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`Drop siege mentality'

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KUALA LUMPUR, Mon. - Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar said Singapore newspapers should discard the siege mentality of believing that others are constantly harbouring evil intentions against the republic.

He said this perception had dragged other parties into problems Singapore faced with their neighbouring countries.

The Singapore media, Syed Hamid said, should be more responsible and transparent when writing about issues relating to its neighbours.

"With this kind of mentality, Singapore will think that all their friends have a hidden agenda towards them," he said at the Parliament lobby.

Syed Hamid was asked to comment on a column by the Straits Times Jakarta correspondent Susan Sim who said Malaysia and Indonesia had a hidden agenda towards Singapore, more so after Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad met Indonesian president Abdurrahman Wahid at the Asean summit recently.

Sim said that on the two occasions Abdurrahman had hit out at Singapore, the Indonesian leader had prior meetings with Dr Mahathir and Syed Hamid.

She also said that the last time Abdurrahman accused Singapore of ripping off Malaysia by buying water cheaply from Indonesia in May this year and on the occasion Abdurrahman threatened to bomb Singapore's yet-to-be acquired submarines, the Malaysian Foreign Minister had called on him just the day before.

Recently, after the Asean summit, Abdurrahman made a strong attack on the republic and its Senior Minister, Lee Kuan Yew, for ignoring its southern neighbours.

Abdurrahman, popularly known as Gus Dur, had accused the republic of trying to go its own way and only thinking of profit and accused Singapore of not placing sufficient emphasis on the least-developed countries in the region.

Syed Hamid said the Singapore media must look at Malaysia in a positive perspective based on the close relations of both countries in economy and investment.

"It is not necessary for us (Malaysia and Indonesia) to agree on everything and anything but we do not have time to incite others to give their own views on other matters.

"I believe that Indonesians have their own views and stand, and they say things based on what they think is right to their own country. Indonesia as a sovereign country has its own foreign policy and their own experience with Singapore, and in this respect, Malaysia need not interfere.

"That is why we keep quiet although the Singapore media provokes us. If this writer Susan Sim, who is known to be close to Senior Minister Lee Kuan Yew, wrote an article, can we presume that she was asked by someone to write the article?

"This shows that the writer is without credibility, even if the accusation is right."

On the meeting between Gus Dur and Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad at the Asean summit, he said, the meeting was open and both leaders did not have time to discuss what should be done to Singapore.

In fact, Syed Hamid said there was no secret at all as Dr Mahathir even held a Press conference after the meeting stressing on the need to strengthen ties between Asean countries.

"This is utter nonsense and is totally unacceptable in the administering of diplomatic relations between both parties. That is why I did not respond at all to the articles as it was without any basis.

"Maybe the writer prefers that Malaysia and Singapore do not have good relationship at all, I do not know the agenda..."

Therefore, he said, the Singapore media should recognise Malaysia's participation in Asean which always holds to the principle of non interference.

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