

# PM: We will stand firm on the royalty

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THE Government will stand firm in its decision to remove the legal immunity of the Malay Rulers, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said yesterday.

He said the Government is happy with the outcome following the passing of the Constitution (Amendment) Bill 1993 by Parliament.

He added the Bill will eventually become law.

Dr Mahathir was speaking after chairing a three-hour Umno Supreme Council meeting at the party's headquarters in Kuala Lumpur yesterday.

The meeting was to discuss recent developments on the issue of the Constitutional amendments and the move by United Sabah National Organisation (Usno) and Parti Bersatu Sabah (PBS) to form a coalition State Government.

The Dewan Rakyat passed the Bill on the Constitutional amendments on Jan 19 while the Dewan Negara passed it the following day.

Although the Conference of Rulers rejected the Bill on Jan 18, the issue is expected to be discussed at next week's Conference of Rulers.

The meeting will be chaired by the Sultan of Pahang who reportedly expressed confidence the

issue will be resolved soon.

"We welcome the possibility of a settlement," said Dr Mahathir, who gave his assurance that the system of Constitutional Monarchy will continue so long as the present Government is in power.

He said what the Government is doing is only what was required under the law.

"We are going back to normal. In the course of so many years, we have ceded to demands from the royalty. Now, we are only giving them their rights and nothing beyond that."

On the possible coalition between Usno and PBS, Dr Mahathir said Usno will be expelled from the Barisan Nasional if it went along with PBS.

The Prime Minister said that as PBS is an Opposition party, the proposed coalition will be against the interests of the ruling coalition Government.

The *New Straits Times* yesterday reported that leaders of Usno and PBS held a meeting a few days before the Chinese New Year.

At the meeting, Usno was said to have agreed to

join hands with PBS to form a coalition State Government.

Among Usno's requests were a full ministerial post, two assistant minister's posts and several positions as political secretaries.

Last year, there were reports that both parties had met to discuss the formation of a coalition Government, but this was denied by both parties.

PBS president Datuk Joseph Pairin Kitingan yesterday hinted at the coalition when he said such a suggestion should be considered.