

# Govt willing to give and take, says Mahathir

By NIZAM ISA

KUALA LUMPUR: The Government is willing to "compromise" with the Rulers on the Constitution amendments so long as the objectives of the amendments are not contradicted, Prime Minister Datuk Seri ~~Dr Mahathir Mohamad~~ said yesterday.

He declined to elaborate on the compromise, saying the Government would not accede to the Rulers' insistence that they were above the law.

"We can't compromise on the principles of the amendments, we can't have a situation where the Rulers can beat up people and commit crime without being punished," he told report-

ers after chairing an Umno Supreme Council meeting.

Asked about the possibility of the Rulers challenging the amendments in court, Dr Mahathir, who is also Umno president, said it was their prerogative to do anything they wanted "as long as it is provided for under the law and the Constitution."

"The Rulers have the right to bring in a Queen's Counsel for their case, but they have to go through the normal procedures like other people," he said.

He added that there would be no special treatment for the Rulers whether it was "for or against" them.

On the media reports about the Rulers' alleged excesses,

the Prime Minister said: "The press is free to report them. All of the Rulers' actions (reported in the media) should not have happened, but they have."

Dr Mahathir also disclosed that the Government spent about RM200 million a year on the Rulers and they still asked for extra allocations in terms of land and other concessions.

He said the Government would continue to have a working relationship with the Rulers.

"It is not true that we are trying to break relations with the Rulers. The Government still communicates with the Rulers when necessary," he added.

Dr Mahathir also said the

Government would not interfere with the Johor Baru magistrate court's decision to free the Tengku Bendahara of Johor Tengku Abdul Majid Idris.

He said the court had the right to make such a ruling.

"If that is a normal court procedure we will not disagree with it.

"We are only against the children of the Rulers enjoying the same immunity as their fathers," he said.

He said the Government would also study whether the Rulers' children were entitled to diplomatic immunity abroad.

"The Government will revoke their diplomatic immunity if this is not stated in the Constitution," he added.