

04 DEC 2000

Syed Hamid-Singapore

S'PORE PAPERS SHOULD DISCARD SIEGE MENTALITY, SAYS SYED HAMID

KUALA LUMPUR, Dec 4 (Bernama) -- Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar said Singapore newspapers, the Strait Times in particular, should discard the siege mentality of believing that others are constantly harbouring evil intentions against the republic.

At a press conference at Parliament House lobby here today, Syed Hamid said one afflicted with such a syndrome would constantly deduce that all others, including close friends, have hidden agenda and nasty motives.

He was reacting for the first time since the Straits Times last week dragged Malaysia into the controversy sparked off by Indonesian President Abdurrahman Wahid's verbal attack against Singapore and its leaders.

Syed Hamid dismissed as baseless and uncalled for the newspaper's Jakarta correspondent's suggestion that Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad had provoked Abdurrahman into attacking Singapore.

"It's illogical. In fact it does not make sense in terms of managing diplomatic ties and bilateral relations between nations.

"Can we then also conclude and allege that the correspondent's article was at someone else's instigation since she is close to (Singapore Senior Minister) Lee Kuan Yew?," Syed Hamid asked.

In her column on Nov 30, correspondent Susan Sim said that on two occasions that Abdurrahman had hit out at Singapore, the Indonesian leader had prior meetings with Dr Mahathir and Syed Hamid.

Quoting palace-watchers in Jakarta, Sim said in her column that they thought there was a pattern in Abdurrahman's diatribe.

Syed Hamid said: "If Indonesia wants to voice out displeasure, why should it make use of Malaysia and give the impression that we are the inciter... being a sovereign nation with its own feelings, foreign policies and issues, Indonesia needs no prompting at all."

Syed Hamid said during the breakfast meeting between Dr Mahathir and Abdurrahman or Gus Dur as the president is fondly known by, on the sidelines of the recent Asean Informal Summit in Singapore, the two leaders discussed Malaysia-Indonesia bilateral matters.

"Having spoken about Asean unity and integration at the informal summit .. why should the prime minister then provoke Gus Dur to hit out at Singapore," Syed Hamid said.

The same Saturday that he had breakfast with Dr Mahathir, Abdurrahman met Indonesian expatriates in the island republic privately and criticised Singapore.

While berating Singapore Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong and Senior Minister Lee, Abdurrahman said the island state was pursuing foreign policies only for profit and that it despised Malays.

Gus Dur also suggested that Malaysia and Indonesia cut off water supply to Singapore.

Syed Hamid however said Sim's article would not affect Malaysia-Singapore ties and that Lee's recent visit to Malaysia had opened new avenues for settling outstanding issues involving both countries, including water supply agreement.

"Lee's visit helps improve ties and enables discussions on several issues. He was also able to meet with the various target groups including the media, parliamentarians and the chambers of commerce for the latest update on the country", Syed Hamid added.

Lee's visit was his first in 10 years.

-- BERNAMA

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