

# Umno wants Constitution amended

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KUALA LUMPUR: The Cabinet will be asked to draft a proposal to amend the Federal Constitution to remove the rulers' immunity from the law.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said the decision was reached at an emergency Umno Supreme Council session

last night.

"Our decision will be conveyed to the Barisan Nasional Supreme Council for deliberation before being forwarded to the Cabinet for action," the Prime Minister told reporters after chairing the meeting here.

The immunity on the rulers is provided under Article 181 (2) of the Federal Constitution which states that no action can

be taken against a ruler of a state in any court of law.

Last night's council meeting, which started at 9pm and ended at midnight, was called to discuss the alleged assault of Maktab Sultan Abu Bakar's hockey coach Douglas Gomez by the Sultan of Johor.

The incident was believed to have been sparked off by Gomez's criticism of the Johor

Hockey Association for pulling out from various national hockey tournaments.

Dr Mahathir said the council felt it was time to end the rulers' immunity as they saw the incident as a clear sign of abuse (of the immunity).

"The allegation is an abuse of the privilege and this (privilege) will have

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# PM confident Rulers will give their assent

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to be removed to protect the people.

"We have also learned that there were previous incidents of assault, torture and even killing."

He said the Johoreans, intimidated by these actions, were living in fear and the victims dared not complain of any wrongdoings against them.

"We could not allow this fear to continue as the people are protected by the law.

"I want to stress that the decision was made by the people as reflected by the unanimous

support at the Dewan Rakyat."

To a question, Dr Mahathir said he anticipated obstacles in the Government's attempt to get the Constitution amended.

He said the amendment would have to get assent from the Council of Rulers and if this was not possible, the Government would find other means of doing it.

"I am confident that the Council of Rulers will give their assent as several of them realise the gravity of the situation."

He conceded that Umno's relations with the palace might deteriorate over the move but

said: "It is for the good of the people."

To another question, Dr Mahathir said he did not expect this move to create a constitutional crisis as had happened in 1983.

"At that time, we did not get full support but now, the Opposition is with us.

"They (the Opposition) realise that this issue should not be politicised as it is for the benefit of the nation."

Asked if the council would send delegations to meet the rulers on the issue, he said it was not necessary.