

Dr M: No change in our resolve

Sun. 7 FEB 1993

**By Syed Abu Bakar
and Jeffrey
Ramayah**

KUALA LUMPUR, Sat. — The Government will be firm in its stand on the amendments to the Constitution to remove the Rulers' immunity in their personal capacity, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

He said the Government was confident that in the final analysis, the Constitution (Amendment) Bill 1993 would be approved and enforced.

"We welcome the confidence expressed by the Sultan of Pahang that the issue of the amendments to the Constitution can be resolved at the two-day Conference of Rulers which begins on Wednesday.

"We have to wait for the outcome of the Conference," he told reporters after chairing the Umno supreme council meeting here.

Dr Mahathir, who is also Umno president, said he would not be attending the 159th Conference of Rulers as he would have to attend functions held in conjunction with the four-day official visit of Mauritian Prime Minister Sir Anerood Jugnauth, which starts on Monday.

He said Deputy Prime Minister Ghafar Baba would attend the Conference.

The Sultan of Pahang said yesterday he believed that the confrontation between the Rulers and the Govern-

ment could be settled at the Conference to be chaired by him.

Dr Mahathir said there had been no request from the Rulers for another discussion between them and the Government.

"I have not received any telephone calls or letters," he said.

He said the supreme council discussed the latest developments on the Bill which was approved by both Houses of Parliament last month.

"We feel there has not been any significant development but our stand on the issue remains the same as we are confident that the Bill will finally be approved," he said.

Dr Mahathir said the Government would continue to abide by the provisions of the law and the Constitution and would uphold the constitutional monarchy system as long as it was in power.

"But we cannot give an assurance for future governments which are not administered by the Barisan Nasional," he added.

Dr Mahathir said it was wrong for anyone to say that the issue of the amendments to the Constitution might create disunity among the Malays.

"History has shown that the Malays were divided by opposition political parties which cashed in on specific issues to enhance their political positions," he said.

Dr Mahathir said in all

past dealings with the Rulers, the Government had accommodated their demands.

"We tried out best to be civil and moderate but that did not seem to work.

"We want to give them their rights but we do not want them to do what they are not supposed to do," he said.

He said the practice of the Prime Minister briefing the King on the weekly meetings of the Cabinet was not included in the laws of the country.

"The first Prime Minister of this country, the late Tunku Abdul Rahman, decided that he would brief the King whenever the Cabinet met.

"It has become a tradition.

"The King was given a copy of all Cabinet papers and therefore he was not ignorant of what was discussed at the Cabinet meetings.

"If the King needs to discuss a specific matter he can request that I see him and I will see him," he said.

On the move by a few Rulers to visit the people to explain their refusal to give assent to the amendments, Dr Mahathir said their status was the same as the people and they were free to do so.

"But if they want to engage in politics and campaign against the Government, then we will also campaign and their image will be affected," he said.