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US-Mahathir

CALL FOR MAHATHIR'S RESIGNATION COUNTERPRODUCTIVE

By: Salmy Hashim

WASHINGTON, Nov 14 (Bernama) -- The US State Department has advised one of the congressmen co-sponsoring a draft resolution against Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir that the language calling for the resignation of the Malaysian Prime Minister is "counterproductive and could trigger a strong reaction from Malaysia", a US official said Thursday.

The congressman, one of 27 supporting the draft resolution, was contacted by telephone "but nothing was made in writing", said the official but she did not reveal the identity of the congressman.

She said the text on the draft condemning the Malaysian Prime Minister for allegedly making anti-Jewish remarks was not final and could be changed as other members view the resolution.

The US government "is interested" in the content of the resolution but is not involved in the crafting of the resolution.

"The State Department is not engaged in any formal consultations with congress. This is totally congress' area," she said.

The draft resolution is sponsored by Democrat congressman Robert Wexler of Florida, who is Jewish.

In a letter to Dr Mahathir, the US congressmen had demanded that Dr Mahathir make a public apology over his alleged remarks failing which he should resign as prime minister.

The congressional move has been denounced in Malaysia and drawn mounting protests from the public and all levels of government as well as opposition parties who condemned the call for Dr Mahathir's resignation as an interference in the domestic affairs of the country.

Dr Mahathir had clarified that his remarks blaming American financier, George Soros, who is a Jew, for the currency crisis in Southeast Asia had been misintrepreted and that he was not anti-Jewish.

The same official said the US viewed the recent death threats on Americans in Malaysia as serious following the development and is taking every precaution to protect its citizens in Malaysia.

The US government was very satisfied with the cooperation that they were receiving from the Malaysian police in investigating these death threats, she said.

No extraordinary measures would be taken to protect the embassy, but officials would be more vigilant, she said.

The US Embassy in Kuala Lumpur had received two telephone calls threatening the lives of four Americans in Malaysia which came a day after the killing of four American oil company executives in Karachi.

The US embassy on Thursday issued a statement advising all Americans in Malaysia to be on the alert and to report any suspicious or threatening behaviour to the police.

There are about 6,100 Americans working in Malaysia. Out of that, 235 of them are officials representing the various US government agencies, while the rest are company executives working in Malaysia.

There are also an estimated 20,000 students or tourists currently visiting family or friends in Malaysia, the official added. -- BERNAMA

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