

04 AUG 1998

Mahathir - Singapore

DON'T TAKE MALAYSIA FOR GRANTED, DR MAHATHIR WARNS S'PORE

JOHOR BAHRU, Aug 4 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today reminded Singapore not to take Malaysia's good nature for granted.

He gave the reminder in reference to Singapore's directive that Malaysia relocate its customs, immigration and quarantine (CIQ) checkpoint in the republic from the Tanjong Pagar railway station to Woodlands.

Dr Mahathir made the statement when addressing 10,000 people comprising Umno and Barisan Nasional leaders, community chiefs, government officials and members of organisations at the city council indoor stadium here.

The prime minister said although he did not mean to arouse the anger of Malaysians with his stern reminder, a fact remained a fact.

"We're not asking much (from Singapore) but just the same treatment we accorded them," he said.

As from last Saturday Singapore moved its CIQ facilities from Tanjong Pagar at the southern tip of the republic to Woodlands, in the north closer to its border with Malaysia but Malaysia refused to budge from its Tanjong Pagar CIQ.

Emphasising that Malaysia would not want to be an enemy with anyone, the prime minister said: "Singapore should be a little bit considerate.. we're considerate."

The crowd gave Dr Mahathir a spirited ovation when he spoke of Singapore's shabby treatment of Malaysia.

"They chase us out of Singapore... our officers were told to get out of Singapore... whereas we provide them with water.

"I met with Singapore leaders to strengthen ties... but what do we get in return?" asked Dr Mahathir.

Reflecting on Malaysia's traditional ties with Singapore, the prime minister said it was never Malaysia's intention to have animosity towards the republic.

"We've tried to practise good neighbourliness... In fact, all this while much of Malaysia's goods are exported through the Singapore port," he said.

In the context of the relocation of the CIQ facilities, Dr Mahathir asked: "By Malaysia having two or three offices in Singapore will this cause such a major problem to the republic?"

Dr Mahathir said the Malaysian offices in the republic which Singapore wanted vacated have been there for decades and so was the practice of posting Malaysian officers there.

"Moreover they are on land belonging to us...not owned by others," he said, referring to the Tanjong Pagar station which sits on Malaysia-owned railway land.

In this context, the prime minister said Singapore also has property in Malaysia "but we've never disturbed them".

Malaysia, said Dr Mahathir, is not one country fond of making things difficult for others and instead "want to be on good terms with all."

"We don't have a large military...we want to remain friendly and we have never wanted to have conflicts with others," the prime minister added.

-- BERNAMA

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