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Role of rulers in picking mentris besar

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A CONCERNED Malaysian has expressed his worry over the role being played by sultans in the appointment of the mentri Besar. His Royal Highnesses have clearly refused to take the advice of the chief minister i.e. the prime minister. Instead, they have chosen on their own a member of the state legislature to head the government.

We hear a lot of opinions on the propriety of the action by the sultan. Some say he has the right to do this while others point out that as a constitutional ruler, he could not do this.

The Constitution says that the ruler or head of state must choose the elected member who enjoys the support of the majority of members in the legislative body to be the prime minister or the mentri besar. Subject to this provision, the ruler it is who chooses and appoints the prime minister or mentri besar.

The prime minister, as prime minister, has no role in the choice of the state mentri besar or *ketua mentri*. His naming of candidate who should be the mentri besar is purely a party matter. Obviously, if the state is captured by the Opposition, he cannot name the candidate.

However, if the ruler chooses someone who does not enjoy majority support, he (MB) could be deposed at a sitting of the legislative body through a vote of "no confidence".

After that, another member can be appointed by the ruler to take his place. But if for some reason, there is no other candidate or the candidate with majority support is considered unsuitable by the ruler, a new government cannot be formed. The ruler may then dissolve the legislative body and a new election may be held.

This new election may lead to the same impasse. The ruler may not like the member with majority support.

However, it should be noted that this kind of thing had never happened during the premiership of the four previous prime ministers. Concerned Malaysians should wonder why.

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