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MP calls for apologies from Lees and Goh

ong; Cheah Chor Sooi

A BACKBENCHER yesterday called on Singapore Senior Minister Lee Kuan Yew, his son, Lee Hsieng Loong and Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong to tender a public apology to the people, Government and Sultan of Johor over the former's statement that shooting, robbery and car-jackings were common in Johor.

Ruhanie Ahmad (BN-Parit Sulong) said the apology tendered by the senior Lee alone was not sufficient as his son, Hsien Loong is a young leader with the potential to lead Singapore.

Bernama reports that Ruhanie, who appeared to be close to tears, said: "We are prepared to put aside historical sentiment that Singapore was opened and owned by the Malays and all the sacrifices were made by the Malays in the interest of co-existence."

He said Lee's derogatory remarks could not be forgotten by everyone in the country and would hurt the feelings of Malaysians forever.

He was speaking during the debate on the motion of thanks to the royal address.

Ruhanie also said the Government should carry out a study to instil awareness on the importance of information technology among civil servants and political leaders in a move towards realising the objectives of the Multimedia Super Corridor.

He said he had observed that there were political leaders and government employees who seemed indifferent towards the MSC although some appreciated Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's objectives.

An impact study was important in ensuring that leaders understood and were committed to ensure the success of the IT industry.

However, in its eagerness to create the manpower in IT, the Government must not neglect to provide work force in the other fields, he said.

He said the Government should also suggest to local financial institutions that they be more responsive to the needs of bumiputera entrepreneurs in securing credit facilities and capital to venture into the MSC-related businesses.

Lim Kit Siang (DAP-Tanjong) expressed the DAP's willingness to co-operate with the Government in tackling social issues which he felt should be approached in an integrated basis by all parties.

He said social problems, if not addressed immediately, would hinder efforts in achieving national objectives to become a developed nation through "Vision 2020".

He also urged the Anti-Corruption Agency to furnish a report on developments pertaining to the investigation on Selangor Menteri Besar Tan Sri Muhammad Taib who was detained at the Brisbane airport in Australia in December last year for failing to declare money totalling RM2.4 million that he was carrying.

He said although the ACA was investigating the matter, it was important that the agency reported developments on the investigation.

Lim also called for Parliament and the various State Legislative Assemblies to play a special role in the country's transition towards an Information Society.

He said all MPs and State Assemblymen should seek to raise awareness about IT among the public, particularly those who are non users or unconfident users of information and communications technologies.

He said MPs and State Assemblymen should play a role in removing the

social, educational and cultural barriers for people who would like to know more about computers, Internet and IT.

"To do this, Parliament and the State Assemblies should establish IT Standing Committees to promote IT literacy among all sectors of the people and popularise the concept of the Information Society where Malaysia can fully benefit from the information and communications technologies," he said when speaking during the debate. He was continuing from Tuesday.

Lim said for a start there should be a programme to make all Ministers, Deputy Ministers, Parliamentary Secretaries, Chief Ministers, Menteri Besar, MPs and State Assemblymen computer literate within a year.

"This should be done before the official take-off of the Multimedia Super Corridor next September with the completion of the Prime Minister's office complex in Putra Jaya.

"This is important because government leaders and politicians can be role models to help the people, especially those above 40 years, to overcome their fear of computers.

"Secondly, Parliament and all State Assemblies should have interactive homepages whereby members of the public can have access to Parliamentary and State Assembly proceedings as well as their elected representatives.

"All MPs and State Assemblymen should have e-mail addresses for online contact," he said.

Lim said the DAP has created history in posting the Computer Crimes Bill on the Internet both as a national service and as another step in bringing Malaysia into the Information Society.

The meeting continues today.