

Govt may backdate amendment, says PM

By PAUL GABRIEL

LANGKAWI: The Government may consider giving retrospective effect to constitutional changes to bring Rulers under the purview of the law, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said yesterday.

The Prime Minister said the Government was prepared to study such a suggestion so that legal action could be taken against the Sultan of Johor for alleged assault.

"We are bent on amending the constitution with regards to the Rulers immunity but we have made no decision as to backdating it (the changes).

"We will consider the suggestion," he said.

Dr Mahathir was commenting on Jelutong MP Karpal Singh's suggestion in Parliament that the constitutional changes be backdated for legal action to be taken against the Sultan of Johor who had allegedly assaulted hockey coach Douglas Gomez on Nov 30.

On Saturday, the Prime Minister had said constitutional changes to remove the Rulers' immunity from the law would be made in about a month.

To a question, Dr Mahathir said it was up to the Mentris Besar to decide whether to meet the respective Sultans to explain the rationale for the changes.

"It is left to their dis-

cretion. The Government will move ahead to make the changes," he said.

Selangor Mentri Besar Tan Sri Muhammad Haji Muhammad Taib and his Johor counterpart Tan Sri Haji Muhyiddin Mohamed Yassin had stated they would seek an audience with the Sultans to explain the constitutional

amendment.

Dr Mahathir said the Government would act against members of the royalty and palace officials who had breached the law.

"All those not covered by immunity will face action if they have committed offences, irrespective of whether they are

from the JMF (Johor Military Force), personal staff or even mere servants," he said.

Asked whether the Proclamation of Constitutional Principles signed earlier by several Rulers would become redundant with the Rulers being brought under the law, Dr Mahathir said the proclamation could be retained

although some provisions seemed ineffective.

He said this was also because the proclamation was not signed by the Sultans of Johor, Kedah and Kelantan.

On the possible disbandment of the JMF, Dr Mahathir said its members could be absorbed into the Armed Forces.