

# Setback for ties with Singapore

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**JOHORE BARU, Thurs. — Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today Malaysia's ties with Singapore have suffered a setback with the visit of Israeli President Chaim Herzog to the republic.**

"The relationship is not as good as before but it cannot be described as being very tense," he said.

"It will not affect the Asean summit scheduled next year," the Prime Minister told reporters after a one-day visit to Johore.

He said the whole issue might blow over in time, but this would depend on the reaction of the two countries.

The Government is monitoring the situation closely and will take appropriate action based on issues at hand.

"We will also monitor whether trade, social

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and cultural ties will suffer any repercussions as a consequence of the visit," he added.

Dr Mahathir said he would not seek a meeting with Singapore Premier Lee Kuan Yew to discuss the visit.

He said this in response to a question asking him to comment on Deputy Foreign Affairs Minister Datuk Kadir Sheikh Fadzir's statement that the relationship would inevitably go through a difficult period.

The Prime Minister added it was unfair to say the Government was slow in reacting to the visit. On the other hand, it had decided to wait and listen to the views of people before taking any action.

"Actually, I did not know about Mr Herzog's visit to Singapore until I went through the newspapers," he said.

"The Singapore High Commission may have informed Wisma Putra but the latter never informed me."

The visit was also not discussed during Mr Lee's visit to Kuala Lumpur recently.

To a suggestion that the visit could have been avoided if Malaysia had made its stand known to the Singapore Government, Dr Mahathir said this was easy to say as the visit has already taken place.

Commenting on a statement by a Singapore Minister that Malaysia should not protest against the Herzog visit when it had not protested against the visit of the late Egyptian President Anwar Sadat to Israel, the Prime Minister said:

"The two visits are different altogether. If the person visiting Singapore is Sadat then we would not make any comments."

Asked to comment on Mr Herzog's statement about Malaysia's protest over the visit when some Arab States were trying to get closer to Israel, he said: "Each person is entitled to his own opinion. We do not care about his opinion."

On Mr Herzog's scheduled visit to Fiji and Tonga, the Prime Minister said Malaysia took her relationship with other countries seriously.

"We do not make decisions at the snap of a finger as we will have to know what it is all about," he said.

Dr Mahathir, who received a memorandum from the Johore Peoples' Action Committee today, said he would study it.

On the Malaysia-Singapore water agreement, he said it would not be reviewed as the current situation did not warrant such a move.

To a question whether Malaysia would be supplying gas to Singapore, the Prime Minister said it all depended on the situation as Malaysia could sell it to other countries.