

'Intention was to convey my views'

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THE following is the transcript of Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad's Press conference at his residence in Seri Kembangan yesterday after his meeting with Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.

Dr Mahathir said: We met for two hours. It was to convey all my doubts. I managed to convey issues that had been bugging me — in 20 minutes. He touched a bit on a few things, including on his son (Kamaluddin) and son-in-law (Khairy Jamaluddin) and my allegation that we have a police state whereby I said each time I am invited, the police will be called to question and instil fear in the audience.

He said this was not true. He disagreed that we have a police state. He also told me that since I had done this, I had become very unpopular and that he had also lost popularity because of my criticisms. And that the people who have benefited from this are (Datuk Seri) Anwar Ibrahim and (Datuk) Nik Aziz Nik Mat, who have

become more popular.

There wasn't much about anything else. My intention was to convey my views and we will wait and see if there will be changes or not I brought up and explained the bridge issue but there were no comments from him.

Many other issues I brought up were not touched on but he noted everything in his little black book, (like mine) all that I said. All the time I was talking he was jotting. (The notes) It was thick. I hope following this meeting there will be some kind of action taken. That's all.

Q: Are you happy with the meeting?

A: I can't say I'm happy. I am satisfied that I have been able to say these things directly to him. People say that I have been making comments from outside, but now I have seen him. But I also made it clear that I want to be free to make my criticisms. If I find that anything done is not good for the country, I will continue with my criticisms. I did explain that attempts to block me from speaking to Umno is not good, not right. I have lost my

civic right. Also the idea of postponing the Umno elections is not right. Although I had done it before, it was because the election came one year before the general election. Now the general election is not even happening anytime soon, so there is no reason the election of Umno's office bearers should not be held.

C: Was it a fruitful discussion?

A: To me, it was worthwhile as I got to say it frankly, (it was also) the way I had said it to the public. But the idea that if I have a grouse I go and tell him, I think that it is not workable because people won't know why I have a grouse, so I have to explain why something that is done is wrong.

Q: How did the PM react when you said you will continue criticising if need to?

A: He didn't say anything.

Q: How do you read into that?

A: As far as I'm concerned if he doesn't say anything, I will do it. But whether he says yes or no, I am going to continue. I am going to continue if I feel that if something is done is not beneficial to the country.

Q: Was it just the two of you?

A: Yes, just the two of us. Nobody else.

Q: Did you get the replies to the issues you raised?

A: Not all. He mentioned about his son and son-in-law's involvement and he said it was not right, that this accusation that they ring up people and all that was not true. But he wants to find out from them whether they did or not.

Q: Are you expecting any feedback?

A: I didn't ask for any.

Q: Did you ask for any form of assurance?

A: I didn't ask for that. I was hot there to argue. I just wanted explanations on the things that I am not happy about.

Q: What are you expecting after this?

A: We will see what happens.

Q: If they are not as you had expected?

A: I reserve the right to comment

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and I also pointed out that in Umno, there must be freedom for members to speak their minds. He is wrong not to allow Umno to speak their minds.

Q: Was there anything that you were unhappy about that was not raised?

A: I raised everything, including that his name appeared in the list of companies that dealt with the Oil-for-Food programme. He said he had nothing to do with that. That he simply wrote a letter to introduce this man who was married to his sister-in-law.

Q: Were a lot of the issues you raised answered?

A: No... he didn't answer much as there were two hours and I spoke for one-and-a-half hours. There was half an hour left and he touched on several issues and then he stopped, you see, so we went back.

Q: How was the tone of the meeting?

A: It was very cordial... he listened.

Q: Were you able to put across your point to the PM?

A: Yes, I was able to explain why I am not happy with so many things, including Proton, the AP and Rafidah.

Q: Will there be a follow-up meeting?

A: It was not scheduled. I didn't say anything about it but he said something that it'd be good if I come and see him.