

UMNO AND B.N.

S 10 DEC 1992

TO DISCUSS ISSUE

Urgent talks on alleged assault of coach

By REMA NAMBIAR

KUALA LUMPUR: The Umno Supreme Council will hold an emergency meeting tonight to discuss the alleged assault of Maktab Sultan Abu Bakar hockey coach Douglas Gomez by the Sultan of Johor.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said yesterday the Barisan Nasional Supreme Council would also meet on

Saturday to discuss the matter.

Speaking to reporters at Parliament House, the Prime Minister said the Johor incident would be discussed in detail at both meetings.

"We will discuss the effects of the incident on the people in general and what action should be taken," he said.

Asked if a special meeting of the Rulers Council would be convened to discuss the issue, he said it would be up to the Umno Supreme Council to decide if this was necessary.

On whether the Government would review the special privileges accorded to the rulers in the Constitution, the Prime Minister said this was also up to the Supreme Council to decide.

Dr Mahathir said the incident was discussed at yesterday's Cabinet meeting.

"We had to discuss it because it is a current issue and of public interest," he said.

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Isa: Issue could have been avoided

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Gomez was allegedly assaulted by the Sultan on Nov 30 after he protested against an order to his team to pull out from a national schools hockey tournament.

The pullout order followed a five-year ban on the Sultan's son, Tengku Majid, by the Malaysian Hockey Federation after he was found guilty of assaulting a Perak goalkeeper at a Sukan Malaysia match earlier this year.

Foreign Minister Datuk Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, who is also an Umno vice-president, said there would be a need to review the relationship of the institution of monarchy and the people.

He said Umno, as a party which supported the monarchy, viewed the relationship seriously as it wanted the people to maintain good rapport with the monarchy.

"Unfortunately, recent developments may prove contrary to the party's effort at maintaining the rapport," he said.

Asked what possible options could be taken, he said it would have to be studied.

He did not rule out the possibility of the Federal Constitution being amended.

In Seremban, Menteri Besar Tan Sri Haji Mohamed Isa Abdul Samad said the issue could have been avoided if all the Sultans had adhered to the Proclamation of Constitutional Principles.

He said the proclamation clearly stated the roles of the rulers and what they were not allowed to do.

"The proclamation is sufficient as long as the rulers kept to it," he said.

He said the problem was that not all the rulers had signed the proclamation and, therefore, "there is no uniformity in practice."

The Johor, Kedah and Kelantan sultans had yet to sign the proclamation.

Isa said the rulers must realise that they had an important role to play and ensure that their actions did not tarnish the image of the country.

In Kangar, Menteri Besar Dr Abdul Hamid Pawanteh said he supported proposals that the law be amended so that the immunity enjoyed by rulers relate-d only to the performance of their duties as constitutional monarchs.

In Alor Star, PAS president Haji Fadzil Noor said yesterday his party would support a constitutional review to bring the Rulers under the purview of the law.

He described the Prime Minister's views as firm, pragmatic and "a great reassurance" to the people.