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Solid backing for Dr M, censure for Congressmen

KUALA LUMPUR, Wed. - MCA president Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has shown effective and credible leadership which brought success to the country.

He added that Dr Mahathir had transformed Malaysia from a small and not widely known country in Southeast Asia to a dynamic and fast developing one.

"Dr Mahathir's leadership has made Malaysia a model country for other developing countries to emulate," he said when seconding the motion of confidence supporting Dr Mahathir as Prime Minister which was tabled by Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim in Parliament today.

Dr Ling, however, said the country's economic development was not the sole achievement of Dr Mahathir. His leadership had also succeeded in uniting the people of various ethnic groups, cultures and religions.

Dr Ling, who is Transport Minister, said the Prime Minister had been given the mandate by the people through the country's general election held in 1995.

Under Dr Mahathir's leadership, he said, the Barisan Nasional received 65.4 per cent of the popularity votes, the highest ever achieved by the ruling party since the country achieved its independence.

"Besides, the BN won 162 (84 per cent) of the 192 Parliamentary seats."

Dr Ling said what was strange was that the United States, a country which always advocated and defended democracy, now showed an attitude of disrespect for democracy which duly elected Dr Mahathir.

On the action of 34 United States Congressmen to move a draft resolution in the US Congress calling Dr Mahathir to apologise for his alleged anti-Jewish remarks, or resign as Prime Minister, Dr Ling said:

"There is no basis at all. It is a fact that Dr Mahathir is liberal and does not like to raise racial issues."

He said it was improper to suggest that Dr Mahathir was a racial extremist.

"As a matter of fact, Dr Mahathir has successfully united the people of various races and of different religious beliefs and cultures."

To further dismiss the allegation of Dr Mahathir as anti-Jew, Dr Ling said that despite protests from several quarters, Dr Mahathir had even allowed Israel to take part in an international cricket tournament held in Malaysia recently.

He added that Dr Mahathir had also invited Israeli students and youths to visit Malaysia.

The objective, he said, was to allow these people to see for themselves how a country which has a majority of Muslim population could live peacefully with other ethnic groups.

He said Dr Mahathir, who is also the Home Minister, had adopted an open policy and had allowed Malaysians to visit Israel, adding that following this, many Malaysians had visited Israel either on business or as tourists.

Dr Ling added that it was sad that the 34 Congressmen had labelled Dr Mahathir as anti-Jew.

On the other hand, he said, the Israeli Government had shown intention to enhance bilateral economic relations with Malaysia.

He said that a well-known newspaper in Israel, Haaretz, had reported on Nov 3 that Israeli Trade and Industry Ministry, Natan Sharansky, had

announced that the State would relax its trade policy to encourage trade with Malaysia and Indonesia.

In conclusion, Dr Ling said: "Dr Mahathir, Sir, All Malaysians Love You, Respect You and Salute You."

The MIC also pledged its support for Dr Mahathir in his tireless efforts to bring about international fairplay and justice.

Its president, Datuk Seri S. Samy Vellu, said he believed there was no one who did not accept and understand the qualities of Dr Mahathir who had been recognised as a champion for Third World countries.

Speaking in support of the confidence motion in Dr Mahathir's continued leadership, Samy Vellu, who is Works Minister, and the MP for Sungai Siput, said the MIC opposed the action of the 34 Congressmen to move a draft resolution in the Congress calling Dr Mahathir to apologise for his alleged anti-Jewish remarks, or resign as Prime Minister.

He said Dr Mahathir was responsible for making Malaysia a model of a multi-racial and multi-religious society based on tolerance, justice and mutual respect.

He said the proposed resolution by the Congressmen was clearly an interference in the affairs of a democratic and sovereign country like Malaysia.

"Their action is in total defiance of the principles of democracy and international relations."

Samy Vellu said the Congressmen must accept the fact that Dr Mahathir "did not make any statement which was anti-Jew or anti-race in the world".

"This is the time for all Malaysians to show that they are united and firmly supported the leadership of Dr Mahathir."

Gerakan president Datuk Seri Dr Lim Keng Yaik, supporting the motion, described the words used in the letter written by the 34 Congressmen and the draft resolution by three Congressmen in asking Dr Mahathir to apologise or resign as Prime Minister as "abhorrent".

"This is because it could only be written by racists themselves with a political agenda to emotionalise their constituents so as to gather support for themselves."

Dr Lim, who is Primary Industries Minister, said the Congressmen tried to stereotype Third World Islamic leaders without wishing to understand the Malaysian situation and Dr Mahathir's explanation.

"We support Dr Mahathir, who, as a leader of a multi-racial, multi-religious and multi-cultural Malaysia, has succeeded in uniting our different races and bringing about political stability and peace."

As a result, he said, the Government had been able to bring prosperity to the people through sustained economic growth.

"This was so until we were attacked by rogue international fund managers who were greedy highway robbers, out to make money while destroying the country's economy and impoverishing us."

Dr Lim said that steps should be taken to fight against this draft resolution and to prevent it from reaching the International Relations Committee.

"It is no use talking to the proposers, as by the language of the resolution, they show that they are racists themselves."

"We should, however, talk and explain to US Congressmen who wrote to the Prime Minister and other influential Congressmen of the International Relations Committee and the Congress itself," he said.

Dr Lim added the party also opposed strongly the efforts of the US Government in using the Iran-Libya Sanctions Act 1996 on Petronas which was investing in the gas industry in Iran.

He described this as "extra territorial implementation of a purely American domestic legislation" which infringed on the sovereignty of

nations.

"We urge the Clinton administration to take heed of the opposition of countries in more than half the world and to refrain from implementing American laws in companies in other countries."

Dr Lim urged all Malaysians to stand behind Dr Mahathir.

Umno Youth chief Datuk Ahmad Zahid Hamidi said the United States should respect the freedom and independence of Malaysians if it really believed in democracy.

He said the US Congress should ignore the resolution proposed by Robert Wexler and the 34 Congressmen.

The Youth movement also wanted the Congress to respect Malaysia's independence which gave it the right to determine its leadership.

"In fact, they should respect our undivided support for the Prime Minister and it was irresponsible of them to ask him to resign," Ahmad Zahid said.

The Congress should accept the US Ambassador in Malaysia John Mallot's opinion that described the resolution by Wexler and 34 Congressmen as unwise.

Ahmad Zahid said the Dewan Rakyat's efforts today would go down in history and prove that Malaysians stood firmly behind their leader.

Barisan Nasional Backbenchers Club president Ruhanie Ahmad said United States President Bill Clinton should try and put some sense into the 34 Congressmen and make them realise that their action towards Dr Mahathir went against the United Nations Charter.

He said the US Congress had 435 seats in the Lower House and 100 more in the Upper House, which meant that the 34 Congress members in question only represented a minority.

"I hope these 34 Congress members, which I am sure were sponsored by an emotional group there, will realise that their action was negative and did not contribute to the efforts of creating peace and harmony."

Ruhanie also demanded that Mallot report to the US Government that Malaysians stood firm on the principle of peace.

On the Iran-Libya Sanctions Act, Ruhanie strongly opposed it, saying that it went against the principles of the Human Rights Declaration 1948.

If the Act was imposed on Petronas, it would surely affect the good relations that existed between Malaysia and US.

"I hope the Malaysian Government will not step down from its stand regarding this issue.

"I also hope the US Government will not enforce this Act on Petronas and any other company that invested in Iran," Ruhanie said.

Parti Bersatu Sabah president Datuk Joseph Pairin Kitingan (PBS-Keningau) said all Malaysians were responsible for the defence of their country when others tried to spoil democracy and peace.

Parti Pesaka Bumiputera Bersatu deputy president Datuk Abang Abu Bakar Mustapha (BN-Kuala Rajang) said the party was against outsiders trying to meddle with international trade.

Dr Mahathir, he said, had never been spiteful or made enemies with the Jews or their country.

"What he opposes are actions and policies that invade human rights. He is a fighter of basic human rights."

Also supporting the motion was Parti Liberal Democratic Sabah president Senator Datuk Chong Kah Kiat who said Dr Mahathir had proven he had good leadership qualities.

Chong urged all to back the Prime Minister.

He said others must now strive to maintain their good relations with Malaysia.

Pas deputy president Abdul Hadi Awang (Pas-Marang) said the party had

decided to abstain from the motion supporting Dr Mahathir because it was not important.

The Prime Minister, he said, had already received the mandate of the people in the 1995 election.

"Furthermore, why should we over-react to a resolution by 34 Congressmen who are only a minority? The resolution will not even be passed.

"This whole motion to support Dr Mahathir is an extension of internal political games.

"It is the Government's attempt to distract the people from the country's current economic problems," Abdul Hadi said.

He added that Pas opposed the interference of other countries in Malaysia's affairs and the actions of US and Jews towards Muslim countries "from the very beginning".

However, he said, Pas was upset with Dr Ling's statement that the Malaysian Government had ties with Israel.

"Foreign policies and practices should be consistent," he said when participating in the debate.

Former Deputy Prime Minister Tun Ghafar Baba told reporters at the lobby that being a giant, the US wanted "to step all over" the smaller countries.

"If they continue with their actions, the whole world will go against them," he said.

SUPP vice chairman Datuk Law Hieng Ding said it could not be denied that Dr Mahathir had provided a fair and open leadership.

In supporting the motion, Law said the party opposed the draft resolution of the 34 Congressmen.

"These Congressmen have no right at all to interfere in the affairs of another country."

Law said Malaysians were mature and did not need the advice and interference of foreigners to determine the country's leadership. is not afraid to expound his thoughts on issues which may be considered sensitive to some."

Law said this did not mean that Dr Mahathir was proud or arrogant.

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