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Paper-editorial

DON'T TAKE NEIGHBOURS FOR GRANTED, S'PORE TOLD

KUALA LUMPUR, June 19 (Bernama) -- Business Times, Malaysia's financial daily, today lambasted a Singapore newspaper with the same name which yesterday ran an editorial seen as meddling in Malaysian affairs.

In its editorial today with the heading "Don't take neighbours for granted", Business Times asked whether the Singapore daily was "exercising a new-found press freedom where they are free to criticise as long as it's not their own government."

The Singapore Business Times' editorial had said that winning the general election will not seal Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's legacy "because that will only come if he can set the foundations for Malaysia's sustained economic progress in the new millennium under a new team."

The paper also said "things cannot bode well for its (Malaysia's) future" when the names of Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah and Tan Sri Musa Hitam were being mentioned for a possible return in the Umno leadership.

It said the Barisan Nasional had been characterised by component parties which show a very low propensity for renewal.

The Malaysian Business Times said that many Malaysians do not realise that the foreign elements Dr Mahathir often spoke about which are out to undermine Malaysia need not be in Europe or America.

"Closer to home, so-called friends and neighbours across the Causeway have developed a tendency to undermine what this country stands for," it said.

The paper said if the editors of the Singapore daily think Malaysians should take kindly to their holier-than-thou views, then they are taking their neighbours for granted.

They have also over-estimated the process of democracy in their little island.

"Perhaps the majority of Malaysian voters are rural folks but they are not stupid. And most importantly, they have nothing to fear, no 'Big Brother' syndrome to scare them into voting for the ruling party."

As a result Malaysia has an opposition in Parliament and PAS for example governs an entire state.

Singapore, the paper said, was governed by Lee Kuan Yew for 31 years, a record no Malaysian Prime Minister, no MCA, MIC or Gerakan leaders are likely to match.

The Business Times noted that the Singapore Straits Times recently found it fit to question Malaysia's ability to become a professional player in the global market.

The Singapore paper also accused the Malaysian government of holding the illegal Central Limit Order Book (CLOB) issue hostage of local politics.

The Business Times said Malaysians can expect more of such from Singapore "but there's a limit to everything and it is hoped that the editors across the Causeway know theirs."

-- BERNAMA

SJ RYN