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Singapore has consistently tried to aggravate Malaysians

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IT is sad that Singapore's Senior Minister Lee Kuan Yew chose to vilify some of Malaysia's former leaders in his memoirs.

It is in bad taste because some of these leaders - Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra Al-Haj, Tun Abdul Razak and former Umno Youth leader Syed Jaafar Albar - are no longer around to rebut Lee's claims.

It is uncalled for because the memoirs come at a time when diplomatic relations between Malaysia and Singapore are at its lowest ebb.

Some diplomats view the publication of the memoirs as another attempt by Singapore to further aggravate the feelings of Malaysians.

It has to be so because it follows a series of other actions by the Singaporean authorities to belittle Malaysia's long-standing policies and actions.

The actions of the island republic are far from what one can consider coming from a good neighbour.

In June, Albert Lau, a senior lecturer at the National University of Singapore had in his book, *A Moment of Anguish: Singapore in Malaysia and the Politics of Disengagement* claimed that the 23 months in which Singapore was part of Malaysia was the most painful and bitter experience for the republic.

The book describes events which took place from Sept 16, 1963, to Aug 9, 1965, the period when Singapore was part of Malaysia.

It has been shown that Singapore is in the habit of annoying Malaysians by rekindling history and raising sensitive issues. One might then ask: Is this part of the Singapore Government's effort to instil the spirit of nationalism in young Singaporeans?

The events which took place in the island republic over the past three decades indicate that Singapore, in its eagerness and actions to achieve economic prosperity, had overlooked the feelings of Malaysia and, to a certain extent, Indonesia's.

In November 1986, Singapore ignored the sentiments of its neighbours and despite strong protests from Malaysians, received the president of Israel Chaim Herzog.

In August 1989, its Finance and Foreign Affairs Minister George Yeo announced that the republic was willing to allow the United States armed forces to locate some of its facilities in Singapore when the US base in Subic Bay ceased operations in 1991.

This was totally against the Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality concept practised by Asean, of which Singapore is a founder member.

In June 1996, Lee, in a talk at the Singapore Press Club suggested that Singapore might seek reunification with Malaysia if the latter adopted meritocracy in its system of administration, implying there was no such thing in Malaysia.

He had, in fact, used Malaysia as a bogeyman to warn young Singaporeans that the country might lose its independence if they did not work hard to facilitate the country's continued economic growth.

A year later, Lee once again stirred the emotions of Malaysians when he alleged in his affidavit in a civil suit that Johor Baru was "notorious for shootings, muggings and car-jackings".

Early this year, Malaysian authorities were given until Aug 1 by the Singapore Government to relocate its Customs, Immigration and Quarantine facilities from Tanjong Pagar to Woodlands.

Wisma Putra later revealed that there was an attempt by the Singaporean Government to get Malaysian authorities to leave the island, although the facilities were located on land owned by KTM Bhd.

Under an agreement signed between the two countries, Malaysia can lose ownership of the KTM land once it is no longer used for railway purposes.

At a time when Malaysia was hit by countless attacks by currency manipulators, forcing the ringgit to plunge, Singapore went ahead and offered high interest rates, even as much as 40 per cent, for ringgit deposits.

Is this Singapore's idea of good neighbourliness? And now the memoirs.

So what exactly is Singapore up to? Is it trying to feed on the misfortunes of its neighbours by first discrediting them?

Is it envious of the free flow of investments to its neighbouring countries which, unlike Singapore, can provide cheap labour, land and other facilities to set up their operations?

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, when asked to comment on Lee's memoirs on Monday, said Singapore used its neighbours' weaknesses to achieve economic prosperity.

He said the Government had a whole list of attempts made by Singapore to undermine Malaysia's economy and policies.

Dr Mahathir said Lee's claims that Malaysia continued to use the supply of water to intimidate and bully Singapore was baseless.

There is no basis for such claims, Dr Mahathir said, as Malaysia had agreed to continue supplying water to the republic even after the Water Supply agreement expires in the year 2061.

Dr Mahathir said Singapore was even making a huge profit by selling for S\$7 per tonne the water it buys from Malaysia at three cents per 1,000 gallon.

By quoting third parties and the dead, one cannot substantiate one's arguments. The dead don't tell tales and cannot possibly defend themselves, even when lies are told, in a futile attempt to rewrite history.

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