

18 MAR 1997

Mahathir-Kuan Yew

MAHATHIR DEFERS COMMENT ON LEE'S LATEST MOVE

JERANTUT, March 18 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today deferred comment on Singapore Senior Minister Lee Kuan Yew's move to expunge his derogatory remarks on Johor from a court affidavit in the republic.

"We will tell you after the Cabinet meeting tomorrow," said a smiling Dr Mahathir when asked if he was happy with Lee's statement issued yesterday evening.

He was speaking to reporters before leaving for Kuala Lumpur after a two-visit to Pahang.

Dr Mahathir said he was informed of Lee's latest move through a letter sent to him last night.

In his statement, the former Singapore premier said he had instructed his counsel to seek the court's permission to delete his "offending sentences" on Johor in a Jan 27 affidavit in which he described Johor as being "notorious for shootings, muggings and car-jackings."

The affidavit was filed in his defamation suit against opposition figure Tang Liang Hong who crossed the Causeway to Johor after being defeated in the recent Singapore general election alleging that he had received death threats.

In his statement, Lee repeated his unreserved apology to the Malaysian government and people for his remarks on Johor which had created a furore here.

Lee said it was never his intention to cause offence and he had instructed his counsel to seek the court's permission to have the offending sentences deleted.

Lee had apologised before this but he failed to quell the outrage among government leaders and politicians who said Lee should retract his insulting remarks on Johor as well to indicate his sincerity.

Earlier, Dr Mahathir wrapped up his visit to Pahang by launching the world's longest canopy walkway at the National Park.

He was accompanied by his wife, Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohamed Ali.

-- BERNAMA

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