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Sabbaruddin-Singapore

MALAYSIA HAS NO QUARREL WITH SINGAPOREANS, SAYS SABBARUDDIN

KUALA LUMPUR, March 27 (Bernama) -- Malaysia has no quarrel with the people of Singapore, but is not happy with the attitude its leaders, said Culture, Arts and Tourism Minister Datuk Sabbaruddin Chik.

"I think our relation and friendship with the people of Singapore is fine. It's only the attitude of its leaders that we don't like, no problem with the Singaporeans," he told reporters here today.

He was asked whether the latest move by the government to freeze fresh bilateral dealings with the republic would affect tourist arrivals from Singapore.

Earlier he officiated the Exhibition on "Infidelity - Violations of Family Values" at the National Museum.

Asked on current ties between the two countries, Sabbaruddin who is also Umno secretary general said: "We want Singapore to understand that we can't behave like children. Don't say bad things about others, then say sorry. They should realise that we too have feelings. This is important."

He said the behaviour of Singaporean leaders did not reflect any sincerity at all as they were perplexed that efforts to mend relations would take time.

Sabbaruddin explained that the suspension of dealings according to the Cabinet decision yesterday meant that in the field of sports, for example, "If we have any sporting activities with them, then it will be suspended."

He added that meetings at official level between Singapore and Malaysia on tourism would also be suspended until further notice.

"In this regard, the Singapore-Malaysia joint committee on tourism which meets occasionally depending on the need, will be suspended until there is a decision otherwise," he said

Asked whether Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad had been informed of the Cabinet decision, he said: "I don't know about that, it is the responsibility of Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim (the Deputy Prime Minister) to inform (Dr Mahathir)."

Asked whether the Cabinet decided on the decision without exception, he replied: "Certainly we are not happy, if we are happy we wouldn't be suspending this kind of thing."

Sabbaruddin however said that the issue on Singapore need not be discussed by the Umno Supreme Council now. "I don't see that there is any significance to bring the matter to the Supreme Council. But if there is any instruction, then it would certainly be discussed."

Meanwhile, Umno Youth leader Datuk Ahmad Zahid Hamidi urged Singapore Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong to state the Singapore government's official stand on the issue.

"Singapore must take the initiative to mend the rift between the republic and Malaysia," he told reporters at the Parliament lobby, here.

He also urged Malaysian companies to support the government's move by using Malaysian ports for their exports instead of exporting through Singapore.

In SHAH ALAM, the Selangor Umno Youth movement urged Singapore Senior Minister Lee Kuan Yew to resign for his derogatory statement on Johor recently which angered Malaysians.

Its head, Sohaimi Abdul Rahman said the government should only consider efforts to mend the rift with Singapore after Lee's resignation.

He fully supported the Cabinet's decision to freeze fresh dealings with the republic as a lesson to remind Singapore leaders in future. -- BERNAMA

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