

# CRISIS HAS MADE UMNO MORE SOLID.

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## SAYS DR M

KUALA LUMPUR, Tues. — The Constitution amendments issue has helped Umno to become "even more solid," according to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

He said in an interview the issue was not such "a major issue as to split" Umno.

The issue was resolved with a compromise between the Rulers and the Government.

Under the compromise, the Rulers recognised the supremacy of Parliament in federal legislation and the Prime Minister agreed to withdraw two other controversial provisions in the Bill.

The first relates to Article 66(5) which says that any Bill passed by Parliament would become law 15 days after it is presented to the Yang di-Pertuan Agong for the Royal assent.

This will now be amended to extend the deadline to 30 days under a new Bill to be

### N.G. NAIR of AFP interviews Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad

presented next month. The new Bill will also contain a provision allowing the King to register his disapproval with any Bill after which it would be taken back to Parliament and if still passed, would become law after 30 days with or without Royal assent.

The provisions that were withdrawn relate to Article 150 and the Eighth Schedule. Article 150 deals with the power to declare an Emergency and had been amended with the words Prime Minister being substituted for Yang di-Pertuan Agong. This will now revert back to its original form.

The Eighth Schedule deals with the matter of Royal assent at the State level. This will now revert to what it was originally.

The Constitution (Amendment) Bill, passed by Parliament in August, was given Royal assent by the Timbalan Yang di-Pertuan Agong on Dec. 15.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said he was sorry that, though the problem was a "simple matter," it was "unfortunately dragged out. It became a conflict where there should not have been one. It should not have become a crisis," he said.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said the heat generated by the controversy would certainly influence the country's political thinking "in one way or another."

He did not, however, think it would be a major issue at the Umno general assembly scheduled for May.

The assembly will include elections for all party posts, including that of president and deputy president, a post currently held by Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Musa Hitam.

Asked about the impact of the Constitution amendments issue on these elections, especially as there were groups in the party opposed to the amendments, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir, who is also the party president, said:

"I think it would not be a decisive issue. It will, of course, influence the thinking of the people one way or the other. But it is not such a major issue as to split Umno as some people have been predicting.

"I think the experience (of going through the crisis) has made Umno even more solid."

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir has summoned a special session of both Houses of Parliament on Jan. 9 and 10 for ratification of the compromise through another Constitution amendment.