

Move to explain proposal to Umno leaders

By Manan Osman
and Alex Choong

KUALA LUMPUR, Tues. — Umno leaders are expected to meet the Malay Rulers on Jan 9 to explain the proposal to remove their immunity, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

Dr Mahathir, who is Umno president, will head the delegation which includes deputy president Abdul Ghafar Baba and the vice-presidents. The venue of the meeting however, has yet to be decided, he added.

The Prime Minister disclosed this when asked to comment on the Sultan of Pahang's suggestion that Federal Government leaders meet the Rulers informally to discuss the proposed amendments before the Conference of Rulers on Jan 16.

Dr Mahathir said this after a half-day visit to Radio Televisyen Malaysia (RTM) at Angkasapuri here.

The draft of the amendments would be presented to the Rulers.

The Rulers are expected to meet on Jan 16, two days before the special sitting of the Dewan Rakyat where the amendments will be tabled and debated.

Dr Mahathir said the Jan 9 meeting would provide Umno and the Government

the opportunity to explain the rationale behind the proposal to remove the Rulers' immunity and to clear any confusion that might have arisen.

He reiterated his earlier statement that the Government had no intention of abolishing the system of constitutional monarchy.

Dr Mahathir said the proposed amendments would only cover the lifting of matters relating to the immunity of the Rulers.

Asked to elaborate on the amendments, the Prime Minister said Attorney-General Tan Sri Abu Talib Othman was preparing the draft based on the meeting between him and the Menteri Besar last Tuesday.

The draft is expected to be handed over to the Government this week for further study before being presented for discussion at next week's Cabinet meeting.

Asked whether the amendments would only cover Article 181(2) of the Constitution, Dr Mahathir said certain consequential amendments connected with the immunity would also have to be made.

He also said that so far, the Rulers had not indicated any outright rejection of the proposed amendments. There were, however, suggestions that the Rulers be given a more detailed explanation for the move.

WST 30 DEC 1992

He said the Umno supreme council would also meet on Jan 9, but did not state the agenda of the meeting. Asked to comment on the proposed gathering at Istana Besar in Johor Baru on Jan 8, Dr Mahathir, who is also Home Minister, said nobody should be allowed to break the law. He said: "If one party is allowed to break the law, other parties will question why they cannot do the same."

He believed that the proposed gathering was initiated by "bankrupt politicians" out to gain political mileage. He could not say whether the Johor palace was involved.

Dr Mahathir said, if necessary, Umno leaders too would go round the country to explain to the people the truth about the proposed amendments.

On his meeting with Umno divisional heads and information chiefs tomorrow, Dr Mahathir said he would elaborate on the rationale behind the proposed amendments.

Tomorrow's meeting is also aimed at clearing the air over the issue, particularly following the circulation of poison-pen letters which could have caused confusion among some Umno members, he added.

☐ MORE REPORTS IN
PAGE 2

remove immunity, says PM
to meet Rulers