

13 MAR 1997

Mahathir-Apology

APOLOGY ..A STEP TOWARDS IMPROVED TIES- DR MAHATHIR

KOTA TINGGI, Johor, March 13 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamed said tonight Singapore Senior Minister Lee Kuan Yew's apology was a step towards improving relations.

Asked whether he viewed this positively, Dr Mahathir said: "I always view things positively unless people view me negatively, then I am negative."

He was speaking to reporters before attending a dinner at Sevana Cove and Marina Resort here.

According to Reuter's news agency the Singapore Senior Minister apologised unreservedly for the offence he caused by a statement he made about Johor.

"The Senior Minister had no intention to cause offence and apologises unreservedly for the offence he has caused to the government and people of Malaysia by his statement on Johor," Reuter's News Agency quoted Lee's press secretary as saying in a statement.

Earlier Dr Mahathir had said Singapore should say nice things and not make unfair remarks about Malaysia if it wanted good relations.

He said remarks like Johor being a notorious place and Malaysia not practising meritocracy should not be made because Malaysia too knew that Singapore did not practise the system (meritocracy) and in fact certain people were discriminated there.

"Some people can achieve something here but the same person in Singapore cannot do it there," he said.

Among the things Malaysia was uneasy about were the rise in the rental rates for the Royal Malaysian Navy (RMN) Base in Woodlands and the call for KTM trains to discontinue their service to Tanjung Pagar in Singapore.

"We willingly handed over the Woodlands Base to them even though we have the right to own it. The rise in rates caused problems," he said.

On the rail service, he said KTM had the right to operate the service to Tanjung Pagar for 99 years but Singapore wanted KTM to stop plying up to Tanjung Pagar.

"The Government only knows this. We did not talk about it to others but since you asked, I am saying," he said. -- BERNAMA

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