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Parliament-Motion (support)

MAHATHIR A LIBERAL NOT RACIAL EXTREMIST, SAYS LING

KUALA LUMPUR, 19 Nov (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad is a liberal leader who does not like raising racial issues, the Dewan Rakyat was told today.

MCA president Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik said that it was inappropriate to regard Dr Mahathir as a racial extremist, and his success in uniting Malaysians of different races, religions and cultures clearly contradicted this.

"Dr Mahathir had personally allowed Israel to take in an international cricket championship here in spite of opposition from various quarters. He also invited Israeli students and youths to visit Malaysia," he said speaking during the motion of confidence supporting Dr Mahathir as Prime Minister.

Dr Ling, who is also Transport Minister, said the decision was to allow Israelis to see for themselves how the predominantly Muslim population could live in peace, tolerate, help and willing to share with other races who had also contributed towards peace, prosperity and racial harmony.

If Israel with the majority of its population being Jews could practice tolerance, helping one another and willing to share, it could also enjoy peace, prosperity and racial harmony, he said.

"Does the noble intention of wanting to bring peace, prosperity and harmony to Israel be regarded as anti-Semitic and anti-Jews?"

"Dr Mahathir, as Foreign Minister, has adopted an open policy by allowing Malaysians to visit Israel. Following that, many Malaysians have visited Israel on business or as tourists.

Dr Ling said that the sad thing was that the 34 US congressmen were not happy with Dr Mahathir, describing him as anti-Jews when the Israeli government, on the other hand, had wanted to enhance economic ties with Malaysia.

He said the Israeli government would not have done so if they thought Dr Mahathir was anti-Semitic and anti-Jews.

"Since his involvement in the political arena, Dr Mahathir's views on various issues have been clear and firm. And we know anti-Semitic or anti-Jews is not one of them.

"As such, the issue of asking him to apologise does not arise. The the resolution by US congressmen is too much as they are trying to interfere in the political affairs of the country," he said.

Dr Ling said Malaysians were now more determined and stronger in their support to Prime Minister Dr Mahathir.

MIC president Datuk Seri S. Samy Vellu, in supporting the motion, said the action taken by the US congressmen had deviated from the principles of democracy and international relations.

"Those who fought for democracy and freedom of speech should understand that the remark made by Prime Minister was not anti-Jews or any races.

"They have purposely twisted what our Prime Minister said for their own interest and agenda to seek revenge against a popular leader from this country," he said.

Samy Vellu, who is also Works Minister, said the motive behind the draft resolution by the US congressmen indirectly showed that they could take whatever action and at any time they liked against anyone.

"We strongly oppose the resolution because it is clearly interfering in the affairs of a sovereign nation.

"Now is the time for every Malaysian to give full support to Prime Minister when the country's sovereignty and prosperity are facing external threat," he said.

Gerakan president Datuk Seri Dr Lim Keng Yaik said the resolution was made a racial extremists in the United States.

The language used was extreme and could only come from racial extremists like "the Archie Bunkers of America", he said.

"They also regard all Third World Muslim leaders as the same without regards for the true situation in Malaysia as well as the explanation made by Prime Minister," he said.

Lim said the resolution should be opposed at the earlier stage before it made through to international relations committee or the Congress.

But, he said Malaysia should discuss the matter with US congressmen involved with the hope of changing their attitude.

Dr Lim, who is also Primary Industries Minister, said it was also improper for the United States to impose its law to other countries as this would be violating sovereignty of other nations.

Sabah Liberal Democratic Party president Datuk Chong Kah Kiat said there was no basis to claim by the US Congressmen that Dr Mahathir Mohamad was anti-Jews and they obviously did not understand the true situation in the country.

"The Prime Minister had at one time stuck to his decision to allow the Israeli cricket team here in spite of strong opposition from certain quarters," he said.

On the investigation against Petronas to see if its business dealings with Iran contravened U.S. law, he said the United States should be strengthening existing ties, not the other way around.

He said the move was also against the World Trade Organisation (WTO) regulations.

Parti Pesaka Bumiputera Bersatu Sarawak (PBB) deputy president Datuk Abang Abu Bakar Mustapha said the resolution by a group of US congressmen was an attempt to bully small nations and undermine the sovereignty of independent countries.

He called on Malaysians to give solid support to Dr Mahathir who had succeeded in building Malaysian from an agriculture country into modern economies.

Parti Bersatu Sabah (PBS) present Datuk Joseph Pairin Kitingan said the existing leadership must be kept intact for continued progress of the country.

Umno Youth leader Datuk Ahmad Zahaid Hamidi (BN-Bagan Datoh) viewed the move by the 34 congressmen as a show of arrogance.

He said he was told that out of 435 congressmen, only 20 per cent had ever visited other countries and this did not include Robert Wexler who sponsored the draft resolution before the U.S. House of Representatives.

So how could they understand the situation in other countries?, he said.

Wanita Umno Chief Datuk Dr Siti Zaharah Sulaiman (BN-Paya Besar), in supporting the motion, said Dr Mahathir had succeeded in turning Malaysia into a modern nation and as spokesman of developing countries.

Mohamed Sabu (PAS-Kubang Kerian), met at the Parliament Lobby, said PAS adopted a neutral stand in the matter because of it was too apologetic which eventually would lead to being soft to the Jews when the fact was that Israel is a terrorist nation.

Opposition PAS could not support the motion because the party was against Jews and Zionist, he said.

Sarawak Chief Minister Tan Sri Taib Mahmud said the draft resolution was made as though anyone could ask our prime minister to apologise and

resign.

"That is why we have to state our right. We are a sovereign nation and should be treated as such," he said. --BERNAMA

NM MY ABG