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CIQ issue not just a technical matter, says Najib

KUALA LUMPUR, Sun. - Umno vice-president and Education Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak said the Singapore Government's order for Malaysia to move its Customs, Immigration and Quarantine checkpoint from Tanjong Pagar to the Woodlands should not be seen as a technicality.

Instead, Umno should view the issue in a broader and longer-term perspective of the relationship between the two countries.

He said Umno fully supported Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's stand that the Malaysian CIQ remained at Tanjong Pagar.

Najib, who is also Malaysian Strategic Research Centre chairman, was speaking after opening a forum titled Malaysian Challenges: Education Perspective, organised by MSRC in Malacca today.

In Ipoh, Transport Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik reiterated the Prime Minister's stand that Singapore must bear responsibility for the current problem.

Since it was started by the Singapore authorities, they must take the initiative to end it, he said.

Dr Ling said he could not understand why Singapore had shifted its CIQ since there were other things more important to be tackled such as the economic problems affecting the country and region.

In Johor Baru, Information Minister Datuk Mohamed Rahmat reiterated that the media in Singapore was inciting Singaporeans to hate Malaysia.

Mohamed said while good relations had always prevailed between the two countries, the republic's media was deliberately discrediting Malaysia so as to create a Malaysia-hating generation in Singapore.

"I reckon the action by the republic's media will not benefit Singapore in the end," Mohamed said after simultaneously opening the Khadijah Mosque and celebrations to mark the Prophet Muhammad's birthday in Taman Ungku Tun Aminah in Skudai near here today.

In Singapore, a Singaporean lawmaker blamed Malaysia for the simmering dispute and said Malaysia was using the city-state as a scapegoat.

"If someone has a special intention to divert his country's failure to deal with the economic crisis onto Singapore, it is very unfair for all Singaporeans," lawmaker Peh Chin Hua was quoted in the Sunday Times as saying.

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