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Zahid - Kuan Yew

UMNO YOUTH WANTS TO START AFRESH TIES WITH SINGAPORE

PETALING JAYA, April 29 (Bernama) -- The Umno Youth today welcomed the move by Senior Minister Lee Kuan Yew to delete his disparaging remarks on Johor in his affidavit in connection with his defamation suit against Singapore Workers' Party member Tang Liang Hong.

Its leader, Datuk Ahmad Zahid Hamidi said the movement accept Lee's move positively.

"We hope that there will no more such remarks either directly or indirectly in that future that could hurt the feelings of Malaysians," he told reporters after attending the opening of a National Congress on Vision 2020 by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad at Bandar Sunway, here.

A Singapore High Court yesterday allowed Lee's statements about rampant crime in Johor be deleted from the affidavit in the interest of maintaining good relations with Malaysia.

In the affidavit, Lee had said he was baffled why Tang had fled to Johor when he feared for his safety in Singapore.

"Of all places, he (Tang) went to Johor. That place is notorious for shootings, muggings and car-jackings. It does not make any sense for a person who claims to be fearful for his life to go to a place like Johor," Lee said in the affidavit.

Lee had apologised for the remarks which Malaysia accepted. But, the remarks had dented bilateral ties which Malaysia said would take time to return to normal.

Ahmad Zahid said the Umno Youth planned to conduct exchange visit with young leaders of the ruling People's Action Party (PAP).

"PAP young leaders led by Brig-Gen George Yeo can visit Malaysia to meet Umno Youth leaders and we will also visit Singapore if they invite us," he said.

He said Umno Youth hoped the visits would build stronger bridge of friendship between the two countries in starting afresh ties between the two countries.

Meanwhile, Foreign Minister Datuk Abdullah Haji Ahmad Badawi described Lee's move as a good development.

"We hope better ties after this," he said when met at the same function.

But, Abdullah said relations between the two countries would take time to go back to normal. "We hope nothing will happen until then."

Johor Menteri Besar Datuk Abdul Ghani Othman, who was also attending the national congress, welcomed the move by Lee to delete the offending remarks.

"He has done what he had promised to do," he said.

Education Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak described Lee's move as an important step in continuing bilateral ties.

"We are very pleased that he has honoured whatever he has promised and we hope that we can move on and look at the substantive aspects of our relationship in future," he said. -- BERNAMA

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