

Detailing CSA deal: Here's what Harapan and govt agreed to do

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Yoursay

Prime Minister Ismail Sabri Yaakob's government and Pakatan Harapan today inked a Memorandum of Understanding on Transformation and Political Stability.

The deal essentially will see Harapan take an undertaking not to obstruct the government on critical votes in Parliament that could have an implication on its survival, such as the budget.

In exchange, the government will undertake a number of policy decisions and reform efforts advocated by Harapan.

Malaysiakini has sighted the agreement, which is expected to be released tomorrow, and confirmed its authenticity with members of the negotiating team.

How does it work?

A 10-member steering committee will be formed, comprising five government and five opposition representatives.

They will meet every two weeks or on a mutually agreed schedule to negotiate and oversee the implementation of the agreement.

What are the ground rules?

The government agreed not to dissolve Parliament before July 31, 2022.

There is also a specific clause stating that the agreement should not be kept secret.

It added that the deal is what is contained in the agreement and any previous verbal or non-written proposals do not apply.

Violation of the agreement will render it invalid.

What is expected of Harapan?

Harapan will support or abstain during the Budget 2022 vote and related supply bills.

This is on the condition that the drafting of Budget 2022 and other budget-related bills must first be jointly negotiated between the government and Harapan.

The opposition coalition will similarly support or abstain on any bill or motion that can be construed as a vote of confidence, on the condition that their formulation is also mutually negotiated and agreed in principle.

The agreement also contained a provision stating that it should not impede Harapan's role to play check and balance against the government.

What is expected of the government?

The implementation of the agreement is divided into three timelines - what will be done immediately, what will be done within this year and what will be done by the first half of next year.

Parliamentary reforms

Most of the items that must be implemented immediately are related to parliamentary reforms.

They are as follows:

1. The setting up of more parliamentary select committees and restructuring existing ones.
2. Ensure their composition reflects the parties' representation in Parliament.
3. Ensure the total number of committees are equally headed by government and opposition MPs.
4. Government to provide support staff and reasonable funding to support the functioning of the committees.
5. Amend the Standing Orders to ensure smooth proceedings of both houses.
6. Equal funding for government and opposition MPs.
7. Ensure the appropriate rights and privileges is accorded to the opposition leader.

One notable caveat to note is that equal funding only applies to MPs involved in

this agreement.

That means the government can still deny equal funding to other opposition parties such as Pejuang or Warisan which have snubbed the deal unless it extends the same benefit out of goodwill.

Another point to note is that the agreement assures "appropriate" rights and privileges for the opposition leader but does not define them clearly.

Previously, it was suggested they should be equal to that of a minister.

A final but key point to parliamentary reform is the introduction of a Parliamentary Services Act which will allow Parliament to manage its own funding.

This bill must be approved by the second meeting of the fifth Parliament session in 2022.

Administrative transformation

This section contains three components, namely:

1. Table and approve an anti-party hopping bill.
2. Expedite the implementation of Undi18 and automatic voter registration
3. Table and approve a constitutional amendment to limit the prime minister's term to 10 years.

All these must be implemented no later than the first meeting of the fifth Parliament session which is in the first half of next year.

After a general election, Parliament sits for five years. Each year is one session. Each session, if it is for the full year, normally has three meetings.

Each meeting normally runs between one to several weeks.

Strengthening Covid-19 plan

Some of the fiscal policies are things that the government is already doing but will now be "enhanced".

A key point that Harapan has been pushing is an RM45 billion fiscal injection to fight the Covid-19 pandemic.

The government has agreed to this and will table it in Parliament for approval. This will include additional funding for the healthcare system, additional aid for vulnerable groups and support for businesses.

Putrajaya has also agreed that the National Recovery Council, which is presently chaired by ex-prime minister Muhyiddin Yassin, must comprise 50 percent of public and private sector experts.

The government will nominate half of its chosen experts while the opposition will nominate the other half.

Additional funding will also be provided to enhance the "find, test, trace, isolate, support and vaccinate" regime.

The RM10 billion aid providing to 11 million recipients in the second half of this year will be extended in 2022, aimed at the B40 community and M40 income earners who have lost their jobs.

The Covid-19 consolidate fund will also be used to provide hiring incentives and support for small and medium enterprises, including in the informal and micro sectors.

The government will also expedite the acquisition of six million vaccine doses by September.

Putrajaya will also work to seek interest exemption for the bottom 50 percent income earners who have accepted a loan repayment moratorium for October, November and December.

This particular item is a promise to put effort although the outcome is not guaranteed. Putrajaya will need to renegotiate with the banks.

All items in this particular section must be implemented within the fourth Parliament session, which is this year.

The first Dewan Rakyat meeting of the fourth session will run from Sept 13 to Oct 12 followed by the second meeting of the fourth session from Oct 25 to Dec 16.

There will only be two meetings this year as there is little time left following a prolonged suspension of Parliament during the emergency which was lifted in August.

Judicial independence and MA63

The two other categories are (1) Ensuring judicial independence and (2) The Malaysia Agreement 1963 but are scant on details.

They only contain a one-line general description. The Sabah-based Upko was only brought into the deal in the final stages as its application to join Harapan had yet to be finalised.

Warisan had also criticised Harapan for not involving it from the beginning. Otherwise, Warisan said it would have made specific demands on the Malaysia Agreement 1969.

Warisan snubbed Harapan's invitation for a briefing on the deal, maintaining that it should have been involved from the beginning.

A Harapan negotiator told Malaysiakini the opposition coalition had requested more details to be included on the Malaysian Agreement 1963 but government negotiators had asked to keep it simple.

The other category on judicial independence is also more towards assurances rather than any concrete changes.

However, it is still important considering Harapan is wary that Umno leaders

from the previous BN government will be let off their graft cases now that an Umno man is the prime minister again.

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