

MAHATHIR - INTERVIEW

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KUALA LUMPUR, DEC. 16 (BERNAMA) -- BERNAMA REPORTER IDZAN ISMAIL WAS TODAY GRANTED AN INTERVIEW WITH PRIME MINISTER (DATUK SERI DR. MAHATHIR MOHAMAD, ON THE SIGNING OF THE CONSTITUTION AMENDMENT BILL, ON BOARD THE EXECUTIVE JET WHILE RETURNING HERE AFTER A SHORT VISIT TO TERENGGANU.

FOLLOWING IS THE TRANSCRIPT OF THE INTERVIEW:

Q: CONGRATULATIONS DATUK. THE PEOPLE ARE HAPPY AND I PRESUME YOU TOO ARE HAPPY.

A: THANK YOU TOO. (SMILE). BUT MOST OF ALL THANKS TO THE PEOPLE.

Q: AS A PRIME MOVER OF THE CONSTITUTION AMENDMENT BILL, WHAT WAS YOUR IMMEDIATE REACTION WHEN YOU GOT THE WORD FROM THE ISTANA (ON ITS SIGNING YESTERDAY)?

A: I WAS RELIEVED, THAT'S ALL.

Q: WHEN DID YOU HEAR OF THE NEWS?

A: AT 1 P.M. YESTERDAY.

Q: TO WHOM DO YOU ATTRIBUTE FOR THE SUCCESS IN SECURING THE ROYAL ASSENT.

A: EVERYBODY INCLUDING THE PEOPLE.

Q: COMING TO YOU, WHAT DOES THIS SIGNIFY TO YOU, HAVING SAID THAT YOU ARE RELIEVED.

A: FIRSTLY I FEEL RELIEVED BECAUSE OTHERWISE THIE WILL DRAG ON AND IN THE PROCESS THINGS MIGHT BE SAID AND DONE WHICH CANNOT BE UNDONE.

Q: THE TIMBALAN YANG DI-PERTUAN AGONG HAS MADE A STATEMENT SAYING THAT YOU HAD PROMISED TO AMEND SOME OF THE CONTROVERSIAL PROVISIONS IN THE BILL.

A: WELL, IT IS AS STATED IN THE ISTANA STATEMENT. --MORE 1805/MD

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Q: IT IS NOT QUITE CLEAR.

A: WELL, WHAT I HAVE DONE IS TO PUT DOWN IN WRITING IN LAYMAN'S TERMS THE SOLUTION TO THE PROBLEM, IN TERMS OF FORTIFYING THE AMENDMENTS AND AS THE RULERS WANT AN UNDERTAKING THAT THIS WILL BE DONE, I GAVE A WRITTEN UNDERTAKING. WE WILL CARRY OUT WHAT WE PROMISED TO DO.

Q: RIGHT NOW AS THINGS STAND, THE AMENDMENTS PASSED BY PARLIAMENT HAVE BEEN GAZETTED?

A: YES THEY ARE GAZETTED, AND THEY ARE OPERATIVE NOW.

Q: WHEN THE RAJA MUDA OF PERAK MET YOU TO PRESENT THE COUNTER -- PROPOSALS, YOU SAID THE GOVERNMENT GAVE ITS VIEWS TO BE CONVEYED TO THE RULERS. CAN YOU TELL US THE EVENTS LEADING TO THE ROYAL ASSENT YESTERDAY?

A: WE GAVE A WRITTEN PROPOSAL AND THEY STUDIED THE PROPOSAL AND MADE CERTAIN COUNTER -- PROPOSALS. WE EXPRESSED OUR VIEWS ON THESE COUNTER -- PROPOSALS AND AS YOU KNOW, FINALLY OF COURSE, THE RULERS ACCEPTED THE WRITTEN PROPOSALS THAT WE HAVE MADE THAT'S ALL. THERE WAS NO MODIFICATION TO THESE PROPOSALS.

Q: THE PROPOSALS YOU MADE IN YOUR LETTER TO THE YANG DI-PERTUAN-AGONG ON DEC. 9?

A: YES. --MORE 1820/MD

Q: HOW MUCH DOES IT DIFFER FROM THE ORIGINAL PROPOSAL?

A: SUBSTANTIALLY, IT WAS THE SAME AS OUR UNDERTAKING AS PRESENTED BY ENCIK GHAFAR (AT THE MEETING BETWEEN UMNO AND RULERS AT BUKIT KAYANGAN SHAH ALAM ON NOV. 20)

Q: THE STATEMENT BY THE TIMBALAN YANG DI-PERTUAN AGONG SAID THAT THE BRINGING INTO FORCE OF THE BILLSUBJECT TO THE UNDERTAKING BEING SUBSEQUENTLY IMPLEMENTED, WILL PROVIDE A TEMPORARY SOLUTION TO THE PRESENT DIFFICULTY. BETWEEN NOW AND JANUARY WILL THERE BE ANY FURTHER NEGOTIATIONS?

A: NO, THERE WILL BE NOE MORE NEGOTIATION.

Q: SO, TO YOU THIS MATTER IS FINAL.

A: YES, NOT ONLY TO ME BUT THE RULERS' STAND ON THIS TOO IS FINAL. THEY HAVE SIGNED THEM. WE HAVE GIVEN AN UNDERTAKING TO AMEND THE AMENDMENTS ALONG THE LINES THAT I HAVE OUTLINED. SO THERE IS NO MORE NEGOTIATION.

Q: THE COMING AMENDMENT TO BE TABLED IN PARLIAMENT IS TO UPHOLD PARLIAMENTARY DEMOCRACY AND CONSTITUTIONAL MONARCY?

A: RIGHT.

Q: WHAT IF DURING THIS COMING MONTH, THEY (THE RULERS) STILL DO NOT AGREE?

A: WELL, THEY HAVE ALREADY AGREED. THERE IS NO QUESTION OF DISAGREEING.

Q: YOU SAID IN PORT KELANG, THAT YOU WERE FACING PROBLEMS BECAUSE OF PRESENTLY THERE WAS NO CLEAR SEPARATION OF POWERS.DOES IT MEAN THAT THIS IS NOW SOLVED?. --MORE 1830/MD

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A: IT WILL BE SOLVED. NOW IT IS VERY CLEAR. EVEN AFTER THE AMENDMENTS TO THE AMENDMENTS ARE MADE, THAT VAGUENESS WILL NO LONGER BE THERE.

Q: WILL THIS BE IN WRITING OR JUST A VERBAL ASSURANCE?

A: THE POINT IS THAT THE VAGVAGUENESS WILL NO LONGER BE THERE.

Q: ON TOMORROW'S UMNO SUPREME COUNCIL MEETING, WILL YOU DECIDE ON THE DATE WHEN THE SPECIAL SESSION OF THE PARLIEMANT BE HELD.

A: WE WILL DECIDE ON THE DATE WHEN THE DEWAN WILL SIT.

Q: WILL THERE BE A SIMULTANEOUS SITTING OF THE DEWAN RAKYAT AND THE DEWAN NEGARA?

A: WE WILL DECIDE TOMORROW. I WILL ALSO INFORM THE UMNO SUPREME COUNCIL MEMEBRS ON THE RESULT NOW. THE MEETING WAS CALLED IN ORDER TO INFORM THE COUNCIL ON THE RESULTS ACHIEVED BY THE TIME THE MAJLIS TERTINGGI MEETS.

Q: BACK TO THE SPECIAL SITTING, WILL IT BE HELD BEFORE YOU LEAVE FOR UNITED STATES EARLY NEXT YEAR.

A: YES, THERE'S PLENTY OF TIME.

Q: IN THE MEANTIME, WILL YOU BE GOING ROUND TO EXPLAIN TO THE PEOPLE?

A: WELL, UMNO AS WELL AS BARISAN NASIONAL WILL HAVE TO EXPLAIN TO THE PEOPLE. AT AN APPROPRIATE TIME, I WILL CALL ON A BARISAN NASIONAL MEETING TO EXPLAIN TO THEM. I HAVEN'T DECIDED YET WHEN TO HOLD THE MEETING.

Q: BUT THE MEETING WILL ALSO BE ON.

A: WELL, WE HAVE TO HAVE A MEETING. IT IS NOT TO SAY THAT THEY HAVE NOT BEEN INFORMED. THEIR LEADERS HAVE BEEN INFORMED, THEY ARE FULLY AWARE. BUT A FORMAL MEETING OF THE BARISAN NASIONAL HAS NOT BEEN HELD. --MORE 1842/MD

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Q: SOME PEOPLE CLAIM CREDIT THAT THEY PLAYED A ROLE IN RESOLVING THE PROBLEM. CAN YOU SET THE RECORD STRAIGHT.?

A: WELL, THEY CAN CLAIM WHAT THEY LIKE. ANYONE CAN MAKE ANY CLAIM. BUT I THINK YOU ARE THE BEST JUDGE, SO ARE THE PEOPLE. YOU HAVE BEEN FOLLOWING THIS THING VERY CLOSELY.

Q: NOW THAT THIS HAS BEEN SETTLED, WHAT IS YOUR MESSAGE TO THE PEOPLE?

A: THEY SHOULD REMAIN CALM. THEY SHOULD BE THANKFUL TO GOD THAT THIS PROBLEM HAS BEEN SOLVED. AS I HAVE SAID PREVIOUSLY, THE PROBLEM WILL BE SOLVED IN THE USUAL MALAYSIAN WAY AND AS YOU CAN SEE, IT WAS.

Q: AS FAR AS I CAN REMEMBER, THIS IS THE FIRST TIME THAT AN AMENDMENT TO AN AMENDMENT IS MADE AND BROUGHT AGAIN TO PARLIAMENT.

A: NO, NO. THAT BILL IS NOT BROUGHT TO PARLIAMENT AGAIN. THAT BILL IS NOW THE LAW. A NEW BILL IS COMING UP. THERE SHOULD BE NO MISTAKE ABOUT THIS. THERE IS NO QUESTION OF BRINGING BACK A BILL AND AMENDING IT. THERE IS GOING TO BE A NEW BILL THAT IS AN AMENDMENT TO THIS BILL. THAT IS DIFFERENT. WE ARE NOT TAKING THE BILL BACK BECAUSE THERE IS NO PROVISION IN THE CONSTITUTION FOR TAKING THE BILL BACK TO PARLIAMENT IF IT IS NOT SIGNED. SO A BILL PASSED BY PARLIAMENT, ACCORDING TO THE LAW MUST BE MADE VALID AND MUST BE EFFECTIVE. NOW THAT BILL IS EFFECTIVE. THERE IS NOTHING TO PREVENT THE GOVERNMENT FROM PRESENTING THE NEW BILL WHICH AMENDS THE OLD BILL. AFTER ALL, WHEN WE AMEND THE CONSTITUTION, THAT IS PRECISELY WHAT WE ARE DOING - WE HAVE PRESENTED A NEW BILL TO AMEND THE CONSTITUTION. SO NOW, THAT AMENDMENT HAS BECOME A PART OF THE CONSTITUTION. -- MORE 1855/SA

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A NEW BILL WILL NOW BE BROUGHT TO PARLIAMENT AND THAT BILL WILL AMEND THE CONSTITUTION. IT IS THAT PART OF IT THAT HAS BEEN RECENTLY AMENDED. BUT THERE ARE 20 OTHER AMENDMENTS TO THE CONSTITUTION WHICH ARE NOW PART AND PARCEL OF THE CONSTITUTION. SO THERE IS NO FIRST TIME. THIS HAS BEEN DONE BEFORE. WE ARE FOLLOWING EXACTLY THE PREVIOUS PRACTICE. WE ARE CALLING A SPECIAL MEETING IN ORDER TO MAKE THIS AMENDMENT TO THE AMENDMENT TO THE CONSTITUTION. OF COURSE, WE HAVE HAD SPECIAL MEETINGS BEFORE SO THIS IS NOT UNUSUAL.

Q: ONE OF THE PROVISIONS IN THE AMENDMENT IS THE SETTING UP OF A SUPREME COURT. DOES THIS MEAN THAT WILL BE NO MORE APPEAL TO THE HIGH COURT.

A: NO, THAT IS AN ENABLING PROVISION. THE USUAL ADMINISTRATIVE ACTION WILL HAVE TO BE TAKEN IN ORDER TO IMPLEMENT THAT PROVISION. SIMILARLY, THE APPOINTMENT OF TWO DEPUTY SPEAKERS WILL NOT BE DONE IMMEDIATELY. IT WILL BE DONE IN DUE COURSE. -- BERNAMA 1900/SA