

Unity panel wants Kuan Yew to say sorry

PUTRAJAYA: A parliamentary panel yesterday called on Singapore's Minister Mentor Lee Kuan Yew to retract his statement that Chinese in Malaysia were being systematically marginalised.

The Parliamentary Select Committee on Unity and National Service also wants Lee to apologise to all Malaysians.

Committee chairman Datuk Dr Maximus Ongkili, who is also Minister in the Prime Minister's Department, said the use of the word "systematically" was tantamount to saying that the Malaysian government had a grand design to

marginalise the people.

Maximus was speaking to reporters after chairing a meeting of the committee near here.

He said Lee's remarks were uncalled for, unwelcome and tantamount to interfering in Malaysia's affairs. "There is no doubt we face challenges in managing ethnic relations but we have done very well and are regarded as a model for religious and racial diversity.

"Lee has apologised for the discomfort he caused but he has not, until today, said sorry over the statement. On this basis, we want him to apologise to us."

In a letter to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, Lee had said he was sorry for the "great deal of discomfort" caused by his statement.

He said when he made those comments at a forum on the sidelines of the International Monetary Fund/World Bank meeting last month, he had no intention of meddling in Malaysian politics.

He also told a forum in the city-state that it was vital that Singapore, which is predominantly ethnic Chinese, stood up to its majority-Muslim neighbours, Malaysia and Indonesia.