

MAHATHIR - CONSTITUTION

BM

EMBARGO: FOR RELEASE AT 11 A.M. MAY 25

84 (P)  
KUALA LUMPUR, MAY 25 (BERNAMA) -- (DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR MOHAMAD TODAY REPLIED TO CRITICISMS HURLED AT HIM IN CONNECTION WITH LAST YEAR'S AMENDMENTS TO THE COUNTRY'S CONSTITUTION, ESPECIALLY BY THOSE WHO FELT THAT THE AMENDMENTS SHOULD HAVE BEEN FIRST REFERRED TO UMNO. TO THIS, THE PRIME MINISTER AND PARTY PRESIDENT ASKED WHY THEY THEMSELVES DID NOT REFER TO UMNO BEFORE THEY MADE ANY PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENTS AND JOINED UP WITH OUTSIDERS TO OBSTRUCT ACTIONS TAKEN BY LEADERS ELECTED BY THE PARTY.

"HAVE THOSE WHO ARE NOT ELECTED MORE RIGHTS THAN THOSE WHO ARE ELECTED? IF THIS IS SO, WHAT IS THE POSITION OF DEMOCRACY IN THE PARTY?" HE ASKED.

DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR, IN HIS PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS AT THE 35TH UMNO GENERAL ASSEMBLY AT THE HILTON HERE, SAID THAT HE HAD IN THE PAST BEEN SACKED FROM THE PARTY "FOR MAKING MISTAKES" (GOING AGAINST THE LEADERSHIP AFTER THE 1969 MAY 13 TRAGEDY).

"TODAY, I AM LEADING THE PARTY BUT WE DO NOT SACK THOSE WHO COMMIT ERRORS AGAINST THE PARTY. WHO IS MORE DEMOCRATIC AND WHO IS 'YES-MAN'?" -- MORE 0945/MK

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DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR SAID THE QUESTION OF THE CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS WAS NOT AS BIG AN ISSUE AS THE SEPARATION OF SINGAPORE IN 1965 AND WAS NOT AGAINST THE CONSTITUTION, FURTHERMORE IT DID NOT NEED THE CONSENT OF THE RULERS.

HE SAID THAT THE SEPARATION OF ANY REGION FROM MALAYSIA WAS PROHIBITED BY THE CONSTITUTION.

"IT NEEDED THE PRIOR APPROVAL OF THE CONFERENCE OF RULERS AND THE PARTY WOULD SURELY HAVE BEEN INFORMED, IF NOT GIVEN THE CHANCE TO DEBATE IT, HE ADDED.

"BUT AS WE KNOW, THERE WAS NO REFERENCE MADE AND NO DISCUSSIONS. THE UMNO SECRETARY-GENERAL THEN (THE LATE TAN SRI SYED JAAFAR ALBAR) RESIGNED IN PROTEST AGAINST THE WAY THE DECISION ON THE SEPARATION WAS MADE," HE SAID.

"NEVERTHELESS THE AMENDMENT WAS MADE WITH TWO-THIRDS OF THE MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT, INCLUDING MYSELF, SUPPORTING IT."

-- MORE 1112/LK

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DATUKSERI DR MAHATHIR SAID HE DID NOT OPPOSE BECAUSE THE ENDS WERE MORE IMPORTANT THAN THE MEANS.

"THERE IS NO USE FOR US TO HAVE LEADERS IF THEY ARE NOT ALLOWED TO USE THEIR DISCRETION AT ALL, PARTICULARLY WHEN PUBLIC DEBATE WOULD CREATE MORE PROBLEMS AND TENSION," HE ADDED.

THE PRIME MINISTER SAID HE REALIZED THAT THERE WERE UMNO LEADERS WHO MIGHT NOT BE VERY ENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT THE AMENDMENTS MADE AND DESCRIBED THIS AS A NORMAL THING.

BUT, HE SAID, THEY BROUGHT UP THE QUESTION OF RULES AND PROCEDURES, BECAUSE OF OTHER INTERESTS OR BECAUSE THEY PURPOSELY WANTED TO FIND FAULT.

THE PRIME MINISTER SAID HE WAS GREATFUL THAT THE CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS ISSUE WAS ALREADY HISTORY.

-- MORE 1116/LK  
ZCZC NO29

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"WE HAVE ACHIEVED OUR OBJECTIVE AND WE SHOULD ALSO BE THANKFUL NOT ONLY BECAUSE OF THE ATTAINMENT OF THE OBJECTIVE BUT ALSO BECAUSE THE PARTY IS STILL UNITED, ALBEIT WITH SLIGHT CRACKS," HE SAID.

HE REMINDED THAT CRACKS COULD EASILY BECOME SPLITS AND THE STRONG COULD BECOME WEAK IF STRUCK OFTEN.

DATUKSERI DR. MAHATHIR SAID, THAT NOW THAT THE ISSUE HAD BEEN RESOLVED, THE QUESTION OF WHETHER IT WAS TRUE THAT THE LEADERSHIP WAS TOO COMPROMISING OR TOO POWER CRAZY NEED NOT BE DEBATED.

"UMNO LEADERS WILL COME AND WILL GO BUT THE PARTY'S STRUGGLE MUST BE MAINTAINED," HE SAID.

"TO MY THINKING, THE STRUGGLE TO DISPEL DOUBTS CONCERNING THE POWER OF THE PEOPLE AND OF THE RULERS HAD BEEN RESOLVED,"

-- MORE 1120/LK  
ZCZC NO30

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"WE HAVE DETERMINED THAT IN THE END IT IS THE PEOPLE WHO HAVE THE RIGHT TO MAKE THE LAWS WHICH AFFECT THEM," HE ADDED.

THE PRIME MINISTER ALSO THANKED PARTY LEADERS AND MEMBERS WHO HAD SUPPORTED THE GOVERNMENT IN THIS MATTER.

HE WAS HAPPY THAT THE INFORMATION BRIEFINGS HELD HAD BEEN WELL ATTENDED NOT ONLY BY UMNO MEMBERS BUT ALSO BOTH MALAYS AND NON-MALAYS.

THUS NO ONE COULD SAY THAT THE AMENDMENTS WERE MADE WITHOUT THE AGREEMENT OF THE MAJORITY OF THE UMNO MEMBERS, HE ADDED.

-- BERNAMA 1123/LK