

# PM: Special rights of Sabah, Review of

# privileges

Sarawak meant to be temporary

By K.P. Waran

KUALA LUMPUR, Sat. — The special privileges accorded to Sabah and Sarawak under the 20-point Inter-Governmental Committee Agreement signed in 1963 will be reviewed, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

The Prime Minister said this would be aimed at bringing about greater integration of Malaysians.

The IGCA is the basis by which Sabah and Sarawak joined the Federation of Malaysia in 1963. It outlines the States' rights over immigration, education and the Borneo concept which calls for locals heading federal departments and agencies in the States.

Dr Mahathir said the agreement should have undergone a review after 10 years.

"Because they (the two States) were not so keen on it, we did not do anything but after more than 25 years of the formation of Malaysia, it will be good if we seek ways to integrate all Malaysians," he said.

Responding to reporters' questions after opening the Bukit Kiara Equestrian and Country Resort in Bukit Kiara here, Dr Mahathir said Sarawak had asked the Federal Government to undertake the review.

He said the review was also necessary to erase the dispute on the finality of the powers of the State and the Federal Government.

When asked by reporters about the areas under the 20-point agreement which needed to be reviewed, he said some quarters had raised the question of the powers of the Federal Government and State Government.

"We should not be thinking which areas come under the State and which come under Federal jurisdiction since we are one country.

"The powers of State Governments had been decided and this will not be revoked. In the case of Sabah and Sarawak, they have some special privileges which were accorded to them temporarily and this has to be reviewed," he said.

Umno Youth leader Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak,

10 OCT 1992

Information Minister Datuk Mohamed Rahmat and former Sabah Chief Minister Datuk Harris Salleh had recently called on the Federal Government to review the powers accorded to Sabah and Sarawak, including their autonomy on immigration matters.

Recently, the Sabah State Government declared that people from the peninsula have to produce their passports at entry points in the State.

Previously, they needed only to fill a simple form giving their personal details for travel between Peninsular Malaysia and Sabah. They could have their passports endorsed as an alternative. Sabahans travelling to Peninsular Malaysia are currently required only to fill a similar form.

When asked whether the review would cover the use of passports by Malaysians entering Sabah, Dr Mahathir said that matter would be left to the Sabah State Government.

"We hope they will seek ways to do away with the restriction," he said, adding that there were no restrictions for those from Sabah and Sarawak to be active in various fields in the peninsula.

He said there were some people from the two States owning large companies and even newspaper publishing firms in the peninsula.

He said, therefore, people should not be suspicious of the move to integrate all Malaysians.

When asked to comment on the call by PBS vice-president Datuk Zaki Gusmiah that the next Sabah State election be considered as a referendum on Sabah's continued presence in Malaysia, Dr Mahathir said a referendum was already held under the Cobbold Commission in 1963 to enable the people of Sabah to make their choice.

"If we want to have a referendum everyday, it is going to be difficult," he said.

He also warned that it was dangerous to incite people on the question of a referendum and the issue of "Sabah for Sabahans" as this could lead to racial strife.