

CNS6652

U GE 15-01 00170 EA562

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ATTENTION EDITORS: Please ignore earlier item slugged "Mahathir-Rulers" and replace it with the following.

LEAD Mahathir-rulers

RULERS' REJECTION MEANS OBSTRUCTION TO DEMOCRACY, SAYS PM

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KUALA LUMPUR, 15 Jan<sup>93</sup> (Bernama) -- The Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today parliamentary democracy in Malaysia will be obstructed if the Malay Rulers reject the government's move to amend the Federal Constitution to remove their legal immunity.

This meant that the people have no freedom to make decisions, he said.

"This saddens us," he told reporters after calling on to bid farewell to Japanese Prime Minister Kiichi Miyazawa at the Kuala Lumpur Hilton.

Asked on the Sultan of Kelantan's rejection of the proposed constitutional amendments as reported today, Dr Mahathir said he had expected it.

On the possibility of two or three more Malay Rulers taking a similar decision, the Prime Minister said he would think that they would also reject them.-- more

♥15/01/12-34MST

CNS6669

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LEAD Mahathir-rulers 2 Kuala Lumpur

The Malay Rulers are scheduled to meet tomorrow to decide whether to accept or reject the government's move to amend the Federal Constitution, seeking among other things, to remove the Rulers' immunity from the law.

Tomorrow's meeting was originally scheduled as a special 159th meeting of the Conference of Rulers but now its status is vague.

Dr Mahathir said he was informed yesterday that the Rulers would meet among themselves only tomorrow without the presence of the Prime Minister or Menteri Besar as was normally the case.

"I don't know whether the meeting can be interpreted as a Rulers' Conference meeting or not," he said.

The government is scheduled to table a bill to amend the Federal Constitution at a special sitting of the Dewan Rakyat on Jan 18 and 19 and the Dewan Negara on Jan 20.

Article 38 (4) of the Federal Constitution states that no law directly affecting the privileges, position, honours or dignities of the Rulers shall be passed without the consent of the Conference of Rulers.-- more

▼15/01/12-52MST

CNS6682

U GE 15-01 00135 EA564

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LEAD Mahathir-rulers 3 Kuala Lumpur

Asked whether as up to now he was confident that the Rulers would accept the proposed constitutional amendments, Dr Mahathir said he could not say for the moment.

He said even though the Rulers were to reject them, the government would proceed with the proposed constitutional amendments.

"We'll go ahead. The people's wishes are clear," he said.

"Wherever we go, the people are disenchanted with the rulers who are free to beat up and victimise the people or commit civil offences. This is no longer desirable in the modern world," he said.

Asked whether the government would hold a referendum, Dr Mahathir said : +We have to think what will be our next move. -- more

▼15/01/13-14MST

CNS6697

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LEAD Mahathir-rulers 4 (last) Kuala Lumpur

According to Dr Mahathir, some among the Rulers agreed fully to the amendments but they were pressured into opposing the government's move by brother Rulers who are against it.

The Prime Minister appealed to the people to remain calm as the government would seek ways to resolve the matter.

He dismissed the notion that the issue would "give a new lease of life" to Parti Semangat 46 if the Rulers rejected the amendments.

"Semangat 46 is already half-dead, it'll perish soon. It is headed for doom as well," he said.

Asked on the government's handling of the illegal logging issue, which is very much linked with the istana, the Prime Minister said the government would be strict in the matter.

"If anybody breaks the law, we will take action," he said.-- Bernama

▼15/01/13-32MST