

27/03/1997

Chronology of events

JAN 27 - Singapore Senior Minister Lee Kuan Yew files an affidavit with the Singapore High Court, which, among other things, describes Johor as "notorious for shootings, muggings and car-jackings". In another paragraph in the affidavit, Lee stated: "Why would a person who claimed that he needs police protection, not go to see the police himself? Why would he (Tang), instead, go to Johor? If there is anywhere where people can do him harm, that is the place." The affidavit was filed in relation to a defamation suit against Singapore Opposition candidate Tang Liang Hong.

March 11 - Lawyer and Parti Rakyat Malaysia deputy president Razak Ahmad, a close friend of Tang, reveals the contents of Lee's affidavit at a Press conference in Johor Baru. Tang was also present at the Press conference.

March 12 - Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim says he is "appalled and surprised" at the remarks.

* Following a Cabinet meeting, Foreign Minister Datuk Abdullah Ahmad Badawi says members of the Cabinet were "offended, shocked and baffled" by Lee's statement which he describes as lacking sensitivity to, and concern about, the goodwill between the two countries.

* Acting Singapore High Commissioner Vanu Gopala Menon is summoned to Wisma Putra and handed an aide-memoire (diplomatic note) demanding that Lee apologise and retract his statement.

March 13 - Lee's Press secretary issues a statement in which Lee "apologises unreservedly" to the Government and people of Malaysia. The statement explained that Lee's remarks portraying Johor as crime-ridden had been based on Press reports. The statement said Lee had no intention to cause offence and had not realised his affidavit would be made public.

* Together with the apology, Wisma Putra also receives an aide-memoire from the Singapore Government acknowledging that Menon had conveyed the contents of the aide-memoire from Wisma Putra on March 12.

* Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad says he is "neither glad nor not glad" with Lee's explanation and reveals the extent of difficulties the Government has had in recent and current dealings with Singapore, particularly in giving up the Malaysian Naval Base in Woodlands and a plan to jointly develop KTM Bhd land at Tanjung Pagar.

March 14 - Malaysia's Barisan Nasional and Opposition leaders unanimously call for Lee to take steps to expunge the offending paragraphs if he was serious about his apology.

March 15 - Singapore Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong describes Lee's remarks as "offside" and says the Senior Minister recognises that, as a member of the Singapore Government, he was offside in his remarks on Johor.

March 17 - Wisma Putra expresses surprise that the aide-memoire from the Singapore Government did not address the Malaysian Government's concerns on the issue nor express any feelings of regret or remorse over the matter. It also said any assertion that Lee's statement was made in a private capacity was unacceptable and called on the Singapore Government to provide an explanation for it.

* Lee announces that his lawyer, Davinder Singh, has been directed to apply to the Singapore High Court to delete the offending statements from court records.

* Anwar refers to Lee's action to remove the offending paragraphs as

"more positive".

March 19 - Abdullah announces in a statement after a Cabinet meeting that the Malaysian Government viewed Lee's actions to remove the offending paragraphs as being positive, but that "restoration of the old level of relationship would take time".

* Singapore Foreign Minister S. Jayakumar expresses surprise over this statement since the affidavit was not made by Lee "as Senior Minister nor did he make it on behalf of the Singapore Government".

(END)