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Mahathir-Singapore

MALAYSIA IS NOT A GHOST TO SCARE SINGAPOREANS

JOHOR BAHRU, Sept 7 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today Singapore should not use Malaysia as a tool to scare its citizens for whatever purpose, including to strengthen the position of the ruling party in the island republic.

The Prime Minister said statements by the republic's leaders could be construed as though they referred to Malaysia as a "ghost" that the people of Singapore must face if they did not work hard or if they did not vote for the ruling party.

"Like the old folks scaring the children, when the sun sets they say the ghost will come so that the kids will rush into the house.

"We become ghosts to scare (their citizens) so that (hopefully) they will vote (their party)," he told reporters after officiating the Universiti Telnologi Malaysia's University-Industry Technology Advancement Programme (UNITAP) at Skudai, near here.

Last night, the Umno Supreme Council expressed its displeasure over the statement by Singapore leaders which inferred that meritocracy and racial harmony did not exist in Malaysia.

On June 7, former Singapore Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew said the republic must be stronger, more orderly and competitive if it did not want a remerger with Malaysia. If there was to be a remerger, it must be based on a policy of meritocracy.

Dr Mahathir said the republic's leaders should not have compared Malaysia with Singapore in such a manner as though Malaysia was not as good as the republic.

When asked whether the government would send an official letter to Singapore following the displeasure registered by Umno, he said that for the time being such action was not necessary.

On the possibility of Singapore reacting to Umno's stand, Dr Mahathir said: "We did not start it, they were the ones who started it. Is it fair to make such a comparison?"

The Prime Minister said it was Singapore that did not practice meritocracy because discrimination against the Malays in the republic was very apparent.

He said the information he received showed that there were no Malays in the republic who were qualified to be a Singapore Air Force (SAF) pilot or a senior government officer.

"I don't believe Singapore Malays are so stupid. I may be mistaken, but that is the feedback that I get," he said.

Asked when would the Singapore-Malaysia remerger issue be settled when both countries continued to make statements, the Prime Minister said: "They make statements, we make statements too."

On the frequent intrusions by SAF jetfighters into Malaysia's airspace despite the numerous warnings issued, Dr Mahathir said: "If they ignore (the warnings), we will not allow them (to fly over Malaysia's airspace)".

In KUALA LUMPUR, Umno secretary general Datuk Mohamed Rahmat described the statements by Singapore leaders inferring that meritocracy and racial harmony did not exist in Malaysia as dirty tactics by them to remain in power.

He said such statements were not proper as they insulted Malaysia particularly the Malays.

Mohamed said if the PAP (People's Action Party) wanted to remain in

power it should convince the people of Singapore of its leadership and not use "dirty tactics" by intimidating the people with the remerger issue.

Speaking to reporters after launching the RTM Current Affairs Division Homepage service at the Kuala Lumpur Tower here, he said Singapore must remember that the racial harmony enjoyed by the people there depended very much on the situation in Malaysia itself.

In fact, he added, Singapore must also remember that if it had not been for the Malaysian Armed Forces keeping the situation under control during the racial riots in the republic following the Natrah issue before, Singapore would not be what it is today.

In PETALING JAYA, MCA Presiden Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik said the comment made by Singapore leaders on the remerger "threat" is truly uncalled for.

He said Singapore should be more sensitive to the sensitivity of their neighbours in making any comments.

"They may intend their comment for internal consumption in Singapore... But they should also be sensitive and knowledgable enough to know that the world is listening," he told reporters after the opening ceremony of the Nanyang Siang Pau new building here when asked to comment on Umno's disappointment over the Singapore's statement.

"With today's information age, today's technology, the world is listening and they should be more sensitive to the sensitivity of their neighbours. I think their comment in this context is very uncalled for," said Dr Ling who is also Transport Minister.

Asked to comment further on the statement by Singapore, Dr Ling said: "Our Prime Minister has answered them very well, we don't want failures to merge with Malaysia, we only want people who succeed."

-- BERNAMA

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