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PM: Quit suggestion made me stronger instead

KUALA LUMPUR, Tues. - Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, amid cheers from an admiring crowd, said suggestions from certain quarters that he should resign as Prime Minister had actually made his position stronger.

He said the suggestions came from two American weekly magazines, Time and Newsweek.

Dr Mahathir said this at the launching of the national truck "Hicom Perkasa" at the Putra World Trade Centre.

In a separate development, the Umno supreme council tonight condemned the move by an American Congressman to sponsor a resolution in the US House of Representatives to seek Dr Mahathir's resignation.

It has been reported that Congressman Robert Wexler had proposed a resolution backed by 23 of his colleagues, demanding that Dr Mahathir resign from his post or apologise for his purported "anti-American and anti-Semitic" remarks.

In dismissing the Congressman's move, the council at its monthly meeting, described it as unacceptable. The council's stand was made known by Umno deputy president and Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim at a Press conference at the end of a three-hour meeting.

Anwar said the matter would be brought to the Cabinet at its weekly meeting tomorrow.

Dr Mahathir was earlier asked whether the move could be interpreted as an intrusion on Malaysia's sovereignty.

"(It is) up to the Government to remove me, ask me to apologise or resign," he said.

Arguing that the resolution has not been passed by Congress, Dr Mahathir hoped that "good sense will prevail".

Press reports said that the resolution was tabled by Wexler, who is Jewish and a Democrat from Florida. The resolution, which was co-sponsored by 23 Congressmen, followed Dr Mahathir's so-called remarks on Oct 10 that a Jewish conspiracy was behind the depreciation of the ringgit and attacks on stock markets in Southeast Asia.

Dr Mahathir had, however, clarified the following day that he did not say efforts to impede the economy of Malaysia and other Muslim countries were due to a Jewish conspiracy.

Asked tonight whether he was worried over the move, Dr Mahathir said it was normal for bilateral relations to have its ups and downs.

"We will have to wait and see how it develops," he said.

Earlier when launching the national truck, Dr Mahathir said a foreign magazine had said that when ever he talked about currency manipulators, the ringgit depreciated and that when he left the country, the value of the currency rose.

"Now I want to say that each time Time and Newsweek magazines open their mouths, my seat (as Prime Minister) becomes firmer," he said to the cheers and applause from the audience.

Making light of the suggestions from the two magazines, the Prime Minister said he was grateful to them. "As a result of their suggestions, I am now firmly in my seat (as Prime Minister).

"If there's anybody here who may represent Time and Newsweek, please convey to them my gratitude for their suggestion that I step down because as a result of that suggestion, I am now more firmly in my seat," he said.

The Prime Minister drew his audience's attention to the attack on the

ringgit, saying that this has helped to make Malaysians more united than ever before.

He said he was also encouraged by the support from many quarters on the manner with which the Government was tackling the issue.

He also thanked opposition parties - Pas and the DAP - for their public support for his campaign against currency manipulators.

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