

PM to seek clarification

I want to get an explanation from Lee, says Abdullah

The Star - 24/9/2000

SELANG: Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi will write to Singapore's Minister Mentor Lee Kuan Yew asking him to explain his statement that Malaysian Chinese were being marginalised.

The Prime Minister said he agreed with his deputy Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak that Lee's statement was "naughty," and would seek clarification over the matter.

"I want to get an explanation from him on what he said and the reason for making the statement," he told reporters upon his return after a two-week trip to Finland, Cuba, the United States and Britain.

On Sept 15, Reuters quoted Lee as saying that it was vital for the predominantly ethnic Chinese state to stand up to its two bigger, Muslim majority neighbours.

Abdullah said Lee's statement was not supported by any specific analysis.

He added that race relations in Singapore was not 100% good either.

Stating that Lee's statement was not fair and inappropriate, he said the statement was tantamount to instigating the Malaysian Chinese.

He said if Malaysia were not stable, Singapore would also be affected as the island republic had economic interests in the



WARM RECEPTION: Abdullah greeting supporters from the Rembau Umno division upon his arrival from London at the Bunga Raya Complex in KLIA yesterday.

country.

During a press conference in London on Friday, Abdullah said no community in Malaysia was being marginalised.

Stressing that this was a fact, he said the progress achieved by the country's multi-racial community showed that no one had been sidelined.

Abdullah said the success of the Chinese community, for instance, was clearly reflected through its participation in various fields.

The Barisan Nasional, he added, was a responsible government that looked after the interests of all the communities and the Chinese, through the

MCA and other parties, were involved in the Government's power-sharing process.

Earlier, Abdullah likened the comparison in economic development between Malaysia and Singapore to that of a ciku and durian.

"It's not for comparison. Singapore did well because it is

only a city-state specialising in areas such as its airport as well as financial and banking services," he said, adding that the Klang Valley could be compared favourably with the republic.

In New York, Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar said: "I'm at a loss as to what his (Lee's) intention was."

Syed Hamid, who was in New York to attend the UN general assembly, added that Lee's statement could cause the people to be dissatisfied with the Government.

He pointed out that the Chinese in Malaysia had succeeded in all sectors.

In Tangkak, Johor, Umno vice-president Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin called on Lee to apologise for making the "provocative remarks."

He said Lee was among those who founded the concept of Asean co-operation to foster greater understanding in the region and should know that such remarks would not benefit the region.

In Taiping, the Backbenchers Club (BBC) called for a retraction and apology from Lee.

BBC acting chairman Datuk Raja Ahmad Zainudin Raja Omar said the Singapore High Commission should explain to Wisma Putra what Lee meant by such remarks.