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Mahathir-US

SUPREME COUNCIL REJECTS US CONGRESSMEN'S IMPENDING RESOLUTION ON DR M

KUALA LUMPUR, Nov 11 (Bernama) -- The Umno supreme council which met tonight rejected the move by 24 US congressmen to table a resolution calling on Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad to apologise or resign over alleged anti-semitic remarks which the congressmen attributed to the prime minister.

Umno deputy president Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim said such a resolution was unacceptable to the council which expressed regret over the move initiated by congressmen Robert Wexler (Democrat-Florida).

Anwar was speaking to reporters after attending a two-and-a-half-hour supreme council meeting chaired by Prime Minister and Umno president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

Earlier, Dr Mahathir said the council, the party's highest policy-making body, had given the mandate to the government to handle the US congressmen issue.

Asked on the government's next move on the matter, he said, "tomorrow's Cabinet meeting will decide."

Dr Mahathir had clarified that he did not make anti-Jewish remarks but had merely said that currency speculator George Soros, who was coincidentally a Jew, had destroyed Malaysia's economy through his speculative attacks on the ringgit.

Dr Mahathir said the congressmen had gone too far by contemplating such a resolution.

He said to them democracy meant they could direct other nations and others should dance to their tune.

"It is up to the Malaysian government to decide... whether I should apologize or resign," he said.

However, Dr Mahathir hoped "good sense will prevail" among the congressmen who comprised only a fragment of the US congress.

Asked whether the congressmen's action was an effort to impose sanctions on Malaysia, Dr Mahathir said he did not see it that way as it was not a US resolution.

"I would like to stress that it is not yet a US resolution. It is at the moment just a group of 24 congressmen unlike the action against Libya, Iran and Iraq," he said.

When asked whether he saw the resolution as a concerted effort to create uncertainties in Malaysia after the US wanted to send an official to Malaysia to investigate Petronas on its business dealings in Iran, he said:

"I cannot say, there is no clear evidence that they plan a conspiracy against us. We are not allowed to say there is a conspiracy."

On whether he was worried over the latest move, Dr Mahathir said: "Indeed, there are ups and downs in the relations between countries. We will see what happens."

On whether Malaysians would be concerned over the matter, he said it depended on them.

"We are a democratic country. If we are prepared to allow our democracy to be controlled by others, it is our own choice," he said.

He said the latest developments had not soured relations between Malaysia and the US as it was only the work of a small group of congressmen.

The meeting also decided on the dates for Umno branch and divisional meetings for next year -- from Feb 16 to March 15 while divisional

conferences from March 16 to 31.

Dr Mahathir also said Umno secretary-general Datuk Sabbaruddin Chik had informed the council that the word "new" in the party's name had been dropped following approval from the Registrar of Societies. A resolution to this effect had been passed at the last Umno General Assembly.

The meeting also discussed the country's economic situation and plans to revive it.

He also said the meeting touched on the abuse of position in the area of religion by certain civil servants involved in politics.

He said government institutions had been used in a recent by-election to support a former lecturer.

On the US government's move to investigate Petronas over its development of a gas field in Iran, Dr Mahathir said the council did not discuss the matter.

He, however, said Umno would cooperate with the Barisan Nasional (BN) Youth which had condemned the US' action.

On Monday, BN Youth chairman Datuk Ahmad Zahid Hamidi said the movement would urge the government to stop the US official from coming here to investigate Petronas. -- BERNAMA

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