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Singapore-Indonesia

SINGAPORE WILL RESPOND IN "DUE COURSE" TO GUS DUR'S TIRADE

SINGAPORE, Nov 27 (Bernama) -- The Singapore Government will respond in "due course" to an outburst by Indonesian President Abdurrahman Wahid who has slammed the wealthy island state, saying it is pursuing foreign policies only for profit.

"We will respond in due course," said a Foreign Ministry spokesman today.

Abdurrahman made the comments in a closed door meeting with the Indonesian community here on Saturday and had also criticised Singapore's Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong and Senior Minister Lee Kuan Yew.

Abdurrahman, popularly known as Gus Dur, was here to attend the fourth Asean informal summit. He had met Lee, who is among his international advisers, on the sidelines.

"Basically, Singaporeans despise Malays, we are considered non-existent," he said in his remarks frontpaged by several Jakarta newspapers and carried today by Singapore newspapers.

"Before, only (Malaysian) Prime Minister Mahathir (Mohamad) was brave enough to confront Singapore, but now ... Mahathir has a new friend," said Abdurrahman who had asked the Malaysian leader, over breakfast during the Asean meeting, why Malaysia did not control water supply to Singapore.

He said if Indonesia and Malaysia withheld water supply, Singapore "will have no water to drink."

Abdurrahman had berated Lee for rejecting his proposal to include East Timor and Papua New Guinea in Asean.

"From my meeting with Lee Kuan Yew, it has also become clear that Singapore is only looking to reap profits from his relations with its neighbours."

"Some of Senior Minister Lee's advice is useful and some is not. It does not mean I have to be beholden to his advice. He is only an adviser in name," he said in excerpts published by Singapore's leading newspaper, Straits Times.

Abdurrahman said he would now propose a West Pacific Forum to include East Timor, Papua New Guinea, Australia and New Zealand.

Abdurrahman criticised Goh for not mentioning Indonesia in regional trade fairs and during the Asean meeting, Singapore was interested only in developing relations with China and other East Asian countries.

Ties between the two countries were seen to have improved after Abdurrahman's predecessor, B.J.Habibie, ruffled feathers here by calling Singapore "that unfriendly little red dot."

But Abdurrahman had once warned Singapore not let to its submarines cross into Indonesian waters.

-- BERNAMA

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