

PM: POINTLESS TO DISCUSS IT

19 JAN 1993

KUALA LUMPUR: The Prime Minister tabled in a special sitting of the Dewan Rakyat yesterday a bill to amend the Constitution on Rulers' immunity, hours after the Conference of Rulers unanimously rejected the amendments.

All nine Rulers were present at the meeting at Istana Negara yesterday morning. Their decision was conveyed to Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad about 10am.

Dr Mahathir told a press conference later that it would be "pointless" for the Government and Rulers to continue discussions over the issue.

"I think there is no longer any point to discuss further this matter.

"If we continue discussion with the Rulers thinking we will get their consent, the agreement will be meaningless if it was not honoured.

"I feel there is nothing else to discuss. The principles (of the amendments) are simple and we have explained all to the Rulers — the removal of Rulers' immunity, Sedition Act and the powers of pardon," he told newsmen at the Parliament lobby.

Dr Mahathir said that the Government had given ample time to the Rulers to deliberate on the amendments.

Dr Mahathir said the Rulers could still give their consent after the bill was passed by Parliament.

"The Rulers can still give thought over this even if the Bill is handed to the King for assent.

"If the King does not give his assent, Parliament will convene again to debate the Bill. And after 30 days it becomes law."

Dr Mahathir said the Government was disappointed with the Rulers' decision in rejecting the amendments because it believed at least six of them had, during discussions on Sunday, agreed.

"But it is different even though the

Chance for MPs to state stand

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that there will be a channel for them to seek redress if any wrong was committed against them.

"Its purpose is to protect the people. We guarantee the people will be protected by the law. However, the existing provisions do not ensure the people are protected. So we are acting to protect the people."

Asked what was the point of going through the process of tabling the amendments when the King would eventually not give his assent, Dr Mahathir

said it would give the MPs an opportunity to state their stand.

"By stating their stand, the Rulers will become aware of the people's feelings. And maybe they will change their minds.

"If we keep quiet just because the Rulers did not give their consent and Parliament is not convened, the Rulers will get an impression that there is no challenge on their stand," he said.

Asked what would happen 30 days after the Bill was debated in Parliament for the second time, Dr Mahathir said the Government would act on the law that was passed.

Government had been accommodating.

"Actually, we had lengthy discussions on the setting up of a special court but it seems the discussions were meaningless," he said.

Dr Mahathir said the Government would still introduce provisions for the special court during the committee stage but because of parliamentary procedures, only the original bill was tabled for first reading.

"We are not unwilling to accept ideas in order to protect the status of the Rulers, like when they suggested to us they should not be tried in an ordinary court and we agreed with them.

"We do not want them to be dragged into court every now and then.

"There will be a special court which is set up entirely for them. This will take care of their status and will also protect the rights of the citizen to seek redress."

On the Rulers' suggestion of an advisory board to recommend the removal of a Ruler before he was tried in court, Dr Mahathir said the Government did not think the idea would work.

Dr Mahathir also said the people should have no cause to worry.

"We are doing this for the people so

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