

07 MAY 1997

Agong-Singapore

MALAYSIA, SINGAPORE SHOULD BE CONSCIOUS OF EACH OTHER'S SENSITIVITY

KUALA LUMPUR, May 7 (Bernama) -- The Yang di-Pertuan Agong Tuanku Ja'afar said today that Malaysia and Singapore should always be conscious of each other's sensitivity and feelings in all matters.

He said the cooperative relations between the two countries, developed over the years, had brought many mutual benefits.

"However, being neighbours, we need always be mindful of the realities that shape our relationship," he said after receiving the credentials of the new Singapore High Commissioner to Malaysia, Kesavapany Krishnasamy, at Istana Negara here.

Tuanku Ja'afar stressed that paramount in such a relationship was the consciousness of each other's sensitivities and feelings in all matters.

"We are of the view that certain facts of history which could complicate our relations, should not stand in the way of our endeavour to cooperate for the common good," he added.

Kesavapany's appointment comes in the wake of a diplomatic row between the two neighbouring countries after Singapore Senior Minister Lee Kuan Yew described Malaysia's southern state of Johor as "notorious for muggings, shootings and carjackings".

Lee later apologised and expunged the remarks which were made in a court affidavit in a defamation suit filed against Singapore opposition figure, Tang Liang Hong.

The Malaysian government accepted the apology. Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, in an interview in the latest issue of Asiaweek magazine, said relations between the two countries were now back to normal.

Tuanku Ja'afar said the two countries were not only close geographically, but also share a common history, and peoples of both countries had inherited common traditions and family ties across the causeway.

According to him, the proximity of the two countries offered opportunities for fruitful collaboration and cooperation and such potentials could only be realised if leaders of the two countries drew lessons from the past and avoid pitfalls in future.

"While there are many ties which bind us, we must also recognise the fact that we are two different countries, but our differences, however, should not be a cause for division as the differences should be harnessed for the benefit of both countries," he said.

In his speech earlier, Kesavapany said the government and the people of Singapore attached great importance to bilateral relations between the two countries as Malaysia and Singapore were closely linked through common cultural traditions, shared history and geographical proximity.

"Family ties and people-to-people links contribute to the unique relationship between our two countries, and the governments of Malaysia and Singapore both pursue economic policies aimed at promoting peace and prosperity in the region," he said.

Kesavapany said Malaysia and Singapore shared many common interests in regional and international fora, and a common belief in the value and the importance of the United Nations, the Commonwealth of Nations and the Asean framework for political, economic and cultural cooperation.

"We are also committed to strengthening Asean as a force for peace and stability in the region and we believe that the realisation of an Asean-10 will contribute towards regional stability and further enhance the

prospects for shared prosperity in our dynamic region," he said.

He was confident economic cooperation among Asean members would buttress the political stability, security, economic, social and cultural development of the region.

Tuanku Ja'afar also received the credentials of Portugal's new ambassador, Dr Gabriel Mesquita de Brito.

In his speech, he said there were ample opportunities and avenues to be explored to widen and deepen bilateral relations between Malaysia and Portugal particularly in the fields of trade and economic cooperation.

"Malaysia and Portugal can be important participants in the ASEM process which had opened a new horizon of inter-regional cooperation on a wider scale, besides opening new opportunities to harness each other's complementarities on the basis of partnership," he said. -- BERNAMA

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