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R GE 09-03 00209 EA897

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Parliament-winding up

PM SLAMS PAS FOR NOT SUPPORTING CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS

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KUALA LUMPUR, March 9 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today criticised PAS for placing **the** Rulers above efforts to uphold Islamic principles like limiting the Rulers' immunity.

He said that in Islam Rulers did not have immunity and PAS should support government efforts towards this end.

PAS's action in withholding support for government efforts to limit the Rulers' immunity gave the impression that the party did not hold true to Islam, he said when winding up the debate on the Constitution (Amendment) Bill 1993 at the two-day special sitting of the Dewan Rakyat.

The Bill was approved by the required two-thirds majority with the support of 167 Barisan Nasional, DAP, Parti Bersatu Sabah and Independent MPs. Parti Sernangat 46 boycotted the sitting.

The Prime Minister said: "We do not know where PAS's stand is. If it is guided by religion it should hold to it and not let go but it appears that the party vacillates.

"PAS should whole-heartedly support government efforts to uphold Islam, whatever the means, especially in the issue to limit the Rulers' immunity."
-- more

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Dr Mahathir also took to task PAS Deputy President Haji Hadi Awang for questioning the government's expose of the Rulers' misdemeanours and for alleging that the government did not explain the amendments to the people.

He said the government made public the Rulers' misbehaviour to show the people the rationale behind its move to restrict the Rulers' immunity.

Without this, the people would not appreciate the government's aim to amend the Constitution and there would not realise that there were immoral Rulers, he added.

"Are we willing to come under immoral Rulers?" he asked.

He chided the PAS-led Kelantan government for willing to serve a Ruler who took away an imported car on which duty had not been paid and for condoning his action.

He criticised Kelantan Menteri Besar Haji Nik Aziz Nik ~~Mat~~ for vacillating on the issue.

Nik Aziz supported the amendments at a meeting of Menteri Besar but he changed his stand on his return to Kelantan, he said. -- more

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“Maybe someone influenced him and he had to find a way to justify his opposition, including questioning the government’s action to expose the wrongdoings of the Rulers which he alleged was improper,” he said.

As an Islamic party, DAS should raise the issue of Rulers’ misbehaviour or support government efforts to limit the Rulers’ immunity and not act otherwise, he added.

The Prime Minister said the government, did not mean to erode the rights of the Rulers or despise them, and it had given them an opportunity to defend themselves, including allowing them to appoint two of the five judges of a Special Court meant to try errant Rulers.

The other judges would be the Lord President and the Chief Justices of Malaya and Borneo who were all independent of the government, he added.

Dr Mahathir said the independence of judges was proven when Umno was declared unlawful by the courts on Feb 4, 1988, and the judges who handed down the judgment were even elevated to the Supreme Court.

The government had striven to reduce the Rulers’ doubts on the amendments by making several relaxations, he added. -- more

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He said the people should have confidence in the judges and their independence in making decisions.

However, Dr Mahathir said he felt lucky that Tun Mohamed Suffian Hashim and Tun Salleh Abas were no longer judges because from early on there were indications that their stand was not right.

He said he realised Suffian did not like him because he was the first Prime Minister who was a doctor while his three predecessors were all from the legal field.

With the amendments, the "culture of fear" would not exist among the people, motorists in Johor Baharu no longer fear to drive and the police need not feel intimidated by royal orders, he added.

The government would act firmly against royalty who broke the law, not to gain "political mileage" but to ensure the people were always protected, he said.

Dr Mahathir said the government could not act against the Tengku Mahkota of Johor for allegedly raping a hotel worker in Johor Baharu in 1990 because there was no police report. -- more

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However, the government was still investigating a case involving the Tengku Bendahara of Johor Tunku Mnjid, he added.

He criticised the DAP for suggesting the holding of a referendum when it did not support the bill earlier on grounds of procedure.

He said the DAP proposal could lead to a revolution.

The Barisan Nasional preferred to hold discussions with the Rulers rather than resorting to hasty actions, he added.

The Dewan Rakyat was adjourned. -- Bernama