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Mahathir-amendments

CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS TO BE TABLED IN A MONTH, DR MAHATHIR

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KUALA LUMPUR, Dec 12⁹² (Bernama) ^(P) -- A special session of Parliament will be held in a month from now to debate a constitutional amendment to withdraw the immunity from prosecution enjoyed by the Malay Rulers and remove obstacles to the amendment.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today the Barisan Nasional Supreme Council special meeting today fully supported the institution of Constitutional Monarchy but did not agree with the privileges given to the Rulers who could not be prosecuted in court for whatever offence.

+The BN Supreme Council agreed to the convening of a special session of the Dewan Rakyat and Dewan Negara where amendments will be made to remove the immunity given to the Rulers and any obstacle to the amendments, + **he told** reporters after chairing the hour-long meeting at the Umno headquarters here.

The amendments would be made first before being submitted to the Conference of Rulers for their consent, he said. -- more

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Asked what would happen if the Conference of Rulers refused to sign and give their consent, he said: +If they (Conference of Rulers) sign there is nothing. If we have the amendments and they don't give their consent, the situation is the same. +

Dr Mahathir, who is BN chairman, said the BN Supreme Council felt that the Rulers would abide by the wishes of the entire Malaysian people.

This was because the people's demands could be clearly seen during the debate on the substantive motion on the Douglas Gomez issue in the Dewan Rakyat on Thursday where it was also supported by the opposition, he added.

He said the people's wishes, were also evident from the writings and statements which clearly showed that they wanted the amendments.

To a DAP suggestion that an All Party **Committee** be **set up** to **discuss** the amendments, he said: +In my opinion, the matter is simple and involves only one matter and things that will affect such removal (of immunity). As such, there is no need for discussions. +

The opposition parties could state their stand during the debate on the amendments, he added. -- more

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Asked whether the government had met the Rulers on the matter, he said: +Officially, no. +

This was because at this point the proposed amendments did not involve the Yang di-Pertuan Agong and the Rulers,

Dr Mahathir said the amendments would not affect all the privileges given to the Rulers.

For instance, the position of the Rulers as head of Islam in their respective states would remain.

Dr Mahathir also said his long-planned visit to Johor next week was to attend the Johor Malay Chamber of Commerce dinner and had nothing to do with the current issue.

But, time permitting, he would meet the Johor Umno members, he added.

As to plans by several State Umno Liaison Committees to seek an audience with their Rulers, he said: +They can do that. +

Dr Mahathir said the constitutional amendment would not affect Federal-state relations but he did not discount this possibility in states ruled by opposition parties. -- more

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Dr Mahathir, who was also asked about the position of the Johor Military Force, said the government was likely to dissolve it as there were indications that it had been misused to aid and abet wrong doings.

It was formed only for ceremonial purposes but the government found that it had strayed from the objective of its formation, he added.

Meanwhile, Deputy Prime Minister Ghafar Baba said the government would also consider the possibility of amending the provision empowering the Rulers to grant pardons at the same time as the amendments to the Federal Constitution were dealt with.

Asked by reporters why the issue of Rulers assaulting their subjects was not raised in the past, Ghafar, who is BN Secretary-General, said: +In the past people were afraid to lodge police reports.

+That was in the past. We tried to rectify it through negotiations but there was no way, + -- Bernama

▼12/12/19-10MST