped by foremost judges from various countries, attempted to enshrine the aspirations of the people who had fought for independence.

"However, the judges are also ordinary people who are not infallible. Although they are learned, weaknesses can be found in the Constitution," Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said.

Sometimes, he said, the writing does not reflect the true situation.

He said the amendments had to be made because of several loopholes. The Constitution failed to specify the powers and obligations of the people in a clear manner and this could hinder the progress of the nation, he added.

There were certain things in the Constitution which were not specific, particularly with regard to the power of the people through Parli-

ment and State Assemblies and this had resulted in several events which affected the administration of the States.

The Prime Minister said it was fortunate this occurred only at State level. If it had occurred at

In colonial times, the Prime Minister said, the people had no role to play as everything was decided upon and determined by the masters.

"But we feel that after our struggles to achieve independence and after having defeated the Malayan Union, it is clear that without the support of the people our national aspirations cannot possibly be realised," he said.

The system of parliamentary democracy and constitutional monarchy chosen by the people was good as it perpetuated the power of the *rakyat* and guaranteed the high position of the Rulers, the Prime Minister told the crowd to resonant shouts of *Hidup Mahathir* (Long live Mahathir) and *Mahathir, kami hidup mati bersama mu* (Mahathir, those fighting for the people, we live and die with you).

However, he added that the weaknesses in the Constitution obstructed the progress of the nation and thus the Constitution needed to be amended.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said the Government had amended the Constitution many times, but each time it was aimed at ensuring that the aspirations of the people be realised.

"That is our objective because we do not hold absolute power. We do not do things as we please. We represent the people," he said.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said he was not

Nasional would be destroyed and no longer be able to serve the people, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said.

He was confident the Government, at State and Federal levels, would not disappoint the people in realising their aspirations.

In the 26 years since independence, he said, the country had seen development even in the most remote areas.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir hoped the people would understand the Government's efforts in resolving the issue.

And to rousing shouts of *Merdeka! Merdeka!* Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir declared: "*Sekali merdeka, kita akan terus merdeka!* (Once independent, we will always be independent).

When the Prime Minister insisted that he was not important, shouts of *Hidup Mahathir* rang out. He responded with *Hidup Rakyat*.

The Prime Minister thanked the people for their show of support saying it brought encouragement to those fighting for the people.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir was met by Mentri Besar Datuk Mohamed Isa Abdul Samad and Land and Regional Development Minister Datuk Rais Yatim.

Also present were Umno Youth leader Anwar Ibrahim, Selangor Mentri Besar Datuk Haji Ahmad Razali Ali, Pahang Mentri Besar Datuk Mohamed Najib.