

Dr Mahathir to lead Umno delegation at today's meeting

PM hopes Rulers will give assent to draft

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By Manan Osman

KUALA LUMPUR, Fri. — Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad hoped that the Malay Rulers will give their assent to the draft of the constitutional amendments which will be presented to them during an informal meeting tomorrow.

Dr Mahathir said as far as he was concerned, the meeting between Umno leaders and the Malay Rulers was on.

He was asked by reporters on the scheduled meeting after bidding farewell to Thai Prime Minister Chuan Leekpai at Carcosa Sri Negara. Chuan ended his three-day official visit to the country today.

Dr Mahathir who is Umno president, said he would lead the Umno delegation to the meeting which is expected to be held at Istana Negara tomorrow afternoon.

Accompanying Dr Mahathir will be Umno deputy president Ghafar Baba, vice-presidents Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim and Datuk Ab-

dullah Ahmad Badawi, and Datuk Seri Rafidah Aziz who is the Wanita leader.

The other vice-presidents, Datuk Seri Sanusi Junid and Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak, who is Youth leader, will not be present as they are overseas.

Earlier in the morning, Dr Mahathir will chair an Umno supreme council meeting which is also expected to discuss the amendments.

Dr Mahathir, however, could not say whether all the Rulers would be present.

He also said that no last-minute changes had been made to the draft of the constitutional amendments.

Meanwhile, *Bernama* reports that according to a source, five provisions are expected to be incorporated in the Federal Constitution under the proposed amendments to remove the legal immunity of the Rulers.

It said the provisions were expected to be added to articles 38, 42, 63, 72 and 181 of the Constitution, adding that changes would also be

made to article 32 and clause 181(2).

The Cabinet has approved the draft of the amendments. The Dewan Rakyat is scheduled to discuss the proposed amendments at a special sitting on Jan 18 and 19, and the Dewan Negara on Jan 20.

The source told *Bernama* the new provisions touched on the structure and procedure of the Pardons Board, sedition and the legal immunity of the Rulers.

Article 38 of the Constitution refers to the functions and powers of the Conference of Rulers in clauses (1) to (6).

The source said a new provision would be incorporated in clause 38(2) which detailed the duties of the Conference of Rulers under sub-sections (a), (b) and (c).

Article 42, which has clauses (1) to (11), touches on the powers of the Yang di-Pertuan Agong and the Rulers on the question of clemency, the form of par-

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don and members of the Pardons Board.

The source said that adding a provision to the article would bring about some change to the structure of the Pardons Boards and its procedures.

Dr Mahathir had said that the proposed amendments would remove the provisions allowing Rulers to pardon themselves, their children, members of the royalty and people close to

them.

Article 63 refers to parliamentary privileges in clauses (1) to (4).

The source said a provision would be added to the article to ensure protection for Members of Parliament from sedition when debating matters relating to the royalty.

Article 72, with clauses (1) to (4), touches on the privileges of the State Legislative Assemblies in relation to sedition.

At present, members of the Dewan Rakyat, Dewan Negara and State Assemblies were subject to article 10(4) of the Constitution and the Sedition Act 1948 (Amendment 1970) during debates.

The source said that despite the liberty to debate issues related to the royalty, MPs and State Assemblymen were prohibited from using words which could be construed to mean they were calling for "the abolition of constitutional mon-

archy in the country".

This, the source said, was proof that the Government had no intention whatsoever to abolish the system of constitutional monarchy through the proposed amendments as had been alleged otherwise by certain quarters, particularly Parti Semangat 46.

Article 181, which has clauses (1) and (2), refers to saving the Rulers' sovereignty.

The much talked about matter now is clause 181(2)

which says that "no proceedings whatsoever shall be brought in any court against the Ruler of a State in his personal capacity".

Adding a provision to the article, the source said, would remove the legal immunity of the Rulers.

However, the source added, only the legal immunity in the Rulers' personal capacity would be removed but not in their official capacity as the Yang di-Pertuan Agong, Sultan, Raja or Yang di-Pertuan Besar.