

# Rulers' word on assent

By ZAINAH ANWAR

**KUALA LUMPUR, Sat. —** The Rulers have given a verbal undertaking that they will not withhold assent unnecessarily to Bills passed by State Legislative Assemblies.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today the amendment to Schedule Eight of the Federal Constitution would be dropped with the understanding from the Rulers that assent would not be withheld without any reasonable excuse.

That amendment would have made all Bills passed by a State Legislative Assembly law after 15 days, with or without the Ruler's assent. But with the understanding from the Rulers, this amendment would be repealed in a new Constitution (Amendment) Bill to be presented to Parliament in a special session on Jan 9 and 10.

When asked whether he was satisfied with just a verbal understanding, the Prime Minister said, "It is good enough."

"We have gone through a very educational process and I think this verbal understanding will be adhered to," he said at a Press conference after chairing a two-hour meeting of the Umno Supreme Council.

He said from what he understood, all the Rulers were aware of this understanding.

On why the Government had not asked for a written undertaking, he said, "We trust the Rulers."

For the first time, the Prime Minister officially announced that the new amendment to Article 66 (5) would provide that Bills passed by Parliament would be presented to the Yang di-Pertuan Agong and within 30 days, he can give his assent to the Bills or register his objection.

## Difference

If there is any objection, the Bill will be returned to Parliament for further debate, taking into consideration the King's views. Once passed and presented to the King again, the Bill will become law after 30

he present any views or objections."

"If he sends the Bill back to the House, he would have to explain why and the House has to make a decision."

The Prime Minister said the amendment to Article 150 would also be dropped as the Government agreed with legal opinion that in proclaiming an emergency, the King is bound by Article 40 (1) which states that the King "shall act in accordance with the advice of the Cabinet or of a Minister acting under the general authority of the Cabinet..."

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said there was no need for a verbal undertaking that the King would not act unilaterally in proclaiming emergency as "they (the Rulers) understand the implication of the original provision."

On the discrepancy on the question of royal as-

sent at the Federal and State levels, the Prime Minister said the difference between the Federal and State Constitutions was due to man-made law, "not divine law."

"What man makes, he can undo."

When asked to comment on the Sultan of Johore's remark yesterday that Umno was used as a tool to pit the Malays against the Rulers, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said, "Everybody is entitled to his own opinion."

On the fact that a few Sultans were not happy over the signing of the Bill, he said, "We're not talking about happiness. We're talking about legacies."

The Prime Minister also said that since the problem over the constitutional amendments was solved, there was no need for him to expose the "traitors" who had obstructed the search for a solution.

But the Umno disciplinary committee will review any case of Umno members who had been labelled as traitors if there is evidence against them.

The disciplinary committee has also yet to make a report to the Supreme Council on the case of Datuk Senu Abdul Rahman who had written an open letter to the Prime Minister protesting against the amendments.

Asked about the effects the just-ended controversy would have on Umno, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said, "Umno is perfectly healthy and able to manage itself. I don't see any problems."

Umno deputy president Datuk Musa Hitam interrupted here saying the Supreme Council today had unanimously congratulated the party president on his efforts and his success in solving the problem and had given its support to what he had done and would do.