

# Rulers to lose immunity

13 DEC 1992

**KUALA LUMPUR:** The Government will introduce constitutional changes to remove the Rulers' immunity from the law in about a month, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said yesterday.

Both the Dewan Rakyat and the Dewan Negara would hold special sittings to debate the Bill, the Prime Minister told newsmen after chairing the Barisan Nasional's supreme council meeting.

He said that Barisan unanimously agreed that the immunity of the Rulers must be removed.

"Although the Barisan supports the constitutional monarchy system, latest developments (the alleged assault of Douglas Gomez by the Johor Sultan) indicate that the privilege must be removed," he said.

"We feel that the Rulers will bow to the wish of the people because it is clear that the motion (tabled by Deputy Prime Minister Abdul Ghafar Baba) has the people's support, including the Opposition.

"The people are demanding the amendment. This is evident from the written and verbal statements of the people that the privilege be removed."

The amendment would also do away with any provision that might jeopardise it, said Dr Mahathir.

Asked if the Government would get the consent of the Rulers' Council before tabling the amendments, he said: "No."

"There is no necessity to get the council's approval as suggested by the Attorney-General because the end result is the same," he said.

"The Attorney-General's opinion is the same as ours. It is just the case of the cart before the horse or horse before the cart," he said when referring to the Article 66 of the Constitution.

The article states that the King may return other Bills (apart from Money Bills) passed by Parliament within 30 days stating the reason for his objections to the Bill or any

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provisions in them.

Any Bill reconsidered by Parliament shall be presented to the King again for Royal Assent and if the King fails to give assent within 30 days, it shall become law at the expiration of that period as if he had assented to the Bill.

Asked to elaborate on the amendment, the Prime Minister said, it would address specifically the removal of immunity of the Rulers.

However, he said certain privileges, such as the Rulers' position as the head of Islam, would be maintained.

To another question, Dr Mahathir said the Yang di-Pertuan Agong and other Rulers would not be briefed on the proposed amendment.

"As it is now, there is no need for the consent but we will present it to the King for his assent when the

Bill is passed by both Houses."

Asked if he expected any complication in tabling the Bill, Dr Mahathir replied that it was a simple matter.

"What is involved here is just to repeal the privilege and provisions that may affect the amendments," he said.

On the possible disbandment of the Johor Military Force, Dr Mahathir said the Government would look into the matter.

"There are signs that it was misused and was even involved in aiding and abetting in the commission of the wrongdoings ... it has been reported."

The Johor Military Force, he said, was established for ceremonial purposes during the colonial days.

"We have received information that the force is involved in activities other than being a ceremonial force," he said.