

PM: AVOID

RALLY

S 31 DEC 1992

AT PALACE

MB also advised not to attend mass audience

By WONG CHUN WAI

KUALA LUMPUR: The Government has advised the people of Johor, particularly the Mentri Besar, not to attend the Sultan's mass audience at the Istana Besar Johor Baru on Jan 8.

Prime Minister and Umno president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said the party's Supreme Council had advised Mentri Besar Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin not to get involved in the function.

"There is evidence to show that Semangat 46 is involved in the gathering. As a result of these political elements, Umno cannot be involved," he told newsmen after meeting with Umno division leaders yesterday.

More than 1,500 division leaders, including those from Sabah, attended the closed door meeting at the Putra World Trade Centre which lasted over two hours.

Dr Mahathir was asked to comment on the Sultan's wish to grant a mass audience to Johoreans at the Istana Besar (see story on Page 2).

The Sultan said at the Masjid Abu Bakar yesterday he was not the one to issue the invitation but if the people wanted to see him, they were welcome to do so next Friday.

Dr Mahathir said the Government could not stop the palace from holding such a gathering.

He said the gathering could be held at the Istana Besar without a police permit, so long as it was within the Istana compound.

The Government wanted the matter to be resolved in a proper manner and not through confrontation.

"That is why Umno is not holding any gatherings or rallies. We hope such methods are not carried out as they would lead to tension," he said.

Dr Mahathir said this would not be good for anyone as there were proper channels provided under the law.

Asked whether the gathering was a form of confrontation with Umno, he replied: "We want to avoid confrontations. For me, I do not agree with confrontations."

Muhyiddin, he said, had been asked to seek an

audience with the Sultan to explain the Government's decision.

On his meeting with the Umno leaders, Dr Mahathir said the party had received "vehement support" from those present.

"I must say the feelings were quite strong," he said, adding that the proposed amendments were in the interest of the Rulers.

The Prime Minister said some division leaders felt that the press was a "little bit aggressive but others are quite happy."

On the Jan 9 informal meeting with the Rulers prior to the Jan 16 Conference of Rulers, he said he was confident most of the Rulers would be present.

Dr Mahathir said the Jan 9 informal meeting was arranged after he had an audience with the Yang di-Pertuan Agong Sultan Azlan Shah on Monday.

Asked what the King had conveyed to him, he said His Highness felt that the proposed amendments should be explained to the Rulers but he did not say anything about supporting the amendments.

Dr Mahathir expressed confidence the Rulers would consent to the proposed amendments.