

05 JUL 2001

Mahathir-Kelantan

RULER MAY HAVE OWN REASONS FOR NON-CONSENT TO AMENDMENTS

KUALA LUMPUR, July 5 (Bernama) -- The Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said the Sultan of Kelantan's reported refusal to give consent to recent state constitutional amendments to limit royal powers does not necessarily mean the ruler is taking side with any political party.

"Perhaps he has other reasons and not because he is siding with any political party," Dr Mahathir replied when asked about the matter at a media conference after attending a dialogue with scientists at Seri Kembangan near here today.

Dr Mahathir said the Sultan could have sensed that the motive behind the amendments was unlike the intention of the federal government when it amended the federal constitution relating to the powers of the Malay Rulers several years back.

"What we did then was to check unlawful conduct of rulers. But in this particular case, it appears that it is out of spite over specific matters," Dr Mahathir said.

He was commenting on today's news reports quoting Menteri Besar of opposition-run Kelantan Datuk Nik Aziz Nik Mat as saying that the Sultan was only courting danger if he truly refused to assent to the amendments passed by the state legislature on June 25.

Nik Aziz reportedly said that the ruler's non-consent would create public impression that the Sultan was pressured by a political party not to assent.

In KOTA BAHARU, the Council of Kelantan Justices of Peace (JPs) today asked state leaders to immediately refrain from making statements relating to the amendments that could create unnecessary palace anxiety.

Council president Datuk Sukri Mohamed said there was no necessity for the state government to issue statements one after another if only to mock, pressure and even threaten the Ruler into performing designated royal duties.

"In fact it is the state government's responsibility to defuse any potential tension and instead preserve cordial ties with the palace at all time," he said in a statement, expressing shock and dismay over Nik Aziz's reported remarks.

Rather than continue making such statements, the state leaders should prevent the masses from debating the issue which could erode the people's respect for the Sultan, he said.

The JPs council was alarmed that the issue was overly politicised whereas the institution of the ruler should not have been dragged to serve selfish political interests, he said.

Meanwhile, the Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Dr Rais Yatim said it was up to Nik Aziz whether or not to apply to the federal government to invoke Clause 71 of the Federal Constitution in order for the state constitutional amendments to become law even without the Sultan's consent.

However, Rais said he reckoned that Nik Aziz would not be prompted to submit such an application.

The minister said this when approached by reporters on Nik Aziz's reported statement after opening the 2nd international conference on cyberlaws here today.

Rais reiterated that the Kelantan government could opt to invoke Clause

71 since the state, along with Kedah and Johor have yet to incorporate Schedule 8 of the Federal Constitution relating to changes in the powers and role of the Malay Rulers into their state constitutions.

-- BERNAMA

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