

Cleaning up after LKY's remark

The Star - 5/10/2006

JAKARTA: Singapore has moved to placate Indonesia after comments made by Singapore's founding father Lee Kuan Yew on Jakarta's treatment of its ethnic Chinese, an official here said yesterday.

Indonesia summoned Singapore's ambassador last week to seek clarification of reports that Lee had told a forum that ethnic Chinese minority communities in Indonesia and Malaysia were being systematically marginalised.

In a diplomatic note, Singapore said it had no wish to interfere in Indonesia's domestic affairs and was aware of the improving situation for Chinese in Indonesia, Indonesian foreign ministry spokesman Yuri Thamrin said.

"So (the note) was about acknowledgement of the positive situation in Indonesia with respect to the Chinese, and the second point is that there was not at all any intention to interfere domestically," he said.

"There is a wish to maintain good relations with Indonesia," he added.

The spokesman said that the remarks had not taken into

account "the changing situation in Indonesia, and that's why we were a bit confused."

Thamrin declined to say if the explanation was sufficient to defuse the spat.

"What I can say is we have received the response. We are also interested in promoting mutually beneficial relations," he said.

"We need to be very careful in making statements sometimes, out-of-context statements that are not really relevant." — AFP