

(EMBARGO: FOR RELEASE AT 5 P.M. JULY 15), 1983

ON THE PM'S OFFICIAL RESIDENCE

Q: DATUK, AS A RESULT OF THE OPEN GOVERNMENT AND YOU DOING A LOT OF TALKING, THE RAKYAT IS ALSO DOING A LOT OF TALKING. ONE OF THE THINGS THEY TALK ABOUT IS YOUR RESIDENCE, THE PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICIAL RESIDENCE. ALL SORTS OF COSTING HAVE BEEN GIVEN BY THE PUBLIC : SOME RUNNING TO SOMETHING LIKE \$80 MILLION. WOULD YOU LIKE TO PUT THE RECORD STRAIGHT ON THIS MATTER ?

A: I REGRET VERY MUCH FOR AGREEING TO THIS THING. IF I KNEW IT WAS GOING TO COST SO MUCH, I WOULD NOT HAVE HAD IT AT ALL. I COULD HAVE STAYED AT TUN RAZAK'S HOUSE (SRI TAMAN). WHEN I DECIDED TO MOVE INTO THIS HOUSE (FORMER SRI TIMAH), THE HOUSE WAS JUST STANDING THERE. ALL I NEED WAS TO ADD ONE OR TWO ROOMS. UNFORTUNATELY, THE BUILDING WAS SUCH THAT ONCE THEY TOOK OFF THE ROOF, THE WALLS TOO COLLAPSED AND FINALLY THE JKR SAID WE COULD NOT ADD THE ROOMS, THE HOUSE HAD TO BE PULLED DOWN. ALL THIS WAS DECIDED BEFORE THE AUSTERITY DRIVE. I THINK TOO MUCH MONEY HAS BEEN SPENT ON THE HOUSE. WHATEVER THE AMOUNT THEY ARE SPENDING ON IT, IT MUST BE MUCH MORE THAN WHAT THE COUNTRY SHOULD BE SPENDING ON A PRIME MINISTER'S RESIDENCE. BUT I'M TOLD THAT THIS IS THE PRIME MINISTER'S RESIDENCE AND IT IS NOT MY HOUSE.

--MORE 0850/BW

ZCZC NO20 (F/S)

MAHATHIR-INTERVIEW (RESIDENCE) 2 KUALA LUMPUR

WHILE I CAN DETERMINE CERTAIN THINGS, I CANNOT DETERMINE WHERE FUTURE PRIME MINISTERS SHOULD LIVE AND THIS IS ALSO MEANT FOR THE PUBLIC, NOT JUST ME. MOST OF THE ROOMS ARE ACTUALLY PUBLIC ROOMS. THEREFORE, IT MUST BE MADE COMMENSURATE WITH THE HEAD OF THE GOVERNMENT IN THE COUNTRY, NOT WITH DR. MAHATHIR. MY REGRET IS THAT THEY CAN'T BRING THE COST DOWN AND THIS IS SIMPLY BECAUSE THEY HAVE TO PUT UP POLICE BARRACKS : THEY HAVE TO PUT UP SERVANT QUARTERS, THEY HAVE TO PUT IN PARKING PLACES AND PUBLIC ROOMS FOR THE GUESTS. I WOULD NOT BE LIVING IN THESE PUBLIC ROOMS. I'LL BE LIVING UPSTAIRS IN MY ROOM AND I BUY MY OWN FURNITURE. I DON'T ASK THE GOVERNMENT TO BUY MY FURNITURE AND I'VE ALSO TRANSFERRED SOME OF THE FITTINGS FOR THE OTHER HOUSE TO THIS HOUSE. BUT DESPITE DOING ALL THIS, I STILL CONSIDER THE COST TOO HIGH. IT HAS RUN IN TO SEVERAL MILLIONS RINGGIT. BUT AGAIN HERE I WAS TOLD THAT EVEN A HOUSE IN KENNY HILL COSTS TWO MILLION RINGGIT WHICH IS NOT FIT FOR THE PRIME MINISTER, ACCORDING TO SOME PEOPLE. IN STAND CORRECTED ON THIS. IF PEOPLE FEEL THAT I SHOULDN'T LIVE IN THAT HOUSE, I'M QUITE WILLING TO CONTINUE TO STAY WHERE I'M STAYING NOW. IT MAKES NO DIFFERENCE TO MY WORK. BUT OF COURSE THIS THING (THE NEW HOUSE) MAY BE TURNED INTO A MUSEUM. WE ALREADY HAVE SEVERAL GUEST HOUSES BELONGING TO THE GOVERNMENT WHICH WE HAVE TO MAINTAIN. I LEAVE IT TO THE PUBLIC, IF THEY FEEL THAT I SHOULDN'T MOVE, I'LL NOT MOVE. IT'S VERY SIMPLE.

Q: SO IT IS NOW COMPLETELY A NEW STRUCTURE ON THE RECOMMENDATION OF THE JKR? THE OLD BUILDING CANNOT BE USED ?

A: CANNOT BE USEDIN FACT THEY TRIED TO RETAIN ONE BEAM OF THE OLD BUILDING. THE ONLY THING THAT HAPPENED WAS THAT, THE WHOLE THING JUST CRACKED AND CRUMBLLED. IT'S AN OLD BUILDING MADE ALMOST ENTIRELY OF SAND AND MORTAR AND NO STEEL.

--MORE 0857/BW

MAHATHIR-INTERVIEW (RESIDENCE) 3 KUALA LUMPUR

Q: BUT DATUK, IT'S NOWHERE NEAR 580 MILLION, NOWHERE NEAR DOUBLE DIGIT?

A: NO, IT'S NOT. BUT FROM MY POINT OF VIEW EVEN IF IT'S LESS THAN \$10 MILLION, I STILL THINK THAT IT IS EXPENSIVE. I DON'T DESERVE TO HAVE A HOUSE LIKE THAT. BUT IT HAS BEEN COMMITTED BECAUSE THEY WANT TO PREPARE THE GROUNDS TO ACCOMMODATE 5,000 PEOPLE FOR RECEPTIONS. THAT'S THE NUMBER OF PEOPLE I ENTERTAIN SOMETIMES. - BERNAMA 0859/BW

ZCZC N022 (F/S)
MAHATHIR - RESIDENCE

(EMBARGO: FOR RELEASE AT 5 P.M. JULY 15)

BY REJAL ARBEE AND ABDUL RAHMAN SULAIMAN

KUALA LUMPUR, JULY 15 (BERNAMA)-- DATUK SERI DR. MAHATHIR MOHAMAD SAYS HE IS PREPARED TO GIVE UP THE IDEA OF MOVING INTO THE PRIME MINISTER'S NEW OFFICIAL RESIDENCE HERE IF THE PEOPLE ARE AGAINST IT.

THE RESIDENCE, THE FORMER SRI TIMAH WHICH THE GOVERNMENT BOUGHT FROM THE MALAYSIAN MINING CORPORATION AND IS NOW BEING RENNOVATED, HAS BEEN THE SUBJECT OF RUMOUR-MONGERING BY SOME CIRCLES WHO CLAIMED THAT A HUGE SUM OF MONEY IS BEING SPENT FOR THE RENOVATION WORK.

THE PRIME MINISTER SAID IN A SPECIAL INTERVIEW ON THE OCCASION OF HIS SECOND YEAR IN OFFICE HERE: "IF PEOPLE FEEL THAT I SHOULDN'T LIVE IN THAT HOUSE, I'M QUITE WILLING TO CONTINUE STAYING WHERE I'M NOW. IT MAKES NO DIFFERENCE TO MY WORK. I LEAVE IT TO THE PUBLIC. IF THEY FEEL THAT I SHOULDN'T MOVE, I'LL NOT MOVE. IT'S VERY SIMPLE," HE SAID IN REPLY TO A QUESTION ON THE MATTER RAISED DURING THE INTERVIEW.

DATUK SERI DR. MAHATHIR SAID HE REGRETTED THAT HE AGREED TO THE IDEA IN THE FIRST PLACE, SAYING THAT IF HE KNEW IT WAS GOING TO COST SO MUCH HE WOULD NOT HAVE AGREED AT ALL.
--MORE 0900/BW

ZCZC N023 (F/S)
MAHATHIR-RESIDENCE 2 KUALA LUMPUR

+I COULD HAVE STAYED AT JUN RAZAK'S HOUSE (SRI TAMAN WHICH HAS BEEN TURNED INTO A MUSEUM). WHEN I DECIDED TO MOVE INTO THIS HOUSE, THE HOUSE WAS JUST STANDING THERE. ALL I NEED WAS TO ADD ONE OR TWO ROOMS.

+UNFORTUNATELY, THE BUILDING WAS SUCH THAT ONCE THEY TOOK OFF THE ROOF, THE WALLS TOO COLLAPSED AND FINALLY THE JKR SAID WE CANNOT ADD ROOMS, THE HOUSE HAD TO BE PULLED DOWN,+ HE SAID.

THE PRIME MINISTER SAID THE RENOVATION WAS MADE ON THE RECOMMENDATION OF THE PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT BEFORE THE CURRENT ECONOMY DRIVE.

+(THEY SAY) IT MUST BE MADE COMENSURATE WITH THE STATUS OF THE HEAD OF THE GOVERNMENT OF THE COUNTRY. MY REGRET IS THAT THEY CAN'T BRING THE COST DOWN AND THIS IS SIMPLY BECAUSE THEY HAVE TO PUT UP THE POLICE BARRACKS, THEY HAVE TO PUT IN SERVANT QUARTERS, THEY HAVE TO PUT IN PARKING PLACE FOR GUESTS AND PUBLIC ROOMS FOR THE GUESTS,+ HE SAID.

DATUK SERI DR. MAHATHIR DID NOT GIVE THE ACTUAL COST OF THE RENNOVATION BUT DENIED ALLEGATIONS WHICH GIVE THE FIGURE AS CLOSE TO \$80 MILLION. - MORE 0904/BW

ZCZC N024 (F/S)
MAHATHIR-RESIDENCE 3 KUALA LUMPUR

HE SAID:+EVEN IF IT'S LESS THAN \$10 MILLION, I STILL THINK IT'S EXPENSIVE. I DON'T DESERVE TO HAVE A HOUSE LIKE THAT. BUT IT HAS BEEN COMMITTED BECAUSE THEY WANT TO PREPARE THE GROUNDS FOR RECEPTION FOR UP TO 5,000 PEOPLE. THAT'S THE NUMBER OF PEOPLE I ENTERTAIN SOMETIMES,+ HE SAID.
BERNAMA J 0808/BW