

'Singapore does not believe in bashing Malaysia'

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SINGAPORE. Thurs:
Singapore Prime Minister
Goh Chok Tong said today
he does not believe in
"Malaysia-bashing" and
sees no benefits in an on-
going media war.

"I don't believe, and nor
does the Singapore Gov-
ernment, in Malaysia-
bashing or in putting down
Dr Mahathir," Goh said,
referring to Malaysian
Prime Minister Datuk Seri
Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

Speaking on the sidelines of
a meeting of education min-
isters of the 21-nation Asia
Pacific Economic Cooper-
ation (Apec) forum here, Goh
said Singapore and Malaysia
have very close inter-related
relations.

"We are an important
investor in Malaysia," he
said. "A stable Malaysia, a
prosperous Malaysia under a
strong leader is a funda-
mental interest of Singa-
pore."

Goh said Singapore and
Malaysia have nothing to
gain from a media war.

"There are so many
negative articles in Singa-
pore, in Malaysian news-
papers," he said.

"I see no benefit in the two
sides going in for a media
war. No benefit at all for
Singapore and Malaysia and
I would urge that Singapore
newspapers and also the
Malaysian newspapers to be
circumspect in their com-
mentary of developments in
each other countries."

Relations have often been
prickly between the neigh-
bours since Singapore was
ejected from the Malaysian
federation in 1965, and
Malaysian Foreign Minis-
ter Datuk Seri Syed Hamid
Albar told the Singapore
media on Monday to stop
churning out untrue stories
about his country.

Last week an article in
Singapore's Straits Times
drew flak when it comment-
ed on Malaysia's leadership
and described Dr Mahathir
as "top dog" of the country.

The expression "dog" is
considered insulting in a
mainly Muslim country.

Dr Mahathir later ap-
peared to play down the dis-
pute over the article, which
singled out Malaysia as the
only Asian country which
had not had a change of
leadership in the past de-
cade.

He said the Singapore
media was "free to com-
ment on other countries" and
the Malaysian Government
did not "take any notice of
such things". — AFP