

# UMNO STUDIES

## Proposed amendments to be handed to Cabinet tomorrow

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ON PAGE 2

**KUALA LUMPUR: Top Umno leaders met yesterday to go through the draft amendments to the Constitution removing the Rulers' immunity.**

Prime Minister and Umno president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad confirmed yesterday they studied the draft which would be presented to the Cabinet tomorrow.

Among those present were party deputy president Abdul Ghafar Baba and vice-presidents Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, Datuk Abdullah Ahmad Badawi and Datuk Seri Sanusi Junid.

The two-hour meeting, which took place at the Prime Minister's office, started at about 10am. It is understood that they also discussed the informal meeting with the Rulers scheduled for Saturday.

These five Umno leaders will be in the delegation to explain to the Rulers the rationale for the amendments.

Dr Mahathir also welcomed the Sultan of Johor's decision to postpone the proposed mass audience at Istana Besar in Johor Baru on Friday.

"It will ease tension and help lead to a better atmosphere for us to resolve the matter," he told newsmen at the Sungai Besi RMAF station before leaving for Alor Star.

To a question, Dr Mahathir said Semangat 46 had earlier supported the Government's move to amend the Constitution but the opposition party had second thoughts.

"They have run away from the issue and have politicised it by playing Malay sentiments," he said.

Semangat itself was one reason for the split in the Malay community, he

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added when commenting on the party's opposition to the amendments because it felt their sovereignty reflected the sovereignty and supremacy of the Malays.

On a proposed gathering to welcome the Sultan and Sultanah of Kelantan back from Mecca at Kota Baru, Dr Mahathir said PAS had expressed its support to the proposed amendments by saying no one was above the law.

"We hope it will stick to its decision. If it wants to show its loyalty to the Sultan, that's their prerogative," he said.

Umno, he said, was also loyal to the Rulers and that "such gatherings are unnecessary."

Dr Mahathir hoped the gathering would not be used to talk about the proposed amendments.

"If they start doing that, there are bound to be negative reactions from those who support the amendments," he added.

On Saturday, the Kelantan palace denied having any role in a move to gather people at the Sultan Ismail Petra airport tomorrow to welcome the Sultan and Sultanah but said it would not stop it.

The Sultan's private secretary Fuad Hassan was reported to have said the palace was not aware of the distribution of pamphlets inviting people to the airport for the welcoming ceremony.

Fuad said the distribution of the pamphlets was probably done by people who believed it was time to show their loyalty to their Sultan and the Royal family.

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