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Anwar-BN

BN SUPREME COUNCIL REGRETS US DRAFT RESOLUTION AGAINST PM

KUALA LUMPUR, Nov 18 (Bernama) -- The Barisan Nasional (BN) Supreme Council, which held a special meeting today, expressed regret over an allegation by 34 United States congressmen that Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad is anti-Jews and their draft resolution demanding him to apologise or resign.

Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, who disclosed this at a news conference after chairing the meeting here, said all the 14 BN component parties reaffirmed their support for Dr Mahathir.

The prime minister is BN chairman.

"As political parties which contest election after election, we stress that only the people, through democratic processes, can decide on their leaders," Anwar said.

Malaysia, under Dr Mahathir, highly valued relations with other countries, he said.

In this regard, BN leaders were mindful of the importance of Malaysia-US ties and would preserve and enhance such relations, Anwar said.

In a letter to Dr Mahathir dated last Oct 27 and signed by 34 congressmen led by the Democrat member from Florida Robert Wexler, the US lawmakers demanded that the prime minister publicly apologise or resign over his alleged remarks of a Jewish conspiracy behind Southeast Asian currency manipulation.

However, Dr Mahathir had clarified that his statement blaming US financier, George Soros, a Jew, for the region's currency crisis was misinterpreted and that he is not anti-Jew.

Anwar said upon securing a mandate from BN component party leaders at today's meeting, he would table a motion of confidence in Dr Mahathir's leadership at tomorrow's sitting of the Dewan Rakyat.

He said Members of Parliament would have a one day sitting to debate the motion upon its tabling scheduled for 3.30 pm tomorrow.

"We'll wait for the motion in Parliament tomorrow. Then we'll convey it to those concerned and the United States government," he said.

On whether tomorrow's motion would demand retraction of the congressmen's draft resolution against the prime minister, Anwar said :  
"No."

He said based on available evidence, the BN leadership denied allegations of Dr Mahathir's animosity with any local or foreign racial group, including the Jews.

"We the BN leadership reiterate that Malaysia is a multi-racial, multi-religious and multi-cultural nation.

"And the philosophy behind the Barisan Nasional's cause is the moulding of this pluralism into a force to build a strong and prosperous country successful in all fields," he said.

In this context, the BN supreme council affirmed that Dr Mahathir, as BN chairman and prime minister, had clearly expounded this ideal and translated it into an exemplary reality, said Anwar.

Anwar said under Dr Mahathir's leadership Malaysia has emerged as a model multi-racial nation developed on the principles of tolerance, justice and mutual respect.

"On the basis of his proven leadership of Malaysia, we (leaders of BN component parties) deny the allegation of Dr Mahathir's animosity with any race, within or outside the country, including the Jews," Anwar told the

news conference also attended by all the 14 BN component party leaders.

On US ambassador John Malott's statement that the draft resolution by the 34 US congressmen against Dr Mahathir was inappropriate, Anwar said: "We (Malaysia) have said that before. I think he is endorsing that statement".

At a news conference at the embassy yesterday Malott said: "I agree that it is inappropriate to call upon the leader of a foreign country to resign."

MCA president Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik told reporters separately later that the 34 congressmen had no right to ask Dr Mahathir to resign.

"They have no business to do that. We're a democratic country and our prime minister is democratically elected -- so they have no right," he said.

Ling asked: "How can you undermine democracy by asking an elected leader of a country to resign?"

On whether it would not be too bad if the congressmen only asked the prime minister to apologise, Ling said: "I think the total statement is something if you read properly, you won't be very proud of it."

Umno vice-president Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, who is also Foreign Minister, said Dr Mahathir commanded an overwhelming support of BN component parties whose leaders stood solidly behind the prime minister as they supported his policy.

Abdullah said: "You (the Americans) can't get rid of him because he is democratically elected by the people."

MIC president and Works Minister Datuk Seri S Samy Vellu encouraged the people to express, through their elected representatives in Parliament, solid support for the prime minister when the motion of confidence in Dr Mahathir is tabled tomorrow.

Gerakan president Datuk Seri Dr Lim Keng Yaik described the congressmen's draft resolution as blatant capitalisation of racial and religious politics and that they had a hidden agenda.

"Malaysia is not a racially segregationist country. This is evident by the various races living in harmony and working together towards attaining an industrialised-nation status," said Lim, who is Primary Industries Minister.

He said the congressmen's draft resolution would not augur well for Malaysia-US ties.

Peoples' Progressive Party (PPP) president M Kayveas said the US congressmen were trying to twist the matter and inflame the feelings of the Jews against Dr Mahathir.

The PPP urged the prime minister to be wary of the congressmen's actions and it would fully support whatever steps that Dr Mahathir would take to expose the fallacy of such actions. -- BERNAMA

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