

U GE 17-01 00113 EA668

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Rptng, dropping word "four" in second para

Rulers-accord

MALAY RULERS, GOVT REACH ACCORD ON CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS

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KUALA LUMPUR, Jan 17⁹³ (Bernama) -- The Malay Rulers and the government today reached accord on the proposed constitutional amendments to remove the legal immunity of the Rulers, with both sides agreeing to additions to the amendments.

The agreement was reached at an informal meeting between six of the nine Rulers and government representatives at the Istana Negara, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad told reporters outside the palace gates after the meeting. -- more

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▼17/01/18-43MST

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Rulers-accord 2 Kuala Lumpur

The six Rulers who attended today's meeting were the Yang Dipertuan Besar of Negeri Sembilan, the Raja of Perlis, the Sultan of Terengganu, the Sultan of Pahang, the Regent of Selangor and the Regent of Perak.

The government was represented by Dr Mahathir, Deputy Prime Minister Encik Ghafar Baba and Finance Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim. Attorney-General Tan Sri Abu Talib Othman was also present at the meeting.

Dr Mahathir told reporters that despite the agreement the Rulers could not make an official decision on the amendments today because of the absence of the three other Rulers. -- more

▼17/01/18-44MST

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Rulers-accord 3 Kuala Lumpur

The Sultans of Johor, Kedah and Kelantan did not attend today's meeting.

Dr Mahathir said the official decision of the Rulers would be made at the meeting of the Conference of Rulers tomorrow, which the Sultans of Johor, Kedah and Kelantan are also expected to attend.

Dr Mahathir said the accord was reached after the government agreed to the counter proposal of the Rulers on the draft of the amendments to the Federal Constitution.

The Cabinet will meet tomorrow to discuss the counter proposal of the Rulers, he said, adding that the matter would be discussed at a meeting, also tomorrow, of the Barisan Nasional Supreme Council.

Asked for details of the additions to the amendments, Dr Mahathir said he would announce them tomorrow.

"On our part, I am confident that the Conference of Rulers will endorse the proposed amendments but I do not know about the Rulers' side because two or three of them did not attend (today's meeting) and may have differing views," he said. -- more

▼17/01/18-58MST

CNS7690
U GE 17-01 00190 EA671
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Rulers-accord 4 Kuala Lumpur

The developments today brought relief to many quarters which had feared that the Rulers might reject the proposed amendments and spark off what could become the worst constitutional crisis in modern Malaysian history.

The accord, reached hours before a special sitting of Parliament scheduled for tomorrow to discuss the amendments, put paid to negative speculation on the Rulers' reaction to the government-proposed amendments.

Today's meeting of the Rulers came as a surprise because the official meeting of the Conference of Rulers had been scheduled for tomorrow.

Reporters only came to know of it when Ghafar did not turn up for a scheduled function in Sungai Buloh this afternoon. They learnt he had to go to the Istana Negara.

Sources in the Prime Minister's Department said Dr. Mahathir received a telephone call from the Istana Negara at about 2 pm at his residence.

Yesterday, after an unofficial meeting with the Malay Rulers at the palace, Dr Mahathir said the government saw some chance of a solution to the issue. -- more

▼17/01/19-16MST

CNS7693
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Rulers-accord 5 Kuala Lumpur

The amendments were proposed by the government after a hockey coach, Douglas Gomez, was allegedly beaten by the Sultan of Johor at the Istana Bukit Serene in Johor Baharu.

The incident resulted in an unprecedented public outcry which forced the government to act with firmness.

On Dec 10, Parliament approved a motion tabled by Ghafar expressing concern and regret over the incident and calling on the government to take steps to prevent its recurrence.

As a result, the government decided to amend Article 181 (2) of the Federal Constitution which provides the Rulers immunity from prosecution.

The proposed amendments are also aimed at removing the Rulers' power of pardoning themselves or members of royalty, and allowing MPs and state-assemblymen to debate on matters pertaining to the Rulers in Parliament and the state assemblies, provided they do not call for the abolition of the institution of monarchy. -- more

▼17/01/19-30MST

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Rulers--accord 6 (last) Kuala Lumpur

However, Article 38 (4) of the Federal Constitution prohibits the passing of any law affecting the privileges, position, honours and dignities of the Rulers without the consent of the Conference of Rulers.

Nevertheless, the government had decided to go ahead with the tabling of the Bill in Parliament tomorrow, even without the consent of the Rulers.

Various quarters predicted that this will lead to a constitutional crisis worse than that which occurred in 1983 when the government proposed constitutional amendments under which a bill will become law 30 days after its passage through Parliament or the state assemblies even without getting the royal assent.

Should Parliament tomorrow approve the amendments without the consent of the Conference of Rulers, there is a great possibility that some people will challenge the validity of that law, which is likely to lead to a long court tussle.

Following is the order of events at the Istana Negara relating to the meeting today between the Rulers and government representatives:

- 3.25 pm: The Yang Dipertuan Besar of Negeri Sembilan arrives at the Istana Negara, followed by the Regent of Selangor, the Raja of Perlis, Abu Talib, Anwar, Ghafar, the Sultan of Pahang, Dr Mahathir, and the Sultan of Terengganu.
- 5.46 pm: Dr Mahathir leaves the Istana Negara, followed by Ghafar Anwar and Abu Talib.
- 6.20 pm: The Yang Dipertuan Besar of Negeri Sembilan leaves the Istana Negara, followed by the Raja of Perlis, the Sultan of Pahang, the Sultan of Terengganu and the Regent of Selangor. -- Bernama

17/01/79-49NSP