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Mahathir apologises for curtailing king's powers

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KUALA LUMPUR: Former Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad has apologised for amending the Constitution and curtailing the powers of the Yang di-Pertuan Agong.

"I would like to apologise for the amendment to the Constitution which made the approval and signature of the Yang di-Pertuan Agong no longer necessary for the legalising of an act of Parliament.

"It would seem that because of the amendment, the new National Security Council (NSC) law has become operational even though the Yang di-Pertuan Agong has not signed it," Dr Mahathir wrote on his blog Chedet.cc on Thursday.

Under the amendment to the constitution, which was made in 1994 when Dr Mahathir was prime minister, any law passed by Parliament and the Senate would become law within 30 days irrespective of whether the king gives his assent.

However, Dr Mahathir said, there were more than 30 proceedings listed in the constitution that still needed the king's approval, including the power to declare a state of emergency.

He said declaring a state of emergency was reserved for the king because its implications were serious as it gave the government the right to suspend laws and arrest and detain suspects without trial.

Under the NSC Act, a security law that came into force on Aug 1, the

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Former prime minister

prime minister is empowered to declare a security zone that security forces would take over.

The law seeks to strengthen the coordination of intelligence, establish a swift response mechanism, and if it was in the interest of national security, enable the establishment of a security area for six months.

The NSC Act also contains provisions for the protection of civilians and their property as and when they are covered by the establishment of a security area, and also sets limits on the actions of the security forces during that time.