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Rafidah: US has no right to do it

KUALA LUMPUR, Thurs. - International Trade and Industry Minister Datuk Seri Rafidah Aziz said today the United States had no right to impinge upon the sovereign right of Malaysia and its citizens to conduct business with Iran.

Speaking after the launch of her biography at Holiday Villa in Subang Jaya, Rafidah said the Government stood by its decision that the US had no right to statutorily apply the Iran-Libya Sanctions Act 1996, a piece of US domestic legislation, on countries other than the US.

"They have no right to impinge on the sovereign right of Malaysia to do business with, to interact with, or to allow its own citizens, companies and corporations to do business with other countries whether or not those countries are friends of the US."

Rafidah was commenting on the news that a US official would be arriving on Nov 18 to investigate Petronas' investment in Iran's South Pars field.

She said the fact that the issue involved Petronas was merely a "coincidence" and the issue at heart involved the US' interference with Malaysia's sovereign rights.

"Nobody should tell another country with whom they should or should not be friendly with," she said, adding that the Government opposed the Iran-Libya Sanctions Act.

On Friday, US Under-secretary for Trade Stuart Eizenstat was quoted as saying that Petronas and four other companies ran the risk of US sanctions if investigations showed their business dealings had contravened the Iran-Libya Act 1996.

In Shah Alam, the Selangor Farmers Association which represents 38,000 farmers today pledged full support for Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and condemned those who alleged he was "anti-American and anti-Semitic".

Its chairman, Datuk Zainal Dahalan, said the association was of the same feelings that there should not be any interference in Malaysia's domestic affairs and no one had the right except Malaysians to decide on whom they want as their leader.

"Americans have no right to tell Dr Mahathir to resign as we Malaysians gave him the mandate to be the Prime Minister of whom we are proud of," he said at the Association's annual general meeting held at Radisson Hotel.

The association members were responding to the draft resolution of the 34 US Congressmen and their letter to Dr Mahathir over his alleged "anti-American and anti-Semitic".

In Tenom, Sabah, Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said the people should show support to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad who had been asked to make a public apology over his alleged "anti American and anti Semitic" remarks.

"The people should support our leaders because the issue involves the nation's dignity.

"We cannot simply bend to pressure imposed by foreign powers," Abdullah said before attending a meeting with Tenom Umno committee members today.

Abdullah was also commenting on the draft resolution of 34 United States Congressmen and their letter to Dr Mahathir over his alleged remarks.

Abdullah said it was unacceptable for the Congressmen to interfere with the country's internal affairs.

"There is no country which would like other powers to interfere with

their affairs.

"We too have not meddled in the affairs of other countries.

"Malaysia's relationship with other countries is based on respect. That should also be the case with Malaysia and the United States."

The 4B Youth Movement today also condemned Congressman Robert Wexler's move to table a resolution in the United States Congress to ask Dr Mahathir to apologise or step down.

Its president, Datuk Wira Mohamed Ali Rustam, said at a Press conference in Parliament that the movement which has a membership of 300,000 was strongly behind the leadership of Dr Mahathir.

"The movement will send a letter to the US Ambassador tomorrow and a protest note to Wexler," he added.

Mohamed Ali, who is also the president of the World Assembly of Youth, said he would also send a letter to inform its headquarters in Copenhagen of the movement's stand.

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