**ASTRO AVANI INTERVIEW DRAFT**

**FRIDAY, 24 MAY 2019**

**MELANGKAH KE TAHUN KEDUA PENTADBIRAN PAKATAN HARAPAN**

1. **Setahun yang penuh dengan cabaran menguruskan perubahan dan pemulihan. Pada pendapat Tun, apakah tiga kejayaan terbesar sepanjang 12 bulan pentadbiran PH?**

Different segments of society will have different reasons to be optimistic about PH’s first year in power. For me, I think the biggest success in terms of positive change has been the emergence of **a very significant civil society movement.** You see ordinary Malaysians holding the federal and state governments to accountability, questioning government policies, pressing Ministers for better answers and explanations. This augurs well for the country because the rakyat no longer have to depend on politicians to fight causes for them. They have learnt to fight for these causes on their own.

The second biggest success in terms of positive change is linked to the first. Malaysians are **no longer living under a cloud of fear**. You see Malaysians speaking out very openly and critically against the government without any fear of being arrested for sedition or under some ill-defined fake news law. Of course, there are still pockets of people being arrested for sedition especially in regards to comments concerning the royalty, but I think generally, the rakyat are fully aware that there is a much freer sense of speech these days. You can also see it in the media reports where the media are free to criticize both sides of the political divide without fear of having licenses revoked and what not.

The third biggest success may very well be the fact that the **PH coalition has remained intact** for a whole year. There were many naysayers and even today there are those predicting the downfall of the PH government before the end of its term. For a coalition that was set up just a little over year before the GE14 (PPBM became an official member of PH in March 2017), I think PH has done a most commendable job in staying intact and functioning as a government.

I would also like to add a fourth success and that is the **success of strengthening public institutions**. This is a success that is often overlooked or ignored because it is not quantifiable. But I assure you this is a very big success and that is the reason why the opposition is also so adamant in running down changes made in relation to strengthening institutions. Their efforts to demean the appointments of the CJ (last year and most recently a new CJ) and the AG are because they know how important these appointments are in working towards strengthening public institutions. So these efforts cannot be underestimated. We have a Speaker in the Dewan Rakyat who is well respected by both sides of the bench.

2. **Dalam aspek kepimpinan setiap pemimpin di dalam kerajaan, membina kepercayaan dan keyakinan (building trust) menjadi asas penting untuk mengharungi era Malaysia Baharu ini. Pada pemerhatian Tun, apakah pengajaran terbesar yang perlu diberi perhatian oleh setiap anggota jemaah menteri melangkah ke tahun kedua pemerintahan?**

The Ministers must always practice and live the adage “the people come first”. You are there to serve the rakyat; they have elected you into office. The rakyat has shown its trust in you, you need to repay this trust by performing for the rakyat. Being a Minister is not about the overseas travel or the nice perks you get. Ministers must remember that they are also serving MPs, so go back to your kawasan and serve your constituents there.

Secondly, Ministers must have a good grasp of their portfolios so that they can give useful answers when questioned by the media. If you do not know what you are talking about, you are really doing a disservice to the rakyat. Go back and study your portfolio and seek advice from your senior officers. Practice some humility. You can be strict by all means, but that does not mean you have to be arrogant.

Thirdly, improve on communications. Don’t think that just because you are a Minister that the media are obligated to cover your events or that they have to give you page leads all the time. You have to earn this by making good and knowledgeable statements. If you say something insignificant or which doesn’t make sense, don’t expect media coverage. It’s all related to sincerity and good communications. The media is not there to serve you, you are there to serve the media. So your communications team must know how to deal with the media and must be fully aware of what is news worthy and important to the rakyat’s well being. This area of communications also applies to internal communications. Ministers must learn to communicate with each other instead of constantly contradicting each other and trying to undermine each other. Work together as a team.

3. **Tun berpendapat bahawa rakyat perlu memberi masa 6 bulan lagi untuk melihat kesan-kesan positif perubahan yang dilaksanakn. Sebagai individu yang sentiasa konsisten menyuarakan sentiment dan aspirasi rakyat akar umbi, pada pendapat Tun, apakah tiga indikator utama yang mencerminkan perubahan positif terhadap kualiti hidup rakyat untuk tempoh 6 bulan akan datang?**

Cost of living is the major issue, of course. The government needs to really take this issue by the horns and announce some strong measures to bring down the prices of food, transport and housing. If people are consistently worrying about whether or not their wages are going to last the month, there is no quality of life.

Stable employment and increased wages is also a factor for quality of life. Wages have to commensurate with the cost of living. If our average wage for KL is RM3,000 and houses cost RM800,000, how can people survive?

And finally, security. People need to walk around freely without the fear of being victims of snatch thieves. People need to be able to go out to the parks without fear of being accosted or harassed. So police presence becomes important. Deterrent measures are far better at easing the rakyat’s worries rather than taking action after the fact. The security forces should be focused on preventing crimes from taking place instead of coming into the picture only after a crime has been committed.

**Pengalaman Mengetuai Rundingan di China**

4. **Penjimatan kos untuk pembinaan ECRL bukan kecil-kecil. Tun merumuskan pengurangan kos lebih RM21 billion itu sama dengan jumlah membina dua KLCC. Apa formula yang membuatkan China bersetuju dengan apa yang ‘dihidanglan’ oleh Tun di meja rundingan?**

When you talk about negotiations, both sides have to practice give and take. It can never result in a case of one side winning all its concessions or both sides winning all their concessions. So while China did concede to some of our demands, they did not concede to all of our demands and vice versa. There was no secret formula involved. It was just about knowing your scope and building trust and confidence that both parties wanted a win-win outcome from the negotiations.

5. **Jika diperhatikan kepada liku perjalanan untuk mencapai persetujuan dengan China, ia sentiasa berteraskan kepada pendirian konsisten oleh PM Tun Dr. Mahathir Mohamad. Munkin Tun boleh berkongsi antara cabaran yang dilalui sehingga Malaysia dilihat antara negara yang tegas dalam mendepani gergasi baharu dunia?**

The PM was instrumental in pushing China to the negotiating table. If you remember, he had actually stated flatly that Malaysia would cancel the ECRL, while he was on a visit to China. This really pushed China into committing to a negotiating process. Until then, China was still under the impression that the ECRL could proceed in its original form, but when they saw that Malaysia was seriously considering cancellation, it dawned on them as well that the negotiating avenue was the best option for both sides.

In that sense, yes, Malaysia showed some real guts because we did not allow ourselves to be cowed by a super power. This however, is not to say that China was bullying or pressuring us. I think there was also some form of various miscommunications that muddled up the situation, plus a lot of people were throwing around all sorts of figures related to the project. So there was plenty of tension at the beginning, but once the PM issued a gag order and we stopped the flow of misinformation, everybody managed to calm down a bit. From there everything moved very fast.

When you have clarity and purpose, things get done. What was important here was not to show the world that we could stand up to China – that was not our intention. What was important was to show the world that the PH government could make decisive decisions and had the political will and the diplomatic attitude to follow through on our decisions.

**Kebangkitan Harimau Asia**

6. **Tahun kedua pentadbiran PH pasti akan berdepan macam-macam jenis tekanan. Antaranya seperti tekanan faktor luar yang memberi kesan kepada usaha dalaman antaranya seperti menguruskan harga minyak sawit. Tun sebelum ini bertegas bahawa kita perlu selangkah di depan dalam aspek perancangan strategic.**

Forward planning is important. We cannot wait for problems to happen and then scramble to find solutions. We must anticipate possible issues or problems that can arise so that when they do happen, we already have our mitigation plans.

For example in the case of palm oil. We can see that the EU is not going to back down from its campaign against palm oil. So while we still try to negotiate with them, we must also take steps to seek new export markets for our palm oil. We also need to be proactive and look at alternative crops for our small holders and Felda settlers. Think of alternative sources of income that they can venture into with government help. Have the plans ready, do your research and surveys and educational campaigns. Are there alternative cash crops that can be planted to supplement settlers’ incomes?

It’s the same in other areas. With the signing of a Supplementary Agreement on the ECRL, China has now announced a few major investments along the rail network. So what can we do – the federal and state governments and agencies – to support these investments and attract new ones? MIDA has announced it has set up a special committee to look into the Economic Accelerator Projects linked to the rail network. This is a good step, and the state government and other agencies should take the cue from MIDA and see what role they too can play.

And it’s not limited to industrial parks only – there are tourism initiatives, art and culture initiatives, food and textile – so many areas where pre-planning can be done so that when the ECRL takes off in six or seven years time, everything is in place and all players are prepared.

7. **Tun sebagai seorang ahli perniagaan yang berjaya, berperanan sangat signifikan bertemu dengan ramai pelabur asing. Ada juga yang menyatakanan minat terhadap jenama seperti Malaysia Airlines. Apa pandangan Tun mengenia jenama-jenama penting Malaysia seperti ini?**

A brand is nothing but a name if it has no value. It’s fine to be known as an airline that provides good service but if you are not making money and need constant bailouts, what’s the point? The question that Malaysia and Malaysians really need to ask themselves is, “do we really need a ‘national’ airline?” Or is it more important to have an airline which carries the country’s name and which is performing well and providing good service even if it is owned by the private sector?

We cannot be too sentimental when it comes to business. We cannot get all nostalgic about the good old days. The world of air travel is changing so rapidly and competition is coming from all sides. If we don’t adapt and make and take hard decisions, we will be left behind.



