

Razali plays down role in release of Suu Kyi

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KLJALA LUMPUR: Tan Sri Razali Ismail, the man who helped broker the talks between the Myanmar military government and Aung San Suu Kyi, played down his role in the release of the pro-democracy leader yesterday and instead paid tribute to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

"Most certainly, Dr Mahathir has contributed to this happy event today and he continues to be very much involved.

"This is what I mean by constructive engagement, without the fanfare, lights and headlines, quietly advising the people. That's what Dr Mahathir has done," he told reporters when met at the Kuala

Lumpur City Centre.

Razali, who was made the UN special envoy to Myanmar two years ago, said he would still go to Yangon regularly amid the latest developments.

"I am the dogs-body for the UN. But always remember that I am not the negotiator. I am only the facilitator. I will do what is necessary."

Asked how far Myanmar was from democracy, Razali said "the process" was moving step by step.

He felt that Asean could do more to help ensure that elections would be held.

"I think with goodwill and clear intentions from all parties, support from Asean, I think two or three years down the road, it can be done. The dialogue is on-going, there have been discussions in the last 19 months," he added.

Razali also took note of the clear commitment of the military government to move to a civilian and constitutional government.

"It has taken them some time to deal with it. And now that they are dealing with it, we should support them and not think negative," he added.

Suu Kyi in a press conference after her release in Myanmar thanked Razali for his role.

"I would like to thank Mr Razali for everything that he has done. He has been a great friend of Myanmar.

Meanwhile, Reuters quoted Razali as saying that he had no idea that a company he headed might have won a lucrative business deal in the country while he was engaged in the mediation process.

The *International Herald*

Tribune had reported that Iris Technologies, headed by Razali, had won a contract related to setting up an electronic "smart card" passport system.

Razali told Reuters that Iris was looking for customers in all South-East Asian countries, but he had not personally engaged in any business transactions with Myanmar authorities.