

13 NOV 1997

Resolution

FATE OF DRAFT RESOLUTION ON PM UNDECIDED

By: Salmy Hashim

WASHINGTON, Nov 12 (Bernama) -- The fate of the proposed resolution on Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, introduced by a US Congressman, hangs in the balance as Congress goes on recess for 11 weeks from Wednesday.

The measure, introduced by Robert Wexler (Democrat-Florida), calls on the prime minister to apologise or resign for his alleged "inflammatory" anti-American and anti-Jewish remarks.

The draft resolution, which so far has the support of 27 congressmen, has not yet been introduced nor discussed in the US House of Representatives, but merely circulated to members.

It is learned that the Malaysian diplomatic community here are exerting efforts to persuade members to either withdraw or "tone down" the language of the resolution.

"Friends of Malaysia" on Capitol Hill are also being sought to move in Malaysia's favour, a reliable source here said today.

Diplomats here had hoped that US Defence Secretary William Cohen could meet with Dr Mahathir in Malaysia on Nov 18 as Cohen makes his trip to East Asia.

However, the trip, which would have taken him to China, South Korea, Japan, Malaysia, Indonesia and Singapore, has been cancelled because Cohen has to attend to matters on Iraq.

Cohen, a former US senator, who has developed a close friendship with Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, has friends on the Hill.

The strong Jewish lobby in the US, which have poured millions of dollars in congressional campaign funds, would probably not allow the resolution to be withdrawn.

However, a congressional observer said, the resolution would probably "die" or "get killed" before it gets a hearing at the sub-committee level.

A resolution such as this is not binding nor is it a piece of legislation that could be enforced, but merely states the sentiment of congressional members about a certain issue.

The strongly-worded House Concurrent Resolution 174 states:

"Expressing the sense of Congress regarding the anti-American and anti-Semitic remarks of Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad.

Whereas over the last several weeks, Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad of Malaysia has publicly made inflammatory anti-American and anti-Semitic statements;

Whereas his characterisation of a "Jewish agenda" to destroy the Malaysian economy is hateful bigotry recalling the horrors of Nazi doctrine and history's darkest moments;

Whereas it is the responsibility of the United States Congress to respond to the dangerous scapegoating of ethnic, religious, and cultural groups throughout the world; and

Whereas the United States and Malaysia had a close and enduring relationship since 1957, and the negative and volatile remarks of Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad violate the spirit of friendship and cooperation between our two nations: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the House of Representatives (the Senate concurring), That it is the sense of the Congress that -

(1) the democratically-elected Government of Malaysia should, on behalf

of the Malaysian people, specifically condemn the verbal attacks articulated by Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad;

(2) the Prime Minister of Malaysia should himself apologise and acknowledge the destructive and divisive nature of his words, or as an alternative, resign as the Prime Minister of Malaysia; and

(3) the United States and Malaysia should continue to strengthen their bilateral cooperation and work to ensure the human rights of all ethnic, religious, and cultural groups." -- BERNAMA

SH rn