

19 JUN 1999

Mahathir-Singapore

SINGAPORE TOO HAS NOT CHANGED ITS LEADERS FOR A LONG TIME: MAHATHIR

KUALA LUMPUR, June 19 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad, irked by a Singapore daily's suggestion that Malaysia is better off being led by a new team in the next millennium, said Singapore itself has not changed its team.

He said the Singapore leadership team had not changed very much as someone had been prime minister for much longer than him and "I don't have my son waiting to succeed me", alluding to Lee Kuan Yew who served 31 years as prime minister.

"I don't like to say these nasty things but Singapore papers have a habit of passing nasty comments about us...and we kept quiet and never made comments about them because we are nice people but if they like to pick a quarrel with us, we are ready to pick a quarrel with them," he told a news conference after the third day of the Umno general assembly, here.

He said he had always downplayed differences with Singapore but "sometimes one gets fed up of them."

The Singapore Business Times, in its editorial, said that winning the next election alone would not seal Dr Mahathir's legacy and that this will only happen if he can set the foundations for Malaysia's sustained economic progress in the new millennium under a new team.

The editorial also pointed out that other component parties within Barisan Nasional, such as MCA, MIC and Gerakan, had not seen a leadership change for more than a decade.

-- BERNAMA

SHO JK