

Debate on the Rulers is meant to be

Ummno is against

advice, says PM a republic

By Ahmad A. Talib

KUALA LUMPUR, Sun. — Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamed today reiterated, after the Umno general assembly had intensely debated the interference of certain Rulers in administrative matters, that the party has no intention of turning the country into a republic.

The Umno president said the party's constitution guaranteed the preservation of the constitutional monarchy and, therefore, he had no wish to see it replaced or exploited by individuals or groups with dubious intentions.

"It was for these reasons that the assembly openly debated the issue. We want this to be a reminder not only to the Rulers but to Malays as a whole that the Rulers are to be loved and respected," he said.

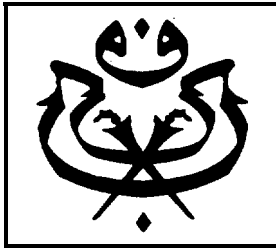
Winding up the assembly's three-day sitting, Dr Mahathir said the fact that the issue was raised again after a resolution on the Rulers and the constitution was adopted and presented to the Yang di-Pertuan Agong and the Sultans last year suggested that there was truth in the points highlighted by the delegates.

Nearly all delegates who took part in the debate alleged that some Rulers had continued to interfere in the administration of the States and took part actively in business.

The Selangor delegate, Haji Zainal Abidin Sakom, even produced a list of properties and projects allocated to or obtained by the Sultan of Selangor for himself and his associates.

Dr Mahathir said the debate was not intended to shame the Rulers but more as advice and reminder. The Rulers should therefore not be offended by the debate.

It was well understood



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that under the constitutional monarchy, the advice that the Rulers received from the Prime Minister or the Menteri Besar should be consented to.

He recalled that during the colonial rule, the Malay Sultans were supposed to rule and the British advisers were supposed to advise them.

"In reality, the advisers ruled," he said.

The Prime Minister added it was better for all parties to be reminded of their powers and responsibilities under the constitution before something more drastic happened that required equally drastic action.

Recalling the facts of history, Dr Mahathir said it was the Malays who insisted upon the establishment of the constitutional monarchy in order to preserve the institution.

They acted because the system came under threat from the British who intended to reduce the position of the Malay Rulers to mere religious leaders. The Malays rose in force to defend their Rulers.

Rut now, said the Prime Minister, the Malays were

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Absolute monarchs who were rejected

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the ones who were expressing reservations on the abilities of the Rulers to abide by the constitutional provisions and to play the role intended for them.

He said the constitutional monarchy was meant to protect both the Rulers and the ruled. The absolute monarchs in many countries were prone to abusing their powers, leading to mass discontent and revolution and resulting in their overthrow.

He cited the downfall of the French monarch and the

Shah of Iran as examples of absolute monarchy being rejected by the people.

Dr Mahathir said because they were absolute monarchs, the people were afraid to advise them even when they made mistakes. Their ministers and courtisans only told them what they loved to hear. Those who dared to advise were killed or banished.

"But under our system, we can advise our Rulers, and if they make bad decisions because of our improper advice, we ought to be blamed," the Prime Minister added.

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