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Kuan Yew-Memoirs

LEE SAYS BOOK A PERSONAL ACCOUNT OF EVENTS

SINGAPORE, Sept 15 (Bernama) -- Singapore Senior Minister Lee Kuan Yew said today the memoirs in his book which contain allegations against Malaysia were a personal account of the events that shaped his life.

"They are my personal account of the events that have shaped my life, and, when I was Prime Minister (1959-90), also affected Singapore's history," he said at a news conference here today.

The book has been criticised in Malaysia, after excerpts were run by Singapore's Sunday Times last Sunday, with Umno Youth saying that it "merely reflects one man's highly partisan interpretation of history".

Among the allegations in his memoirs were that Malaysia had used the water issue to put pressure on Singapore, that Umno had a hand in the 1964 racial riots in Singapore, and that Singapore ministers were not pleasure-loving nor did they seek to enrich themselves unlike politicians in the then Malaya.

At the start of the news conference on the book, to be launched tomorrow, Lee read out a prepared statement in response to criticisms from Malaysia.

He said it was not true that he had chosen to publish his book when Malaysia was in difficulties to take advantage of the situation.

He said he started writing in 1995, the year documents in British archives were made available under the 30-year rule, as were archival records of Australia, New Zealand and the US.

Answering questions later, Lee said bilateral relations between Malaysian and Singapore fluctuated depending on the differences of the moods of Malaysians and their leaders as well as economic and political circumstances.

However, he noted that when he and Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad were both prime ministers during the 1981-1990 period, there were "nine years of relatively good relations, except for two instances".

One instance was during the visit of an Israeli leader to Singapore in the mid-80s.

"Otherwise, I did a lot of things with Dr Mahathir and got many things done," he said.

"There are ups and downs in our bilateral relationships."

Asked whether Singapore Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong had asked him to delay the publication of his book, Lee said it was completely untrue.

Lee said he had planned to publish his memoirs in two volumes in September this year but the second volume had been postponed to 1999 to update the chapters on Asean. -- BERNAMA

THG JK