

Lee's comment 'naughty'

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Najib: Statement on Chinese community not appreciated at all

BANGI: Malaysia can do without scathing comments from its neighbours, especially if the statements made are inaccurate and have political implications, Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak said.

He said that a recent statement made by former Singapore Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew on the status of the Chinese community in Malaysia and Indonesia was seen as "naughty."

"I do not know the reason he made such a statement but it should not have been made at all. It's a comment that we can do without and it is not appreciated at all," he said after launching and presenting the Amanah Saham Bumiputera (ASB) Sejahtera aid to the hardcore poor yesterday.

On Sept 15, Reuters quoted Lee, who is Minister Mentor for the island republic, as saying it was vital for the predominantly ethnic Chinese state to stand up to its bigger, majority Muslim neighbours, Indonesia and Malaysia.

Lee, who was speaking at a forum on the sidelines of the World Bank-International Monetary Fund meetings, had also said the attitude of neighbouring Malaysia and Indonesia towards Singapore was shaped by the way they treated their

own ethnic Chinese minorities. Lee had said that Singapore's neighbours had problems with their Chinese communities because they were successful and hardworking and "therefore, they are systematically marginalised."

Najib said Lee's comment, apart from having political implication, was also not accurate and did not represent the actual scenario in the country.

"We do not sideline the non-bumiputera in this country. What are in place are efforts to

create a balance between the bumiputera and the non-bumiputera," he added.

Asked if Malaysia would send a diplomatic note to protest Lee's statement, the Deputy Prime Minister said: "I don't know about that. It is up to Cabinet to decide."

On another matter, Najib, who met Paul Wolfowitz at his office in Putrajaya yesterday, said the World Bank president had asked what was the key to the nation's socio-economic and political success and had wanted Malaysia to share its success story and experience with foreign ministers of 18 African nations.

"We are glad to share our experience and impart the factors that have made us successful. But I informed Wolfowitz that Malaysia does not want to be seen as 'preaching' to them what to do.

"We will give the facts and it is up to them to consider what can be used, accepted, modified and implemented in their respective country," he added.