

Jakim declares book on Lee Kuan Yew haram
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KUALA LUMPUR, Dec 8 — Federal Islamic authorities have declared haram a book in which Singapore's founding father Lee Kuan Yew urged Muslims in Singapore to be "less strict on Islamic observances."

Lee Kuan Yew: Hard Truths to Keep Singapore Going, a collection of interviews published in January, was included in a list of 15 books declared haram by the Department of Islamic Development Malaysia (Jakim).

Jakim's planning and research division confirmed the decision was made when its committee on the censorship of publications with Islamic elements met in October.

However, both the division's director and Jakim director general Datuk Othman Mustapha have not responded to queries by The Malaysian Insider on why the decision was made nine months after the book hit the shelves in Malaysia.

According to procedure, the list of books declared haram is sent to the home ministry for further action but it is unclear if the home ministry has followed suit and banned the books.

Othman's predecessor Datuk Wan Mohamad Sheikh Abdul Aziz had said in February that Lee was unsuccessful in developing the mindset of the Singaporean public because he was "still influenced by the landscape of the 1960s which were full of prejudice and presumptions against Muslims."

Lee, who served in Singapore's Cabinet as PM, senior minister and minister mentor for 52 years before retiring in May, said in the book that Muslims in Singapore were socially "distinct and separate" and should "be less strict on Islamic observances" to aid integration and the city-state's nation-building process.

It led to uproar from Malay and Muslims groups on both sides of the Causeway with his old rival and former Malaysian PM Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad accusing Lee of having no respect for religion.

Lee later retracted his statement in March ahead of general elections in the island which has a 15 per cent Malay-Muslim population.

His son Lee Hsien Loong led the ruling People's Action Party to its worst ever performance in this year's Singapore general election, gaining just 60 per cent of popular support.

Lee, 88, admitted last month he has been suffering from a nerve illness for the past two years which prevents him from walking steadily.

Other books in the haram list include Sebongkah Batu Di Kuala Berang by Faisal Tehrani, Mengenal Diri: Ilmu Peninggalan Tok Kenali by Mohd Yusof Che Wook and The Teachings of the Quran by H. U. Weitbrecht Stanton

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