

MAHATHIR-INTERVIEW

BY IDZAN ISMAIL

84 (P)
KUALA LUMPUR, MAY 22 (BERNAMA) -- THE PRIME MINISTER / DATUK SERI DR. MAHATHIR MOHAMAD, YESTERDAY GRANTED A SPECIAL INTERVIEW TO BERNAMA ON THE EVE OF THE UMNO GENERAL ASSEMBLY THIS WEEK.

FOLLOWING IS THE TRANSCRIPT OF THE INTERVIEW:-

Q: TOO MANY UMNO PERSONALITIES ARE CONTESTING FOR THE VARIOUS PARTY POSTS THIS TIME... 178 PEOPLE FOR 53 POSTS TO BE EXACT. WHY DO YOU THINK THIS IS SO?

P M: WELL, ATTITUDES HAVE CHANGED AND TODAY PEOPLE SEE A LOT OF PRESTIGE AND EVEN POWER, TO BE GAINED BY WINNING A SEAT IN THE UMNO POLICY MAKING BODY. IT'S NOT JUST THE POLICY. IT IS THE PERKS THAT COME WITH IT. PEOPLE SEE IN THE POST NOT ONLY AN OPPORTUNITY TO SERVE AND HELP IN THE MAKING OF POLICIES THAT WOULD BE BENEFICIAL TO MALAYS IN PARTICULAR AND TO THE COUNTRY IN GENERAL BUT THEY ALSO SEE A LOT OF PRESTIGE AND OPPORTUNITY COMING WITH THE POST. THEREFORE, WE NOW HAVE A MIXTURE OF PEOPLE -- SOME WHO WISH TO SERVE AND SOME TO GET THE OPPORTUNITY;

Q: THERE ARE POLITICAL HAS-BEENS, PEOPLE WHO DO NOT COMMAND THE SUPPORT OF THE BRANCHES AND SOME WHO ARE VIRTUALLY UNKNOWN; JOINING THE FRAY. DO YOU SHARE THE VIEW THAT SOME ARE UNNECESSARILY CONTESTING?

-- MORE 0800/AZ

MAHATHIR-INTERVIEW 2 KUALA LUMPUR

PM: ONE COULD SAY **QUITE OBVIOUSLY** THERE ARE SOME **PEOPLE WHO OBVIOUSLY WILL NOT WANT TO HAVE DECIDED TO CONTEST** FOR REASONS KNOWN ONLY TO **THEMSELVES**. THAT I THINK IS **QUITE UNNECESSARY**. BUT OF COURSE **DIFFERENT PEOPLE HAVE DIFFERENT VIEWS** AS TO WHAT IS NECESSARY.

Q: **THIS EAGERNESS TO CONTEST IS INDEED A DEPARTURE FROM THE 'OLD' DAYS. AS YOU MENTIONED, IN ONE OF YOUR SPEECHES, DURING THE EARLY DAYS, UMNO MEMBERS HAD TO BE COAXED TO CONTEST. BUT TODAY, SOME ARE OFFERING THEMSELVES AS CANDIDATES. CAN YOU EXPLAIN THIS CHANGE IN ATTITUDE?**

PM: **BEFORE, SOCIETY WAS VERY SHY. THAT THEY HAVE OVERCOME THIS SHYNESS IS A VERY GOOD THING. BUT A TOTAL LACK OF SHYNESS, LIKE ALL THINGS WHICH ARE EXTREME IS BAD. YOU SEE THIS HAPPENING ALSO IN THE COMMUNITY WHERE PEOPLE NOW DO NOT MIND DRESSING IN A VERY ODD FASHION IN PUBLIC BECAUSE THIS IS THE VALUE THAT IS ACCEPTED NOW. IN THE PAST TO BE DIFFERENT FROM OTHERS WAS NOT WELCOME BUT NOW IT IS WELCOME. THEREFORE, YOU SEE THE SAME PHENOMENA IN POLITICS. PEOPLE PUSHING THEMSELVES FORWARD.**

Q: **YOU HAD REPEATEDLY SAID THAT THE SECOND ECHELON LEADERS SHOULD BE GIVEN THE OPPORTUNITY TO PROVE THEMSELVES FIRST BEFORE TRYING TO MOVE UP. BUT WE NOW SEE SOME TRYING... ARE NOT SOME OF THEM BEING TOO AMBITIOUS TO MOVE UP THE POLITICAL LADDER, IN FACT TOO FAST TOO SOON?**

-- MORE 0803/AZ

ZCZC NO11 (F/S/)

MAHATHIR-INTERVIEW 3 KUALA LUMPUR

PM: **WELL, WHEN ONE GIVES AN ADVICE TO MAKE PREPARATIONS, THERE MAY BE SOME WHO FEEL THAT THE ADVICE IS FOR THEM, AND THEREFORE THEY WANT TO MAKE THE NECESSARY PREPARATION. THE FACT THAT YOU MAY NOT BE DIRECTING THE ADVICE TO THEM OF COURSE IS IRRELEVANT. IN THEIR OPINION THEY SHOULD PREPARE THEMSELVES.**

Q: **I UNDERSTAND THAT YOUR STATEMENT, ON THIS DID NOT GO DOWN TO WELL WITH THE UMNO OLD GUARDS. THEY FEEL THEY ARE BEING GINORED AND IN FACT, THE YOUNG, IN THEIR QUEST TO GO UP, ARE STEPPING ON THE VETERANS' TOES?**

PM: **THAT IS NOT QUITE CORRECT. I THINK SOME OLD GUARDS FEEL THAT THERE IS MUCH VIRTUE IN PREPARING PEOPLE AND OF COURSE THERE ARE SOME WHO DIFFER. I MYSELF SHOULD BE CONSIDERED AMONG THE OLD GUARDS BECAUSE OF MY AGE AND DURATION OF SERVICE WITH THE PARTY BUT I FEEL THAT WHETHER YOU ARE NEW OR OLD THE QUESTION IS WHETHER THE PARTY STILL WELCOMES YOU. IF THE PARTY DOES NOT WELCOME YOU, THEY SHOW SOME SIGNS; AND I THINK IT IS NOT GOOD TO IGNORE THOSE SIGNS. OBVIOUSLY IF THEY DON'T VOTE YOU IN, THEY THINK THAT YOU ARE NO LONGER SUITABLE. I ACCEPT THIS. I HAVE SAID SO MANY TIMES THAT IF I FEEL OR I RECOGNISE SIGNS THAT I AM NO LONGER WANTED, I WILL NOT HESITATE TO LEAVE THE FIELD.**

Q: **DATUK, YOU HAD ALSO MADE IT CLEAR THAT YOU WANT THE UMNO TRADITION TO BE UPHELD. IN SHORT, YOU WANT ALL ASPIRANTS TO BIDE THEIR TIME. BUT IT APPEARS THAT SOME ARE NOT LISTENING TO YOUR ADVICE.**

-- MORE 0806/AZ

MAHATHIR-INTERVIEW 4 KUALA LUMPUR

PM: WELL, OF COURSE WHEN YOU GIVE AN ADVICE, YOU DON'T EXPECT EVERYBODY TO LISTEN TO YOUR ADVICE. BUT IF YOU DON'T GIVE ADVICE, THEN YOU WILL BE FAILING IN YOUR DUTY AS A LEADER.

Q: THE CONTEST FOR THE DEPUTY PRESIDENCY IN PARTICULAR THIS YEAR IS UNPRECEDENTED IN THE HISTORY OF UMNO. HOW DO YOU VIEW THIS THREE-CORNERED FIGHT?

PM: WELL, I HAVE MADE MY FEELINGS VERY CLEAR ON VERY MANY OCCASIONS. I DON'T SEE THE NECESSITY FOR REPEATING IT.

Q: AT THE LAST UMNO ASSEMBLY YOU MENTIONED THAT YOU GET ALONG VERY WELL WITH DATUK MUSA DOES THIS MEAN THAT IN THE EVENT OF SOMEONE ELSE BEEN CHOSEN AS DEPUTY PRESIDENT, IT WOULD BE DIFFICULT FOR YOU TO WORK WITH HIM?

PM: WELL, TUNKU ABDUL RAHMAN (FORMER PRIME MINISTER) USED TO SAY IT'S BETTER TO WORK WITH THE DEVIL YOU KNOW THAN THE ANGEL THAT YOU DON'T KNOW.

Q: DATUK HARUN IDRIS HAD MET YOU BEFORE ANNOUNCING THIS CANDIDACY AS DEPUTY PRESIDENT. DID TENGU RAZALEIGH SEEK YOUR ADVICE BEFORE ANNOUNCING HE WAS CONTESTING THE NUMBER TWO SLOT?

PM: NO, AS FAR AS I CAN REMEMBER HE DID NOT CONSULT ME.

-- MORE 0809/AZ

ZCZC ND13

MAHATHIR-INTERVIEW 5 KUALA LUMPUR

Q: MANY UMNO MEMBERS FEEL THAT IT'S UNFAIR TO ASK THEM TO MAKE A CHOICE BETWEEN DATUK MUSA AND TENGU RAZALEIGH AS BOTH ARE ABLE LEADERS WHOM UMNO CAN'T DO WITHOUT. AS THERE IS ONLY ONE DEPUTY PRESIDENT'S POST, THEY FEEL THAT TENGU RAZALEIGH SHOULD GO FOR VICE PRESIDENT WHICH WILL ALSO ENABLE HIM TO CONTRIBUTE TO UMNO. DO YOU AGREE?

PM: I SUPPOSE THAT IS ONE WAY OUT. WELL, OBVIOUSLY SINCE HE IS NOT STANDING FOR VICE PRESIDENT THAT IS NOT A SOLUTION ANYMORE.

Q: PERSONALLY DO YOU FEEL TENGU RAZALEIGH SHOULD CONTEST FOR A VICE PRESIDENCY?

PM: IT'S OBVIOUS FROM WHAT WAS DONE AFTER THE LAST ELECTION OF THE DEPUTY PRESIDENT, THAT WE COULD FIND ROOM FOR TWO PEOPLE BUT NOT IN THE SAME SEAT.

Q: DATUK HARUN HAD SAID THAT HIS REASON FOR CONTESTING IS TO UNITE UMNO MEMBERS WHO ARE NOW, ACCORDING TO HIM, SPLIT RIGHT DOWN THE MIDDLE FOLLOWING THE RAZALEIGH-MUSA CONTEST IN 1981. DO YOU BUY THIS ARGUMENT?

-- MORE 0813/AZ

ZCZC NO14 (F/S)
MAHATHIR-INTERVIEW 6 KUALA LUMPUR

PM: THERE IS TO A CERTAIN EXTENT SOME TRUTH IN THAT. BUT THE OTHER ARGUMENTS PUT FORTH WERE NOT ACCEPTABLE OR RATHER THEY BELIEVE WHAT WAS SAID IN THE FIRST PLACE.

Q: DO YOU THINK DATUK HARUN HAS VALID REASONS FOR CONTESTING, BASED ON THE STATED REASONS. IT HAS TO BE ADMITTED THAT A CONTEST, WHOEVER THE CONTESTANTS BE IT TENGKURAZALEIGH OR DATUK MUSA IS BOUND TO SPLIT THE PARTY.

PM: YES, I THINK THERE IS SOME VALIDITY IN WHAT HE SAYS. BUT OF COURSE IF THAT IS THE SOLE REASON. OTHER THAN THAT ONE CANNOT FORGET THAT HE IS ALSO CONTESTING BECAUSE HE IS NOT SATISFIED WITH THE LEADERSHIP AS AT PRESENT, SO THAT IS NOT THE ONLY THING THAT WAS MADE HIM DECIDE TO CONTEST.

Q: I HAVE BEEN COVERING YOUR SPEECHES OPENING UMNO DELEGATES MEETINGS WHERE YOU REPEATEDLY SAID THAT THE STATUS QUO SHOULD BE MAINTAINED UNLESS THOSE CONTESTING COULD PROVIDE A BETTER ALTERNATIVE AND A MORE EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP. THIS IMPLIED THAT YOU WANT THE PRESENT UMNO LEADERS TO BE REELECTED.

PM: WELL, IT IS UP TO THE PEOPLE TO INTERPRET WHAT I SAY. IF I WANT TO BE VERY SPECIFIC, THEN I WOULD HAVE BEEN SPECIFIC. BUT I PREFER TO SAY THINGS IN THAT WAY. IT IS MEANT FOR THE PEOPLE TO MAKE THEIR OWN INTERPRETATIONS. -- MORE 0816/A7

MAHATHIR-INTERVIEW 7 KUALA LUMPUR

Q: YOUR CRITICS FEEL THAT BY MAKING SUCH STATEMENTS YOU ARE TAKING SIDES WHICH YOU SHOULD NOT AS UMNO PRESIDENT. THEY FEEL THAT YOU HAVE DECLARED THE VICTOR BEFORE THE BATTLE IS FOUGHT.

PM: NO, I HAVE ALWAYS MADE IT CLEAR. HAS THE VICTOR IN 1981 UMNO ELECTIONS BEEN DIFFERENT, I WOULD HAVE SAID THE SAME THING.

Q: THEY ALSO FEEL THAT YOU SHOULD ALLOW EVERYONE TO FIGHT IT OUT AS TO QUOTE A RECENT SPEECH BY AN UMNO LEADER, UMNO DOES NOT EXCLUSIVELY BELONG TO ANYONE.

PM: IT IS OBVIOUS THAT UMNO BELONGS TO EVERYBODY BUT NEITHER HAS ANYONE THE RIGHT TO DESTROY UMNO BECAUSE OF PERSONAL AMBITIONS.

Q: WHY IS THERE A NEED TO UPHOLD THE TRADITIONS OF UMNO WHEN TIMES ARE A-CHANGING. DOES THIS MEAN THAT YOU FEAR FOR THE FUTURE OF UMNO ESPECIALLY WITH THE PRESENT STRUGGLE FOR POWER WHEN YOU STEP DOWN?

PM: BECAUSE THE TRADITIONAL WAY OF DOING THINGS HAD RESULTED IN THE STRENGTH THAT UMNO HAS TODAY. ONE DOES NOT DISCARD TRADITION MERELY BECAUSE IT IS AN OLD TRADITION, AN OLD TRADITION THAT HAS SERVED WELL SHOULD BE MAINTAINED.

-- MORE 0818/A7

ZCZC NO16

MAHATHIR - INTERVIEW 8 KUALA LUMPUR

Q: THE OLD GUARDS INCLUDING DATUK HARUN HAD IMPLIED THAT YOU DON'T REFER TO THE UMNO SUPREME COUNCIL BEFORE ANNOUNCING POLICIES. IS THIS TRUE?

PM: OF COURSE IT IS NOT TRUE. IF I HAD NOT REFERRED TO THE UMNO SUPREME COUNCIL, IT IS BECAUSE THAT HAS BEEN THE WAY ALL THE TIME WITH ALL THE PREVIOUS PRESIDENTS OF UMNO.

Q: DATUK HARUN HAD ALSO SAID THAT EVEN IF HE WINS THE DEPUTY PRESIDENT'S POST, HE DOES NOT WANT TO BECOME DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER. ARE YOU IN FAVOUR OF THIS IDEA OF SEPARATION OF POWER BETWEEN THE PARTY AND THE GOVERNMENT.

PM: THAT IS THE KIND OF THING THAT CAN BE EASILY SAID BUT NOT SO EASILY CARRIED OUT. YOU HAVE SEEN HOW AT LEAST ONE GOVERNMENT IN SOUTH EAST ASIA TRIED A SEPARATION BETWEEN THE PRESIDENT AND THE CONGRESS FOR EXAMPLE. AND BECAUSE IT FAILED, THE WHOLE SYSTEM HAD TO BE CHANGED TO AN AUTHORITARIAN TYPE OF RULE IN ORDER TO HAVE AN EFFECTIVE GOVERNMENT. IT IS IMPORTANT THAT THE GOVERNMENT BE EFFECTIVE. TO BE EFFECTIVE YOU CANNOT SEPARATE THE MAJOR PARTY FROM THE POWER OF THE GOVERNMENT. ---MORE---0835/JAS
ZCZC NO17

MAHATHIR - INTERVIEW 9 KUALA LUMPUR

Q: SO YOU STILL FEEL THAT THE UMNO, DEPUTY PRESIDENT SHOULD BE THE DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER?

PM: WELL, I BELIEVE IT IS THE PROPER THING TO DO. IT HAS WORKED VERY WELL. IT HAS NOT POSED A PROBLEM TO ANY OF THE PREVIOUS GOVERNMENTS, IT HAS NOT BEEN A PROBLEM TO THIS GOVERNMENT; SO, I SEE NO REASON WHY IT SHOULD CHANGE.

Q: IN VIEW OF THE TOO FEW POSTS AVAILABLE, ESPECIALLY IN THE UMNO SUPREME COUNCIL THERE HAVE BEEN SUGGESTIONS THAT THE PARTY CONSTITUTION BE AMENDED TO ACCOMMODATE MORE LEADERS. DO YOU FORESEE THIS CHANGE?

PM: I HAVE NO VERY STRONG VIEWS - I LEAVE IT TO UMNO TO DECIDE. BUT OF COURSE IF WE HAVE MORE POSTS, IT DOES NOT MEAN THAT EVERYBODY WILL BE SATISFIED. AS I USED TO SAY BEFORE IF WE HAVE ONE LORRY LICENCE TO GIVE OUT, THERE WILL BE TEN APPLICANTS. ON THE OTHER HAND IF WE GIVE TEN LORRY LICENCES, IT DOESN'T MEAN THAT ALL THE APPLICANTS NOW WILL GET THE LICENCE. THERE WILL BE A HUNDRED APPLICANTS. SO ALWAYS THERE WILL BE 90 PERCENT, WHO WILL NOT BE SATISFIED.

Q: ANOTHER LEADER CAME UP WITH THE IDEA THAT UMNO SHOULD IMPOSE CERTAIN CONDITIONS, FOR EXAMPLE ONE MUST HAVE A CERTAIN NUMBER OF YEARS IN LEADING UMNO BRANCHES PROVEN THEIR LEADERSHIP OR COMMAND THE CONFIDENCE OF UMNO BEFORE THEY CONSIDER VOTING FOR TOP PARTY POSTS. ---MORE---0837/JAS

MAHATHIR - INTERVIEW 10 KUALA LUMPUR

PM: THERE IS SOME MERIT IN THAT, WE WANT TO SEE PEOPLE WHO ARE COMMITTED TO UMNO AND ARE SCREENED BEFORE WE CHOOSE THEM AS LEADERS. OTHERWISE WE MAY FIND THAT THE LEADER WILL CHANGE THE PARTY COMPLETELY AND THIS HAS HAPPENED WITH OTHER PARTIES AND IT CAN HAPPEN TO UMNO ALSO.

Q: NEW TRENDS ARE EMERGING IN UMNO POLITICS THESE DAYS. BESIDES USING MONEY TO SECURE POSITIONS, MANY HAVE ORGANISED GATHERINGS WHERE THEY HAVE MADE PLEDGES THAT DELEGATES FROM THIS STATE WILL VOTE FOR SUCH-AND-SUCH CANDIDATE. ISN'T THIS TANTAMOUNT TO BLOCK VOTING?

PM: WELL, IT COMES TO THAT. BUT OF COURSE THE VOTE PLEDGES REALLY MEANS NOTHING BECAUSE THEY WILL BE VOTING INDIVIDUALLY. PEOPLE WILL MAKE OPEN PLEDGES BUT IN THEIR HEARTS THEY MAY NOT BE COMMITTED. SO IT REALLY MEANS NOTHING.

Q: BUT WITH PEOPLE GOING ROUND FROM STATE TO STATE TO MEET DELEGATES, SURELY IT WILL AFFECT THE VOTING PATTERN.

PM: THERE ARE SOME CANDIDATES WHO BY THE NATURE OF THEIR WORK ARE NOT EXPOSED TO THE WHOLE NATION. THEY ARE CONFINED TO THEIR OWN STATE. SUCH PEOPLE ARE USUALLY HANDICAPPED. FOR SUCH PEOPLE IT IS NECESSARY PERHAPS TO INTRODUCE THEM, SELVES TO THE WHOLE COUNTRY. ALSO, THE SORT OF GATHERING WHERE ALL CANDIDATES, ALL OF DIFFERENT GROUPS OR THINKING ARE INTRODUCED JUST AS CANDIDATES, I THINK THAT IS A GOOD THING. --MORE--0838/JAS

ZCZC N019 (F/S)

MAHATHIR - INTERVIEW 1 1 KUALA LUMPUR

BUT FACTIONAL OR INDIVIDUAL GATHERINGS AND PRESSURES AND TRYING TO CONFINED YOUR STATE TO YOURSELF ONLY AND NOBODY ELSE SHOULD COME, AND USING ARM-TWISTING TACTICS, I THINK THAT IS BAD.

Q: YOU MEAN THERE ARE INSTANCES OF ARM-TWISTING TACTICS BEING EMPLOYED?

PM: WELL, FOR EXAMPLE IF YOU HAVE A STATE WHICH DARES NOT VOICE SUPPORT FOR ANYBODY ELSE EXCEPT PARTICULAR PERSONS, THEN OF COURSE, IT'S A BAD THING. PEOPLE SHOULD BE FREE TO VOICE THEIR FEELINGS.

Q: THIS YEAR, ELECTIONS CAMPAIGN BEATS THE REST WITH DISTRIBUTION OF VIDEO, CALLING CARDS, BOOKS, BOOKLETS AND PAMPHLETS BESIDES PUBLICITY IN THE PRESS.

PM: I THINK IT IS UNCALLED FOR. IT IS A TREND THAT IS BAD. IT IS A KIND OF TREND THAT WILL LEAD TO MISUSE OF POWER, MISUSE OF MONEY AND LATER ON, WHAT YOU SEE TODAY IS PROBABLY RELATIVELY SMALL. IF THIS TREND IS NOT ARRESTED, THE BITTERNESS OF THE FIGHT WILL CERTAINLY DESTROY THE PARTY. IT IS AN UNHEALTHY TREND.

Q: THIS CAMPAIGN STRATEGY OF ORGANISING GATHERINGS... MANY UMNO MEMBERS FEEL THAT THOSE WHO ARE USEFUL TO UMNO BUT ARE NOT CLOSELY ALIGNED TO ANY CAMPS WILL DEFINITELY BE OUT IN THE COLD.

--MORE--0839/JAS

MAHATHIR - INTERVIEW 12 KUALA LUMPUR

PM: THOSE WHO ARE USEFUL TO UMNO NEED NOT ADVERTISE. THEIR OWN PERFORMANCE? I THINK WILL BE TELLING. I DON'T LIKE TO CITE MYSELF AS AN EXAMPLE BUT WAY BACK IN 1964 TO 1969, I WAS AN ORDINARY MP WITH NO POWER WHATSOEVER. I WON THE HIGHEST NUMBER OF VOTES IN 1969 NOT BECAUSE I WENT OUT CAMPAIGNING OR DID ANYTHING. IT WAS SIMPLY BECAUSE PEOPLE NOTICED WHAT I WAS SAYING OR WHAT I WAS DOING. I HAD NO INFLUENCE OVER THE NEWSPAPERS IN THOSE DAYS. BUT IF YOU SAY SOMETHING THAT IS WORTHY OF PUBLICATION, I SUPPOSE THEY WILL PRINT. THAT WAS SUFFICIENT. ALTHOUGH I NEVER OPENED ANY UMNO BRANCH, WAS NEVER INTRODUCED TO ANY STATE, I WAS JUST FROM KEDAH, I WAS ABLE TO WIN WITH A BIG NUMBER OF VOTES. I THINK BASICALLY IF YOU SERVED THE COUNTRY WELL, YOU SERVE UMNO WELL, YOU WILL BE RECOGNISED EXCEPT THOSE PEOPLE WHO FOR REASONS OF THEIR POSITION PERHAPS ARE CONFINED TO THE STATE. THAT IS WHY I SAID THAT IT IS WORTHWHILE, IN ORDER TO BALANCE, FOR PEOPLE TO BE INTRODUCED. IN THE PAST WHEN THERE WAS NO INTRODUCTION WE STILL MANAGED TO ELECT RELATIVELY GOOD PEOPLE TO LEAD THE PARTY.

Q: BUT THERE ARE SOME UMNO LEADERS WHO CLAIM THAT THEY DON'T HAVE ACCESS TO THE MEDIA AS WHATEVER THEY SAY IS BLACKED OUT BY THE PRESS.

PM: NO I DON'T THINK SO. I SEE EVERYBODY'S NAME IN THE PAPERS. IF YOU SAY SOMETHING GOOD, YOU DO SOMETHING GOOD, I DOUBT WHETHER ANYBODY CAN STOP A REALLY GOOD MAN. ---MORE---0834/JAS

MAHATHIR-INTERVIEW 13 KUALA LUMPUR

Q: DATUK, SOME CANDIDATES ARE COMING UP WITH THEIR OWN MANIFESTOS IN THE COMING PARTY ELECTIONS. THIS IS AS THOUGH IT'S A GENERAL ELECTION AND NOT AN INTRA-PARTY PROCESS.

PM: (LAUGHTER) WELL, I DON'T KNOW HOW ANYBODY CAN HAVE A MANIFESTO IN THE PARTY BECAUSE THE PARTY ITSELF HAS A MANIFESTO. UNLESS OF COURSE YOU WANT TO CHANGE THE PARTY AND OF COURSE IF ALL THE MEMBERS FEEL THAT WE SHOULD CHANGE THE PARTY, THEN OF COURSE WE SHOULD HAVE MANIFESTOS. ALL OF US HAVE MANIFESTOS AND OF COURSE THEN IT WILL BE COMPLETE CHAOS.

Q: DATUK, YOU HAVE BEEN IN UMNO FOR MANY YEARS. SURELY YOU MUST HAVE NOTICED A DRASTIC CHANGE IN THE STYLE OF CAMPAIGNING.

PM: OH, ABSOLUTELY DIFFERENT. AS FAR AS I REMEMBER EVEN AS LATE AS 1976 OR 1975 WHEN I STOOD FOR VICE-PRESIDENT I DIDN'T HAVE TO CAMPAIGN AT ALL. I DIDN'T PUBLISH ANY MANIFESTO I DIDN'T GIVE AWAY THINGS TO PEOPLE BUT I MANAGED TO GET IN. BUT EVEN THOSE WHO STOOD AGAINST ME OR WHO STOOD FOR THE SAME POST THERE WAS A LITTLE BIT OF CAMPAIGNING, BUT NOT VERY MUCH. BUT NOW THE CAMPAIGNING IS RIDICULOUS, IT HAS COME TO THE POINT WHERE EVEN GOD HAS BEEN INVOKED IN ORDER TO WIN. I THINK THAT IS IMPROPER.

Q: DATUK, UMNO IS NOW BECOMING RATHER LIKE THE MIC, WITH MEETINGS INTERRUPTED BY QUARRELS, CHAIR THROWING AND EVEN USING A SHOTGUN. AREN'T THERE WAYS TO CURB THIS UNHEALTHY SITUATION? -- MORE 0833/RAS

MAHATHIR-INTERVIEW 14 KUALA LUMPUR

PM: THE ONLY WAY IS FOR UMNO MEMBERS TO MAKE UP THEIR MINDS. NOBODY ELSE CAN BE BLAMED BUT YOURSELVES. IF YOU WISH IT TO BE THAT WAY, THAT IS WHAT YOU GET. IF YOU DON'T WISH IT, YOU WILL ACT TO PREVENT IT THEN OF COURSE IT WILL NOT HAPPEN. IT IS IMPORTANT TO REMEMBER WE DESERVED WHAT WE GET. AND IF UMNO WANTS THIS SYSTEM, NEITHER I NOR ANYBODY ELSE CAN STOP IT. AS YOU KNOW THE SUPREME AUTHORITY IN UMNO IS THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY AND IT IS UP TO THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OR THE PEOPLE, IF THEY WANT THIS KIND OF CAMPAIGNING THEY WILL GET THIS KIND OF CAMPAIGNING. I CANNOT STOP IT AND NEITHER CAN ANYBODY ELSE. IT'S ENTIRELY THEIR OWN DECISION.

Q: WILL THERE BE A CABINET RESHUFFLE AFTER THE UMNO GENERAL ASSEMBLY?

PM: I DON'T THINK IT IS NECESSARY TO TALK OF SUCH THINGS. THIS IS AN UMNO ELECTIONS AND NOT GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS.

Q: BUT DATUK THERE HAS BEEN THAT WITH LEADERS GOING FOR BROKE AND IF THEY LOSE, THEY MAY LOSE THEIR POSITION IN THE CABINET.

PM: IT'S MERELY A SPECULATION.

Q: LASTLY, WHAT IS YOUR ADVICE TO UMNO DELEGATES ESPECIALLY WITH REGARD TO THE ELECTIONS WHICH WILL TAKE PLACE ON THE FIRST DAY OF THE ASSEMBLY? -- MORE 0836/PAS

MAHATHIR-INTERVIEW 15 KUALA LUMPUR

PM: WELL, I WOULD SAY ABOVE, ALL THINK OF UMNO, THE FUTURE OF THE MALAYS AND THE COUNTRY, DONOT THINK OF INDIVIDUALS.

Q: THIS MEANS YOU WANT DELEGATES TO CHOOSE CANDIDATES WHO CAN CONTRIBUTE TO THE COUNTRY AND UMNO...?

PM: ALL I AM SAYING IS THAT THEY HAVE TO UNDERSTAND WHAT IS AT STAKE. NOT INDIVIDUALS BUT UMNO. THEY HAVE TO THINK WHAT IS BEST FOR UMNO.

Q: AT THE LAST UMNO ELECTIONS, YOU SAID THAT THE WINNER DOES NOT TAKE ALL AND THE LOSER DOES NOT FALL.

PM: GENERALLY THAT IS MY FEELING AT ALL TIMES. YOU DON'T EXPECT THAT IF YOU WIN, YOU CAN KICK OUT EVERYBODY. NOR DO YOU EXPECT THAT IF YOU LOSE, YOU LOSE EVERYTHING. I WANT EVERYONE TO ACCEPT THE DECISIONS AND CLOSE RANKS. THAT IS WHAT UMNO WANTS. SO LET IT BE.

-- BERNAMA - 0839/RAS