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MAHATHIR-CRISIS

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KUALA LUMPUR, DEC 21 (BERNAMA) -- DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR MOHAMAD TODAY EXPRESSED THE WISH FOR A SPEEDY SOLUTION OF THE 10-MONTH-OLD MCA CRISIS, SAYING THAT HE SAW NO REASON FOR AN ABSOLUTE IMPASSE IN THE NEGOTIATIONS BETWEEN THE TWO RIVAL FACTIONS IN THE PARTY.

HE SAID THE QUESTION OF SOLVING THE CRISIS THIS MONTH OR THE NEXT DID NOT ARISE AT ALL. WHAT WAS CRUCIAL WAS THAT THE CRISIS BE RESOLVED.

+IF WE CAN SOLVE THE PROBLEM WITHOUT BRINGING IN OTHER PROBLEMS, IT SHOULD BE GOOD. AS A MALAY PROVERB SAYS -- ONE SHOULD NOT MESS UP

THE FLOUR WHEN-FULLING OUT A THREAD FROM IT (KALAU MENARIK BENANG DARITEPUNG, JAGA TEPUNG ITU DARIPADA BERKECAI).+ HE WAS SPEAKING TO REPORTERS ON HIS RETURN HOME AFTER AN OFFICIAL VISIT TO LIBYA, EGYPT AND MALI.

COMMENTING ON THE REPORTED DEADLOCK IN NEGOTIATIONS CONDUCTED BY BARISAN NASIONAL SECRETARY-GENERAL ENCIK GHAFAR BABA BETWEEN THE FACTION LED BY ACTING HCA PRESIDENT DATUK DR NEO YEE FAN AND THE MAHATHIR SAID: MCA HAS GOOD LEADERS INSIDE AND OUTSIDE AND I DO NOT SEE WHY THERE SHOULD BE AN ABSOLUTE IMPASSE.+ -- MORE

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MAHATHIR-CRISIS 2 KUALA LUHPUR

DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR WAS OPTIMISTIC THE CRISIS WOULD BE SOLVED, AND STRESSED REPEATEDLY THAT HE HAD NOT SET ANY TIME LIMIT FOR THE MCA LEADERS TO SOLVE THEIR PROBLEM.

+I HOPED THE CRISIS WOULD HAVE BEEN OVER A LONG TIME AGO, AND THERE WAS NO CRISIS AT ALL, IF YOU ASK WHAT WAS MY HOPE.+

THE LONG DRAWN OUT CRISIS HAD PROMPTED DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER DATUK MUSA HITAM TO SUGGEST THAT THE MCA MIGHT FIND IT WORTHWHILE TO TEMPORARILY LEAVE THE BARISAN NASIONAL TO RESOLVE ITS PROBLEM.

DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR'S REACTION TO THIS WAS: +I MUST KNOW FROM THE HORSE'S MOUTH EXACTLY WHAT HAPPENED WHILE I WAS AWAY, WHAT WAS SAID, WHAT WAS THE REACTION AND THEN ONLY AM I IN A POSITION TO SAY SOMETHING. +

THE PRIME MINISTER MADE IT CLEAR THAT HE HAD TO ABIDE BY THE CONSENSUS OF THE FEELINGS OF FIRSTLY UMNO WHICH MUST AT LEAST BE THE POLITICAL COMMITTEE OR POSSIBLY THE PARTY'S SUPREME COUNCIL.

+IF IT CONCERNS THE MCA AND OTHERS, I HAVE TO TALK TO THEM AND IF IT CONCERNS THE BN, THEN I WILL HAVE TO CALL A BARISAN NASIONAL MEETING AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.+

DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR, WHO IS CHAIRMAN OF THE BARISAN NASIONAL, MADE IT CLEAR THAT HE WAS NOT THE ONE WHO ARBITRATES IN THE CRISIS, SAYING THAT IF IT AFFECTED THE BN THEN THE BN SHOULD HAVE THE CHANCE TO DISCUSS THE MATTER.

ASKED WHETHER THE CRISIS HAD TARNISHED THE BN'S IMAGE, HE REPLIED: +WE ALWAYS HAVE THIS PASSION FOR IMAGE. OF COURSE, IMAGE GOES UP AND DOWN DEPENDING ON HOW YOU LOOK AT IT. . . . +

ASKED WHETHER HE WOULD MEDIATE IN THE DISPUTE, THE PRIME MINISTER SAID: +I WILL HAVE TO KNOW THE FACTS AND THEN I CAN DECIDE WHETHER MEDIATION IS THE ANSWER, WHETHER I NEED TO COME OUT WITH A STATEMENT OR HAVE A MEETING, I HAVE TO DECIDE AFTER I KNOW THE FACTS.+

HE DECLINED TO SAY WHETHER HE WOULD MEET THE TWO FACTIONS BUT SAID THAT HE WOULD THINK OF THE NEXT STEP AFTER DISCUSSIONS WITH DATUK MUSA.

FOLLOWING THE SUGGESTION BY DATUK MUSA, SEVERAL HCA LEADERS CAME OUT STRONGLY AGAINST THE STATEMENT, CRITICIZING IT AND SAYING IT WAS UNWARRANTED AND UNCALLED FOR

DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR SAID, HOWEVER: +EVEN IF IT IS OVER-REACTION, I ONLY KNOW (ABOUT THE MATTER) FROM NEWSPAPER REPORTS AND I HAVE TO FIND OUT FROM THE MCA LEADERS THEMSELVES WHAT THEIR REACTION IS.+ --BERNAMA

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