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Mahathir-Sabah

SABAH CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT WILL BE IN ACCORDANCE WITH LAW

KUALA LUMPUR, Feb 27 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today that the proposed amendment to Sabah Constitution will be done in accordance with the law.

He said there was no necessity for a referendum for such a move as the Constitution permitted changes to be made.

The amendment was needed to curtail the administrative powers of the Sabah Chief Minister, he told reporters at the Kuala Lumpur International Airport in Subang, near here, on his return from a three-day working visit to Japan.

He was asked to comment Parti Bersatu Sabah (PBS) President Datuk Joseph Pairin Kitingan's statement that the government was trying to change state law without consulting the Sabah people.

Pairin also said the opposition PBS may take the matter to the International Court of Justice if the State Constitution was amended.

Dr Mahathir said that in the past the Chief Minister could award timber concessions and contracts without having to consult anybody and could also withdraw them to be given to someone else.

This was not healthy and such powers had caused everybody to want to become chief minister and some others having fear of a chief minister who was not friendly with them, he said.

Dr Mahathir said Pairin did the same thing when he was the chief minister.

He said such a situation did not exist in other states. Other officials and the Cabinet should have the right to modify certain things, he said.

"(It) Cannot be the chief minister's discretion to make people wealthy or to make people poor," he said.

The Prime Minister said the option for rotating the Sabah Chief Minister's post among the three major communities was still open as no decision has been made on the matter.

He said Datuk Salleh Said Keruak would continue as the Chief Minister until the law was changed and for the time being his term would be slightly extended.

"Once we have amended the Constitution, we will make a decision whether to continue to extend his term or to appoint another CM, so the option is still open," he said. -- BERNAMA

AFY YBY