

# Chok Tong" and Dr M step in to bury differences

By P. BALA KUMAR

SEPANG: After months of strained relations, both the prime ministers of Malaysia and Singapore met for two hours yesterday and agreed to move forward to strengthen bilateral ties.

While they did not outline any specific decision, a verbal agreement to co-operate in raising funds for Malaysia in Singapore could pave a positive step towards stronger co-operation.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said Singapore could be of help to Malaysia in the matter especially to overcome the present economic crisis.

"We will need to raise some funds in Singapore and they have promised to negotiate how best they can be of help in this area," he told a joint news conference with Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong.

Both leaders had their meeting at the KL International Airport. It was the fifth between them this year.

In his response to Malaysia's request to raise funds in Singapore, Goh said:

"We got to first ascertain what is the requirement of Malaysia.

"Dr Mahathir told me what will be Malaysia's requirement and we believe that we can meet those requirements," he added.

Goh said details pertaining to the funds would be discussed by officials from both countries.

When asked about the measures taken to improve bilateral ties, Dr Mahathir said they had agreed to set aside the differences and work towards closer co-operation.

"Yes (agreeing towards improving relations). I hope so, unless someone else speaks and say things again ... not me anyway.

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## PMS want to work on closer co-operation

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"The two of us (Dr Mahathir and Goh) will not say anything," he said.

In his response, Goh said the differences between both the countries would be there and might arise again.

"But what is important is to narrow the gap between differences and work to maximise (understanding) in common areas.

"Where we disagree we can say we disagree and discuss it. One day we will agree and understand each other's position," he said.

Bilateral ties between the two countries have strained in recent months over several issues, including the location of Malaysia's rail, immigration and customs facilities at the Tanjong Pagar railway station.

Other prickly issues were the request for more water from Malaysia and status of

pension savings of peninsular Malaysians working there.

On the status of the location of Malaysia's rail, immigration and customs facilities at the Tanjong Pagar railway station, Dr Mahathir said both the leaders discussed it but no decisions were made.

He said they have decided to allow senior officials to discuss the matter further.

When asked on Singapore's request for more water, Dr Mahathir said Malaysia had to determine the quantity of water needed by the republic and see how it could meet the requirement.

On the sharing of airspace between both the countries, Dr Mahathir said the only aspect discussed in his meeting with Goh on the matter was the approval for using the airspace during search and rescue operation, which would be granted immediately.