

# Rulers expected to select next King at meeting

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SUNGAI PETANI, Fri. — The meeting of the Conference of Rulers in Kuala Lumpur next week is expected to decide the successor to Sultan Azlan Shah as the country's next Yang di-Pertuan Agong.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said the subject of the appointment of the next Yang di-Pertuan Agong was among the items on the agenda of the conference.

"I think they (the Rulers) will determine who among them will be the next King," said Dr Mahathir in a Press conference after opening the Prime Granite (Malaysia) Sdn Bhd granite processing factory at Bakar Arang industrial estate here today.

Dr Mahathir was responding to questions by reporters on whether the coming Rulers' Conference would decide on the appointment of the next King.

Dr Mahathir said the appointment would follow the normal procedure.

However, he did not rule out the possibility of an election if there was no consensus among the Rulers on who should succeed Sultan Azlan Shah.

Dr Mahathir said the appointment of the King was totally the Rulers' affair.

"We (Government) are not involved in the matter," he said.

Asked whether the Yang di-Pertuan Besar of Negri Sembilan would succeed Sultan Azlan Shah by virtue of his position as the Deputy Yang di-Pertuan Agong, Dr Mahathir said:

"It is up to the Rulers to find the replacement ... the deputy could ascend to the throne ... any other Ruler could also become the King."

Sultan Azlan Shah's term as the Yang di-Pertuan Agong expires in March. He was elected the ninth Yang di-Pertuan Agong at the 146th session of the Conference of Rulers at Istana Negara on March 2, 1989 and was subsequently installed as the King on Sept 19.

□ PLEASE TURN TO

PAGE 7, COL 3

# PM: Don't allow trivial matters distract us

JAN 1994

□ FROM PAGE ONE

1989. He succeeded the Sultan of Johor.

The Yang di-Pertuan Besar of Negri Sembilan was appointed Deputy King at the same conference.

Asked on the other items on the agenda of the conference, Dr Mahathir said it would be the normal agenda and that he had not received the details.

On whether he would attend the conference, the Prime Minister said: "Most probably, at the time of the conference, I will be in Manila."

Earlier in Bukit Kayu Hitam, Dr Mahathir said the Government was giving serious attention to spiritual development because it did not want the people to lose their moral values like in some developed nations.

Speaking at the laying of the foundation stone of the RM1.26 million Bukit Kayu Hitam mosque, he said although the country was striving towards becoming a developed nation by the year 2020, it would give similar emphasis to spiritual development.

"That is why we have never neglected our commitment towards religious development.

"The country will not ape some developed countries which could be destroyed by moral decay.

"Moral decadence in these countries is very serious with little respect being given to the family and marriage institutions. They fought for freedom until they lose their own values," he said.

Dr Mahathir said a time would come when these developed nations would crumble when they no longer have good moral values.

The Prime Minister also advised the Muslims not to be distracted by trivial matters to the extent of neglecting the bigger issues facing them.

For example, he said, some teachers indulged in

petty things like barring their pupils from laughing and singing but they neglected the major issues that was to enrich the knowledge of their students to strengthen themselves and the religion.

"That's why we are weak. When the Bosnians are tortured and murdered by the Serbs, the Muslims are helpless.

"All they can afford to do is to seek the help of others to save the Bosnians.

"When other people refuse to help, they become disappointed. But actually they should be disappointed with themselves."

Dr Mahathir said some Muslims could not even build their own mosques and had to rely on other people to do it for them.

"We bring people from Morocco and Uzbekistan to build mosques for us. We are fortunate we still have people to help us build our mosques.

"We must acquire knowledge and be masters in various fields," he said.

Dr Mahathir said efforts must be made to prepare the Muslims for development.

"We do not want them to

be frustrated. In many places, when the Muslims become weak, they become frustrated and consequently renounce their religion," he said, adding that this should not have happened.

Also present at the ceremony were Menteri Besar Tan Sri Osman Aroff and Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali.