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S'pore-War

LOOSE TALK OF WAR DANGEROUS, SAYS S'PORE

By: Salbiah Said

SINGAPORE, Jan 25 (Bernama) -- Singapore's Foreign Affairs Minister S Jayakumar has rapped the Malaysian media, in particular Malay language newspapers for, 'war-mongering' which, he says, can only be designed to stir up animosities in Malaysia's Malay population against Singapore.

"Loose talk of war is irresponsible and dangerous. It whips up emotions that could become difficult to control," he said in Parliament today in response to articles in the Malaysian media on the current dispute between Malaysia and Singapore over Pedra Branca or Pulau Batu Puteh.

He said such provocative actions were not only senseless but dangerous.

"Senseless because both sides have agreed to refer to the dispute to the ICJ (International Court of Justice) and such actions cannot affect the decision of ICJ.

"Dangerous because of the risk of accidents that may not only cause loss of life but also cause serious damage to naval vessels with unforeseeable consequences," he said.

Jayakumar said that it was in the overwhelming national interest of both countries to avoid escalating tensions and conflicts as the consequences could be costly for both.

"Prime Minister Mahathir (Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad) said that Malaysia would respect international law on territorial disputes and avoid any confrontation with Singapore on Pedra Branca. This is also Singapore's position," he said.

On bilateral relations with Malaysia, he stressed that it was Singapore's desire to have good, not strained, relations with Malaysia as "there is much that both countries can gain by working together. Our common interests far exceed our bilateral differences."

Noting that Singapore's relationship with Malaysia, would be difficult from time to time, he said, "What is important is that we stay calm and rational through these periodic cycles of ups and downs."

-- BERNAMA

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