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A move that will strengthen our resolve to resist interference

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DEPENDING on which side of the fence you are on in the Anwar Ibrahim issue, your reaction to the move by several members of the US House of Representatives to pressure for his release will either be one of support or anger.

And if you are on neither side, then you don't have to be either. Certainly it is of great concern and must not be taken lightly but we should not overreact or be unduly worried.

This is, after all, politics, to borrow a cliché. And certainly nothing that the Government cannot handle as it must expect Parti Keadilan Nasional's campaign to free Anwar to continue.

It was reported that seven congressmen and women filed a resolution recently in the House of Representatives calling on the Malaysian Government to provide Anwar with "the process of law either by offering him a new trial under fair and transparent procedure or by dismissing all charges against him".

The resolution, referred to the Committee on International Relations, was filed by Chris Smith of New Jersey, Ileana Ros-Lehtinen of Florida, Tom Lantos, Dana Rohrabacher and Ed Royce of California, Neil Abercrombie of Hawaii and Robert Wexler of Florida on Oct 27.

For Keadilan, it is probably something of a victory proving that its Free Anwar Campaign (FAC) machinery is well-oiled, running smoothly and getting results.

The party believes its collaboration with the mighty USA has been so fruitful that it is definitely inspired and encouraged to carry on its mission and achieve its objective.

Party president Datin Seri Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail who is Anwar's wife, when asked for her response on Thursday at the Parliament lobby, expressed the hope that the "gesture would not be misconstrued".

She said this showed that the US Congress was fighting for human rights, democracy, and this was what the resolution was about.

Dr Wan Azizah believed that the filing of the resolution was under the ambit of the FAC. Keadilan media co-ordinator Raja Petra Kamarudin is the director of the FAC secretariat.

Is it a victory of sorts for Keadilan?

"No. How can it be? It is nothing," said a political analyst.

He doubted that the congressmen and women's action would have much impact.

"It is a pin prick. The resolution is asking for the impossible - to get a new trial for Anwar or to dismiss all charges.

"It is interference, certainly. But the Malaysian Government cannot be pressured by all this and the Malaysian Government is not known to submit to such pressure," he said.

The report on the US congressmen and women having filed the resolution somewhat caps reports of the anti-Mahathir campaign overseas undertaken by Keadilan Youth chief Ezam Mohamed Noor.

Clearly, Keadilan is waging an anti-Mahathir war. There have been few battles but the party appears to have begun an all-out campaign against Dr Mahathir to win support for Anwar.

The (US congress) resolution is obviously part of the Anwar support lobby.

But it is worthwhile to note that Ezam, while admitting to having

maligned Dr Mahathir in his overseas campaign had denied being involved in an anti-Malaysia smear campaign by engaging Janus-Merritt Strategies (JMS) a public affairs/government relations firm.

Keadilan said it was "friends of Anwar" who had got JMS to lobby for Anwar through economic and political influence.

It would be so naive to think that Keadilan is sitting idle. And it would be just as naive to be surprised.

Keadilan is an opposition party established after Anwar was jailed. Surely it will do all it can to get him free - malign Dr Mahathir and his policies, malign Malaysia and its political and judicial system.

The brickbats are coming in against the US congress resolution. The message from the government, parliamentarians and political parties is that the US should butt out and stay out of Malaysia's internal affairs.

Already, Ezam and Keadilan have been condemned. And yes, they should be if they are part of the campaign to put economic pressure on Malaysia. Ezam is not naive to think that if he and his party are responsible for any damage to the economy, Malaysians will be silent.

While the action of the seven US congressmen and women is a bit of an irritant, there is every reason to stay cool.

"Yes, it is a resolution filed by US lawmakers in the US House of Representatives. Don't let this beguile or overwhelm us.

"In our own big way, we can counter this. If we don't know how to, then we must start by strategising effective measures.

"If anything, all this should strengthen our, the government's and the people's, resolve to resist the interference," said an economist.

Malaysians might have their political predilections, but they are proud of the country's political stability and economic recovery.

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