

# All eyes on 'first meeting between Johor sultan and Dr M'

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**JOHOR BARU:** Sultan of Johor Sultan Ibrahim Sultan Iskandar is expected to grant an audience to Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad at Istana Bukit Serene here on Thursday.

Sources told the New Straits Times Press that the meeting is in the ruler's schedule and will involve Dr Mahathir's wife, Tun Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali.

It will be the first meeting between the ruler and Dr Mahathir since he became prime minister

following the 14th General Election last year.

A source said the agenda of the meeting was unknown.

However, it will be highly anticipated as the Malay rulers are in the process of naming the next king following the resignation of Sultan Muhammad V on Sunday.

"Dr Mahathir and his wife have been granted an audience with the Sultan of Johor on Jan 10. The agenda of the meeting is unknown, but it will be an event that

is closely watched.

"This will be the first time that the prime minister has been granted an audience with the Johor ruler since the change in the federal government last year.

"The prime minister has yet to officially meet the sultan since assuming office last year, so this is the first meeting for them," the source told NSTP.

Sultan Ibrahim and Dr Mahathir had been embroiled in highly-publicised disagreements

prior to the change in government on May 9.

In August 2016, Dr Mahathir had criticised Johor's "Bangsa Johor" unity concept as he claimed that it could lead to residents of a state feeling superior to those in other states.

This earned a rebuke from Sultan Ibrahim, who told off Dr Mahathir for allegedly not knowing the history of the concept.

In October last year, Dr Mahathir equated the people of

Bugis-descent to "pirates" when referring to former prime minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak.

Sultan Ibrahim, who is of Bugis descent, later said he felt "slighted" by Dr Mahathir's statement.

At the time, the Johor ruler's sentiment was shared by another ruler of Bugis ancestry, Sultan Sharafuddin Idris Shah of Selangor, who said Dr Mahathir's statement could incite hatred and prejudice against the Bugis community.