

# PM: Govt decides, monarchs endorse

## Ruling coalition has the last say on who is MB - not royals, says Dr M

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**PETALING JAYA:** Newly-minted Johor Menteri Besar Datuk Dr Sahrudin Jamal has barely had time to work with his new exco line-up, a selection allegedly influenced by the palace, before Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad sent a subtle shot across the bow.

The Prime Minister reminded everyone that it is the government that has the last say on who is menteri besar, not the constitutional monarchs.

In a posting on his blog chedet.cc yesterday titled "The Malaysian Constitution", Dr Mahathir said that the Federal Constitution reigns supreme and no one can violate the rule of law.

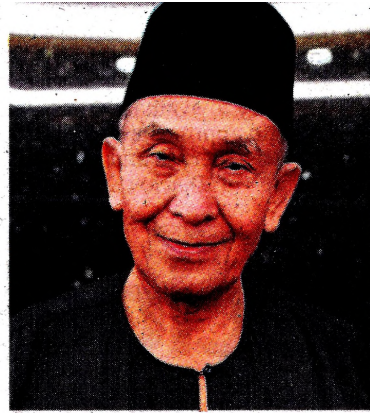
The posting is believed to be a veiled warning to those who interfere with executive appointments by the government of the day.

Not unexpectedly, in an apparent response, Tunku Mahkota Johor Tunku Ismail Sultan Ibrahim posted excerpts of the Federal Constitution on the rights and powers of Rulers on his Facebook page last night.

He posted Article 71(1) which states that the "Federation shall guarantee the right of a Ruler of a State to succeed and to hold, enjoy and exercise the constitutional rights and privileges of Ruler of that State."

The Article also states that any dispute as to the title to the succession as Ruler of any state shall be determined solely by such authorities and in such manner as may be provided by the Constitution of that State.

On Monday night, at a hastily convened Parti Pribumi Bersatu



**New faces:** (From left) Mohd Solihan, Tosrin and Tan

Malaysia meeting, top party leaders said that Dr Mahathir felt slighted by how the new Johor executive committee (exco) line-up was selected.

"He had told Bersatu leaders that there would be no change in the Johor exco despite the appointment of the new MB.

"He then threatened to resign as prime minister, to which all of us unanimously protested," said a party leader who asked not to be named.

Earlier that day, Dr Sahrudin had announced three new faces in the exco line-up, saying that he needed people he could work with.

The three new exco members were Jementah assemblyman Tan Chen Choon from DAP, Tenang assemblyman Mohd Solihan Badri and Bukit Permai assemblyman Tosrin Jarvanthi from Bersatu.

Former Johor menteri besar Datuk Osman Sopian, who tendered his resignation to the Prime Minister on April 8, had said that Johor Ruler Sultan Ibrahim Ibni Almarhum Sultan Iskandar had wanted a

change in the exco line-up.

In his blog posting yesterday, Dr Mahathir recalled the rise of the Malays against the Malayan Union by the British colonisers, forcing them to replace it with the Federation of Malaya.

"It was agreed that Malaya would be a democracy where the people would choose the government.

"The rulers would be constitutional heads without executive power. Their position would be guaranteed by the Constitution, which would be the supreme law of the country.

"The party winning the election would name the Prime Minister (or the Chief Minister - Menteri Besar) and the constitutional head would endorse (it).

"Should the constitutional monarch refuse to endorse and proposes his own candidate and endorses him, the winning party can reject him in the assembly - 'dewan', through a vote of no confidence.

"The constitutions of Johor and Terengganu which were promulgated earlier were nullified by the

new constitution which was accepted by all the states of Malaysia.

"Accordingly on May 9, 1958, the people of Malaysia went to the polls to elect the governments of (the Federation) Malaysia and the governments of the states.

"It is important that everyone concerned respects the Constitution and abide by it. Failure to do so would negate the rule of law," said Dr Mahathir.

On the Bersatu special meeting on Monday night, Bersatu leaders also refuted speculation that there was tension between Dr Mahathir and Bersatu president Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin.

"It is not true that they say that Dr Mahathir and Muhyiddin are locking heads over the Johor exco line-up and that there is a tussle between the two," said the party source.

The source farther said that Dr Mahathir sometimes tends to fall back into his "old 1980s mode" when, as the fourth Prime Minister, he had the last say on everything.

"Muhyiddin had agreed to the changes after consulting the Sultan

of Johor and Dr Sahrudin, as he wanted to cushion the strong stance Dr Mahathir seems to have taken against the royalty," said the source.

The source was referring to Dr Mahathir having been upset over the recent forced retraction of Malaysia's ratification of the United Nations International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination and the Rome Statute.

The Rome Statute covers the International Criminal Court, which seeks to prosecute those guilty of serious crimes like genocide when their governments are unable or unwilling to do so.

The Malay Rulers had opposed Malaysia's ratification of the Rome Statute, citing interference in their sovereignty.

The Bersatu source further pointed out that Johor is Muhyiddin's territory as he was the MB there for some years and knows how to deal with the Johor Palace.

"Muhyiddin is the man who set up Bersatu but he has always been the one standing two steps behind Dr Mahathir. There is no doubting his loyalty to the premier, despite his correspondence with the Palace," said the source.

Another source, who was present at the special meeting on Monday night, said that Dr Mahathir did offer to step down if "no one wants to listen to him".

"There was no drama. He just said it as a slighted old man would, when he is sidelined.

"Of course there are some 'moles' out to destabilise the party but those who are creating a storm in the teacup over last Monday's meeting are merely singing the song in the background of a Hindi movie to further dramatise it," alleged the source.