

Amendments made to proposal to remove legal immunity Six Rulers say 'yes'

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KUALA LUMPUR, Sun. — Four Rulers and two Regents have agreed to the constitutional amendments seeking to remove their legal immunity with some changes to the original Bill which is scheduled to be tabled in the Dewan Rakyat tomorrow.

The agreement was reached at an informal meeting between them and a government delegation led by Prime Minister ~~Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad~~ this afternoon. Dr Mahathir told newsmen after the meeting at Istana Negara that both parties agreed to an amended draft of the proposed amendments.

"The Rulers agreed and we also agreed (on the amendments). But since this is an unofficial meeting, the Rulers cannot give an official endorsement," he said.

An official endorsement can only be given when all the Rulers meet at a formal conference scheduled for tomorrow morning.

Today's meeting was attended by the Sultans of Pahang and Terengganu, the Raja of Perlis, the Yang di-Pertuan Besar of Negeri Sembilan and the Regents of Selangor and Perak.

Absent were the Sultans of Kelantan, Johor and Kedah.

Accompanying Dr Mahathir were his deputy Abdul Ghafar Baba and Fi-

nance Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

Attorney-General Tan Sri Abu Talib Othman was also present to explain the changes to the proposed amendments.

The Prime Minister, who was speaking to newsmen from his car outside the palace, said the meeting was a positive one.

He said the Rulers had made some proposals which he could not reveal although the Government had agreed to them.

Asked whether the Rulers would give their endorsement tomorrow, Dr Mahathir said, "for us it is possible but I do not know about the Rulers. I do not know whether those who were not present at today's meeting will have a different stand."

Asked for details of the changes that had been agreed upon, Dr Mahathir said he would explain these tomorrow.

He said the Cabinet would hold a special meeting tomorrow to discuss the changes.

He said the pre-council meeting of MPs and the special sitting of the Dewan Rakyat to debate on the amendments would proceed as scheduled.

One of the main changes in the Constitution (Amendment) Bill 1993 is the removal of all laws which provide for the immunity of the Rulers in their personal capacity from any proceedings whatsoever in any court, or

Meeting lasts nearly two hours

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attached sanctity to their residences.

It also seeks to shift the power of clemency from the Rulers to the Conference of Rulers, and allowing MPs and State Assemblymen to debate on matters pertaining to the Rulers in Parliament and State Assemblies, provided they do not make statements that can be construed as calling for the abolition of the institution of monarchy.

Today's meeting which

started about 4pm lasted nearly two hours.

It was a follow-up to the informal meeting held yesterday where all seven Rulers and two Regents deferred their decision on the proposed amendments.

The meeting at Istana Negara yesterday was also attended by Dr Mahathir, Ghafar and Anwar. Abu Talib was present at the palace, but did not attend the meeting.

Yesterday, Dr Mahathir said he had asked Abu Talib to come up with a solution

to the issue after the Rulers failed to arrive at a decision.

Abu Talib indicated yesterday that some changes might be made to the proposed amendments but declined to discuss specifics.

The Yang di-Pertuan Besar of Negeri Sembilan was the first to arrive today at 3.25pm followed by the Regent of Selangor, the Raja of Perlis, and the Sultans of Pahang and Terengganu.

Dr Mahathir arrived at 3.52pm while Anwar and Ghafar arrived about seven minutes earlier.