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Singapore-Kuan Yew

S'PORE GOVT ASKED TO DISTANCE ITSELF FROM KUAN YEW'S VIEWS

KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 17 (Bernama) -- A senior member of Parti Gerakan today asked Singapore Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong to distance his government from the views of Senior Minister Lee Kuan Yew.

A Central Committee member of the ruling Barisan Nasional component party, Dr S. Vijayaratnam, said notwithstanding the fact that Lee is still a senior minister in the administration, the present leadership should categorically state that it had nothing to do with remarks in Lee's just-published memoirs which has caused outrage in Malaysia.

"This would certainly go some way in assuring Malaysians that Singapore is indeed keen in fostering better relations. But to just sit back and let this war of words continue is a negative stance and would be construed as them silently agreeing with what Lee says," he said in a statement.

Several Malaysian leaders, including Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, have hit out at Lee for remarks on Malaysia in his book "The Singapore Story: Memoirs of Lee Kuan Yew".

Among other things, Lee accused Malaysia of intimidation and bully during the two years Singapore was part of the Malaysian federation which ended in 1965, and blamed Umno for inciting the racial riots in Singapore in 1964.

Dr Vijayaratnam said: "Matters that deal with racial problems of the past are best left as they are part of history".

"We have come a long way from those days and the outlook has changed whereby the Malays, Chinese, Indians and others on either side of the Causeway have come to accept each other and live in harmony," he said.

He said the current leadership in Singapore should now look forward to improving relations with its neighbours, particularly Malaysia which is culturally, linguistically, economically and socially so close to Singapore.

In a related development, the Umno Youth today defended Malaysia's founding fathers from disparaging remarks by Lee in his book.

Its vice chief, Datuk Hishamuddin Hussein, said men such as Tunku Abdul Rahman, Tun Abdul Razak, Tan Sri Syed Jaffar Albar and Tun Tan Siew Sin worked hard to create a Malaysian Malaysia.

"All four men strived to form a nation where all Malaysians regardless of background, race, religion and social class could live in harmony and prosperity with their neighbours," he said in a statement.

He said Umno Youth regretted the disrespect and abuse that had been heaped on these men and their families (in the book) as they were deceased and therefore unable to defend their reputation.

"However, Umno Youth, being a reasonable movement, understands that the sentiments expressed by Lee reflects the view of only one highly partisan, embittered figure and not the Singapore people," Hishamuddin said.

-- BERNAMA

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