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Singapore-Kampung Glam

MALAYSIAN MEDIA ACCUSED OF MEDDLING OVER KAMPUNG GLAM ISSUE

By: Tham Choy Lin

SINGAPORE, July 6 (Bernama) -- The Malaysian media, in particular private television channel TV3, was slammed in the Singapore Parliament today and accused of meddling in the domestic affairs of Singapore and stirring racial unease over the Istana Kampung Glam issue.

Several Members of Parliament said reports on the redevelopment of the old palace ground into a Malay Heritage Centre by the Malaysian media were negative and distorted.

Voicing their support for the heritage centre, the MPs pointed to Malaysia's outrage over a recent editorial by Singapore's Business Times that had questioned the tenure of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

Justice Minister S.Jeyakumar, who is also Foreign Minister, said he shared the views of the MPs that such "irresponsible and mischievous media reports amount to interference in our internal affairs."

"These media reports had deliberately distorted and played up the facts of a sensitive internal issue without regard to the possible damage to racial harmony and social stability in Singapore," he said.

He was replying to points raised during the debate that followed the second reading of amendments to the Sultan Hussain Ordinance in the House today.

"The fact that almost all the media there were saying the same thing seems to suggest a planned salvo against Singapore. While such a 'wayang' may be useful for a certain party to regain its lost ground, it is most unkind that in the same breath, it tries to undermine that of another," said MP Mohamad Maidin.

Cited at length were articles by Malaysia's Utusan Malaysia and Utusan Melayu and a feature on Istana Kampung Glam aired by TV3 last week.

"The problem arising from the resettlement of Istana Kampung Glam's residents is an internal affair of Singapore. By such false and distorted articles on sensitive matters, these articles on our internal affairs are trying to sow the seed of discord and stir up ill feelings between races in a multi-racial Singapore," said Yatiman Yusof, MP and Senior Parliamentary Secretary for the Ministry of Information and the Arts.

Kampung Glam MP Loh Meng See said the media on both sides should be considerate and not interfere in each other's domestic politics.

"The Chinese community in Singapore has been careful not to champion and speak out against the Malaysian authorities on Malaysian Chinese issues whether on Kampung Cina or Chinese ancestral places in Malacca, Kuala Lumpur, Ipoh or Penang," he said.

MP Ibrahim Othman said the Malays in Singapore, while proud of their Malay Sultanate history, were now more realistic and want to move along with the mainstream to face the new millennium.

"The Singapore Malay community is aware of the game played by the media of our neighbour. Remember, the Singapore Malays are not the pawns in the game of chess of the said country," said another MP, Harun Ghani, the political secretary to the Home Affairs Minister.

Jeyakumar said Malaysian media reports, including the TV3 programme, had wrongly reported that the old palace building would be demolished and that the government had "seized the land and evicted the 300 residents."

"Furthermore most of these media reports had conveniently ignored or omitted the fact that the project was to establish the Malay Heritage

Centre which would benefit not only the Malay community but also preserve Singapore's multi-cultural heritage," he said.

He also said that many of the 79 beneficiaries were not residing in Singapore and of those still here, only 14 were living in the old palace site.

"So far, an overwhelming majority of 64 beneficiaries or 81 per cent had informed the Land Office that they wish to opt for lump sum payment," he said.

The beneficiaries would receive S\$350,000 per annum over 30 years.

-- BERNAMA

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