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`Singapore must translate statement into action'

KUALA LUMPUR, Fri. - The Government has welcomed Singapore Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong's statement yesterday that media wars helped no one and that neither he nor his Government believed in Malaysia-bashing.

Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar said today the important thing now was to translate the statement into action and ensure that the media in both countries understood how it should deal with bilateral relationships.

"It is a very good view. But this is not the first time such an incident has occurred.

"Both countries had always stressed the importance of maintaining long-term bilateral relationship and it is time the media understood this," he said.

He said Malaysia did not want its relationship with Singapore to be marred by political media statements suggesting a change of Government in another country.

In his first reaction to the Singapore Straits Times article which derided Malaysia's leadership, Goh had said that neither he nor his Government believed in Malaysia-bashing or putting down Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

In the March 25 article, writer Chua Lee Hoong had criticised Malaysia as the only democratic Government left in Asia which did not have a leadership change in the last decade.

She also wrote negatively on Malaysia's economic policies during the recent Asian crisis.

Urging the media in both countries to be circumspect in commenting on developments in each other's countries, Goh said Singapore and Malaysia had very close inter-related ties and the republic was an important investor in Malaysia.

Said Syed Hamid: "We understand that there are bound to be differences between the two countries.

"But, both sides, especially the media, should know each other's norms and values and the importance of respecting them to maintain good relations."

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