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Mahathir-Campaign

MALAYSIA WON'T BECOME OBJECT OF SINGAPORE'S HATE CAMPAIGN

KUALA LUMPUR, Jan 30 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today Malaysia will not let itself become the object of Singapore's hate campaign in order for the republic to divert the attention of Singaporeans from serious internal problems that country was facing now.

The prime minister said Singapore's difficult economic situation coupled with losses stemming from bad investments had prompted the Singapore government to make Malaysia a scapegoat so that Singaporeans would think about other matters rather than the unfavourable situation of their country and their own wellbeing.

Speaking to reporters after chairing the Umno Supreme Council meeting here, Dr Mahathir said: "The reason they are now talking about sovereignty, price of water... Malaysia being aggressive is because of their internal problems."

"The Supreme Council has decided that we are not going to play to their tune to help them overcome their difficulties. They can manage their own difficulties."

"I'm quite sure they are very smart people. We are not going to be the object of their hate campaign."

Elaborating on the economic misfortunes that had befallen the island republic, the prime minister said its economy had not grown and in fact had achieved minus growth, and there was a lot of unemployment with Singaporeans feeling generally unhappy with their situation.

Dr Mahathir said Singapore's state-owned firms had also been losing a lot of money through their investments in companies like Enron, Virgin Airlines, New Zealand Airlines as well as their ventures in China.

He said Singapore might also feel bad about losing major shipping lines such as Maersk and Evergreen to Malaysian ports.

"They've lost billions of dollars and in Singapore, this is not something that can be discussed in public. Their press cannot print and tell people how much the government has lost money through bad investments.

"So this has caused Singapore to focus on other things so as to divert the attention of their people."

Apart from economic woes, Dr Mahathir said there was also evidence that there were factions in Singapore's ruling PAP with each trying to prove to Singaporeans that it was more "Singaporean" and more aggressive in attacking Malaysia than the rest.

Nevertheless, the prime minister said Malaysians regarded the people of Singapore neighbours, friends and even brothers and sisters due to the close ties between them.

He made it clear that Malaysia had no quarrels with Singaporeans and had no intention of going to war with them as reportedly suggested by discussions in the PAP Youth website.

"We think that this talk about war and sovereignty should stop. We are not going to deprive Singapore of their sovereignty. They are an independent country. We have our high commissioner there and they have their high commissioner here.

"No way we are going to colonise them or do anything towards them, least of all going to war with them because, you know, Singapore is a concentrated island. Anything that is directed at Singapore will of course damage a lot of innocent people," he said.

Dr Mahathir said Malaysia was not in the business of killing innocent

people.

"We have no intention to hurt the people of Singapore. Many of them are relatives of Malaysians. Many of them, even the leaders, are actually from Malaysia. So that is our view," he said.

On the other hand, Dr Mahathir said Malaysia welcomed Singaporean tourists and investors alike, and encouraged them to buy property in this country.

"They have been good tourists in Malaysia and have contributed to our economy. And I am quite sure that it is a bit of strain on the mind to live on a small island.

"Obviously they must go somewhere. If they want to go to Bintan and Batam (islands), it's okay. We have no objection. But if they come to Malaysia, please feel welcome, please tell our Singaporean friends that we have nothing against them," he said.

Dr Mahathir said Singaporeans could also enjoy driving on Malaysia's long roads where they would be treated the same way as other motorists.

"We are not going to out-argue them or try and raise the ante and have a word war with them. No way. That is the view of the Supreme Council whose members gave their frank opinion, and this is the conclusion of the Council," he said on the differences between the two countries.

Responding to questions later, Dr Mahathir said Singapore had this "kiasu" attitude whereby it was afraid to lose.

"They have never lost. They have this kiasu attitude, afraid to lose. So, when they lose, they don't know how to react. We cannot play a part in this game of theirs," he said.

Dr Mahathir said Malaysia would continue to give explanation on issues pertaining to its relations with Singapore whenever necessary but this would not be done in an aggressive manner.

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