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Umno Youth leads protests against Lee

THE Umno Youth, armed with anti-Lee Kuan Yew banners, led protests against the Singapore Senior Minister for his disparaging description of Johor with demonstrations at the Singapore High Commission in Kuala Lumpur and in Johor Baru, where Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad was starting a two-day visit.

Its leader Datuk Ahmad Zahid Hamidi said at the demonstration in Kuala Lumpur the movement will sue Lee for defamation if he does not make a public apology and retract his statement.

Among other things, the banners called Lee "senile" and "stupid", and urged the former Singapore Prime Minister to respect the feelings of Malaysians in general.

Lee sent an official letter of apology for describing Johor as a place "notorious for shootings, muggings and car-jackings" around 6pm yesterday, but not before various other Malaysian parties had expressed their views.

The Consumers Association of Penang (CAP) sent two press releases within an hour yesterday to express its sentiments.

CAP president S.M. Mohd Idris sent out the first press statement to Business Times at 2.14pm, calling for a review of the water pact with Singapore. The republic relies heavily on Malaysia for water, drawing about 1.527 billion litres daily from Johor under two agreements. The first agreement expires in 2011 and the second runs out in 2061.

It also demanded that Lee's datukship bestowed by the Johor Sultan be stripped. Lee received the datukship in 1984.

At 3.09pm, CAP sent another statement asking the Government to also suspend all trade and other arrangements with Singapore. In addition, CAP said the Government should also recall its High Commissioner to Singapore to be briefed on these actions.

Deputy Entrepreneur Development Minister Idris Jusoh said in Kuala Lumpur even though Malaysians are unhappy with such statements, it is important for good relations between the two countries to continue, as there has always been close understanding between them.

In Alor Star, Kedah Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Sanusi Junid said Lee was actually jealous of Malaysia's remarkable success.

"Lee Kuan Yew is envious of our success, he may have a problem of superiority complex and feel he is intelligent and more qualified to rule a country bigger than Singapore."

Lee's statement reflected a person who is frustrated and he wanted to show his superiority, he said.

The DAP, in a statement, said it will move a motion in Parliament, which sits beginning March 24, to condemn Singapore if there were no public apology and withdrawal of the statement.

"DAP supports the strong action taken by the Government demanding that both Singapore and Lee Kuan Yew apologise for insulting and angering Johoreans and Malaysians," said party deputy secretary-general Lim Guan Eng.

At a press conference in Johor Baru, Tang Liang Hong, 61, the Singapore politician who sparked a diplomatic tiff between Malaysia and Singapore, denied he was the cause.

Tang claimed that Singapore's Senior Minister Lee Kuan Yew should be blamed for his remarks that Johor is "notorious for shootings, muggings and car-jackings" in his affidavit in connection with his defamation suit

against Tang.

He said Lee should not make such a statement knowing that it could jeopardise the relations between the two neighbouring countries.

"Lee should have known that his statement in the affidavit is a public document," he told a news conference attended by the majority of the foreign press here.

Tang, a Singapore Workers Party candidate who lost in the recent election has been sued by Lee, Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong and six other People's Action Party (PAP) candidates for calling them liars, among other things.

Asked if Singapore is a safer place to live in, he said: "If you are prepared with your head down ... maybe yes, to some extent, it is a safer place but if you are with your head up and chest up ... speak up ... I don't think it's safer place for anybody who wants to speak up."

Asked how long he intends to stay outside Singapore, Tang said it is very difficult for him to decide because his heart and mind are still with Singapore.

"I will come back when the time is right and when I have finished all the documents relating to my case," he added.

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