

Sabah amendment not democratic, says Dr M

By ROHAIZAD A RAHIM

PETALING JAYA: Sabah's constitutional amendment which allows the State Assembly to expel "misbehaving" members is contrary to the spirit of democracy, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said yesterday.

He said the only plausible motive behind the amendment was to prevent Parti Bersatu Sabah (PBS) members from leaving the party.

He was speaking to reporters on his arrival home after attending the third G-15 summit in Senegal and official visits to Tunisia and Namibia.

"If misbehaviour (by betraying electoral mandate or ill-disciplined) is the real issue, then the Federal Government would have done it (amend the Federal Constitution to the effect) a long time ago," he said when asked to comment on the amendment.

Similarly, he said the Dewan Rakyat could then expel all PBS MPs and leave it to the people to decide whether the action was within the spirit of democracy.

"But if Federal Government were to amend the Constitution along similar lines, the action would be

branded as undemocratic by the world," he said.

Dr Mahathir also said the Sabah's amendment was publicised by the world's media and was generally accepted as the right thing to do by the international press.

The Sabah State Assembly recently passed an amendment to the State Constitution to expel members on grounds of

indiscipline, abuse or betrayal of the mandate given by the electorate.

It comes in the wake of a suit brought by Sabah Umno deputy chief Tun Datu Mustapha Datu Harun challenging the validity of the state's anti-party law.

On the proposed debate on the 20-point issue, Dr Mahathir said it would still have to be a debate.

"The people must know what is going on and a forum will not be suitable," he said.

To a question, Dr Mahathir said PBS was trying to hide their weaknesses by asking for a forum to discuss the matter.

Sabah Chief Minister Datuk Joseph Pairin Kitingan had said that a forum would be a suitable platform to discuss the

Inter-Governmental Commission Report.

Asked if the matter should be dealt on a government-to-government instead of a party-to-party basis, Dr Mahathir replied:

"It makes no difference. When he (Pairin) spoke on the matter first, he was speaking on a party platform."