

Syed Hamid: His apology is not an apology

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PUTRAJAYA: Malaysia does not consider Lee Kuan Yew's apology an apology.

Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar said while the Singapore Minister Mentor apologised for causing "discomfort" to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, he did not regret the remarks he made about Malaysian Chinese being marginalised.

"These are two very different things. In fact, he was restating what he said before and even went beyond the previous statement," he said after breaking fast with staff of Wisma Putra here last night.

Asked if the government would pursue the matter or demand that Singapore retract the remarks Lee made, Syed Hamid said Lee should translate his stated intention of wanting to build on the good ties with Malaysia.

"Since he (Lee) said he wanted to have a good relationship (with Malaysia) it is important that he looks at the sensitivities and feelings of this country.

"His intentions may be good... that he wants to explain to the foreigners and such, but he has created ill-feelings within this country, created a lot of negative perceptions from outside and within the country.

"We are proud of the unity and harmony that we have achieved in this country and we do not want any party to disturb that. Anything said that can incite feelings is not welcome."

Syed Hamid said Malaysia under Abdullah had done all it could to create an environment that was conducive to Malaysia-Singapore bilateral relations.

The government, he added, wanted to focus on future relations and continue pushing Malaysia as a country where the different ethnic groups lived together in peace and prosperity.

"The Prime Minister has made a very clear statement on the issue and we have worked very hard to build good bilateral relations."

Asked if Malaysia was settling for Lee's reply, Syed Hamid said Abdullah's statement that Lee's remarks were "uncalled for" and "unappreciated" was enough to reflect the nation's sentiments.

He said statements such as that made by Lee should be discontinued if good relations were to be maintained.

Syed Hamid said Singapore should not make references to past incidents if it wanted to build on its relations with Malaysia.