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US-Mahathir

CONGRESSMEN ARE WRONG, SAYS US ENVOY

KUALA LUMPUR, Nov 17 (Bernama) -- US ambassador to Malaysia John Malott said today it was "inappropriate" for US congressmen to call on a leader of another country to resign and urged Washington and Kuala Lumpur to put a stop to all the bickerings which may have affected bilateral ties.

" Enough is enough. Let us put an end to this emotionalism. Let us all be more responsible in what we say and write. Let us try to control this ugly atmosphere, rather than contribute to it," he told a news conference at the US Embassy here.

Malott, who had just returned from a two-week vacation in Europe, said US-Malaysia relations were "too important not to do so".

He was commenting on the action by 27 US congressmen led by Robert Wexler (Democrat-Florida) to move a draft resolution at the US Congress calling on Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad to apologise for his alleged anti-Jewish remarks, failing which, he should resign as prime minister.

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

Malott said by saying that it was inappropriate for the congressmen to ask a foreign leader to resign, he had made 34 members of the congress angry at him.

" The congressmen have some influence over me on my future," he said.

He said he was prepared to "display this act of political courage" because he believed that the US-Malaysia relations were important.

Urging Malaysians not to be emotional, Malott, who himself appeared emotional as he read a prepared text, hoped that "in the days and weeks ahead, the Malaysian leaders in the government, business and in the press take a similar determination" to place importance on building a strong US-Malaysia ties.

Malott said as a friend of Malaysia, he was concerned about what he had heard and read in the local press about the growing belief among some Malaysians that "there is some benefit to be derived from engaging in America-bashing and thrashing the ties."

"I'm concerned about the growing tendency to blame everything that is happening on foreigners, usually Americans, or on the foreign press, usually American-owned," he said.

Malott said he was shocked to read local editorial opinions that the sale of foreign publications should be banned in Malaysia, or that the US' Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) was conspiring with the foreign press to bring down Dr Mahathir and that US government funds were being used to manipulate the stock market.

He also expressed disappointment over remarks that his embassy was not doing its job to improve bilateral ties.

Calling on all parties to put an end to this, he said: "My message today is about the importance of our relationship and the growing partnership that we have been building, My message today is "enough is enough"... to put it in the American slang, 'let's cool it'."

On the draft resolution against Dr Mahathir, Malott said it had not been forwarded to the US Congress and believed it would not be done "for some time".

While noting that the resolution stressed the importance the congress attached to US-Malaysia ties, Malott, however, said the congressmen had a

right to express their concern about the alleged remarks of the Prime Minister as reported by the Malaysian press.

When asked if Dr Mahathir's clarification on his statement about the Jews was conveyed by the embassy to the US government and the congressmen, Malott said they were aware as it was reported by BERNAMA in Washington.

" Almost anything that is said here is reported back in Washington because the US government subscribes to BERNAMA. If you go to any US government agency in Washington, you will see the BERNAMA press statement coming in.

" The clarifications that the Prime Minister made were reported directly by BERNAMA to US government officers and the embassy did send in reports of what the Prime Minister had to say, clarifying his remark," he said.

Despite the clarification, some of them (congressmen) were not satisfied, he said.

On the threatening phone calls received by the embassy which he said were aimed at him, Malott said he took the calls seriously and informed the Americans here about it.

Asked if he was sure the callers were Malaysians, he said he had no idea but they spoke in English. -- BERNAMA

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