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Mahathir-Singapore

NO EXTRAORDINARY STEP TO MEND RIFT WITH SINGAPORE, SAYS MAHATHIR

KUALA LUMPUR, March 23 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today he does not want to put any condition on the Singapore government to mend the diplomatic furore between the two countries.

The Prime Minister said Malaysia is not going to do anything extraordinary regarding the matter.

Speaking to reporters on his return from Saudi Arabia at the Sultan Abdul Aziz Shah Airport in Subang near here, Dr Mahathir said the Cabinet had already made a decision.

The government has accepted Senior Minister Lee Kuan Yew's apology over his remarks on Johor made in his affidavit filed in a Singapore court in support of his defamation suit against opposition party member Tang Liang Hong.

However the government said it would take time to restore the old level of friendship with Singapore.

Dr Mahathir was asked by reporters if the Singapore government should take the first step to mend the diplomatic row between Malaysia and Singapore.

"Although we feel that it's all over, like the saying goes, only time will heal a broken heart," he said.

Stressing that the government would stick to the Cabinet's decision, Dr Mahathir said: "We will let time heal (the wound)."

"What else is there to do...I don't know the responsibility about whose government (should make the first move to mend the rift) but all I can do is that, that is the decision of the Cabinet.

"I do not wish to say anything more. I have no wish to, in any way, put down conditions or anything like that (on the Singapore government)," he said.

Asked if the matter should be laid to rest, the Prime Minister said if others wanted to talk about it, they can do so because it is their right "(but) I don't want to talk about it anymore".

"Who makes matters worse or not is something for everybody to say," he added.

Regarding the statements by certain parties that Lee's son, Hsien Loong, should also apologise, the Prime Minister said: "I am not bothered too much as to who apologises."

Yesterday, Umno Youth chief Datuk Ahmad Zahid Hamidi asked why Hsien Loong, who also signed the affidavit, had kept quiet over the issue. He had also wanted him to apologise.

Hsien Loon, who is Singapore Deputy Prime Minister, was quoted yesterday as saying that his father's apology was "his as well". -- BERNAMA

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