

RM: Constitutional amendments will also

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Pardon rights to

include clause on sedition
be affected

By Manan Osman,
G. Danapal,
Vijayan Menon
and Alex Choong

KUALA LUMPUR, Wed. — The removal of the Rulers' immunity will be accompanied by consequential amendments to constitutional provisions concerning royal pardons and sedition, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

The Prime Minister said this had to be done because amendments with regard to Rulers' immunity would only be effective if the relevant clauses were amended accordingly.

"While amending clauses on Rulers' immunity, the Government also has to amend other provisions relating to sedition and the Rulers' rights of pardon," he told the Press after meeting some 1,500 divisional heads, branch chairmen and information chiefs nationwide at the Putra World Trade Centre.

The gathering fully endorsed the proposed amendments and urged the Government to be firm in handling the matter.

Dr Mahathir said some members were of the opinion that the newspapers had been a bit aggressive in their reports on the issue but others were quite happy with the manner the Press was handling the issue.

Replying to questions by the Press, Dr Mahathir said the consequential amendments had to be made to prevent the Rulers from pardoning themselves and the people close to them like their children.

"The rights to pardon will be transferred to other parties...maybe to other Rulers," the Prime Minister said.

However, he said the functions of the Pardons

Hoard would remain, adding that there were other cases which did not involve the Rulers.

On the proposed amendments to the clauses on sedition in the constitution, Dr Mahathir said they were necessary as, at present, it would be considered seditious to charge any Ruler who committed an offence.

Citing an example, he said: "If one goes to a police station to lodge a report alleging that a Ruler has committed a crime, the act constitutes sedition."

Because of this, he added, the Government had to remove clauses connected to sedition.

The amendments would subject the Rulers to prosecution for both civil and criminal offences.

Dr Mahathir also said that the draft of 'the proposed amendments had been submitted to him by the Attorney-General Tan Sri Abu Talib Othman and was being studied by the Government.

He said the amendments to the law would not be retrospective.

When asked whether the amendments would give more power to the executive as claimed by the Bar Council in a statement today, he said in a democratic system, the Government could not afford to exceed the limit of the executive powers as the people were the judges.

They act as the check and balance, he said. Moreover, there were also courts where people could seek redress.

Dr Mahathir also said that the proposed amendments would have to receive royal assent before it could become a law.

However, he said the Bill could be tabled in the Dewan Rakyat and Dewan Negara to get the approval of

Political stability 'not affected'

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both Houses. He was confident that the Bill when approved, would get the Rulers' consent.

Asked what would happen if the Rulers declined to give the consent, Dr Mahathir said: "We will look into it."

Dr Mahathir said the controversy with regard to the proposed amendments would not affect the country's Political stability but might affect slightly certain areas of the Government's administration.

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