

04 NOV 1998

Mahathir-Singapore

M'SIAN AND SINGAPORE PMs TO MEET TOMORROW

By: Azman Ujang

KUALA LUMPUR, Nov 5 (Bernama) -- The prime ministers of Malaysia and Singapore will meet in Sepang on the outskirts of Kuala Lumpur tomorrow just days after both leaders said their two countries' "frosty" bilateral ties have taken a turn for the better and that both sides wanted to get back on keel.

This will be the fifth meeting this year between Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and Goh Chok Tong.

No formal statement on the meeting was issued here but the government Information Department sent a note to editors of a press conference by Dr Mahathir at the Pan Pacific Hotel in Sepang at 11am after the meeting with Goh.

Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi when contacted by Bernama at his home tonight refused to comment on the meeting.

"Just wait for tomorrow," he said.

Ties between Malaysia and Singapore have been strained in recent months over several issues, including the location of Malaysia's railway checkpoint station in Singapore, the future of water supply from Malaysia to Singapore, and comments about past Malaysian leaders in the recently-released memoirs of former Singapore Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew.

The first meeting this year between the two prime ministers took place in Johor in January, followed by two meetings a month later, each in Singapore and in Kuala Lumpur.

In April, the two met again when they jointly declared open the two-kilometre bridge built by both countries which serves as the second link after the Causeway.

Last week, both leaders made significant comments about the state of their two countries' relations.

In an interview with the Malaysian Chinese press, Dr Mahathir said bilateral relations had taken a turn for the better and Malaysians did not have any quarrel with their Singapore counterparts.

He said his relationship with Goh was "very sound" and he did not want to stir up any animosities at this time.

Reacting to Dr Mahathir's remarks, Goh said on Sunday, "We are all for good relations, and we have said before that Malaysia would have to set the pace. If there's a change in thinking on his (Dr Mahathir) part, I'll be very happy to meet him".

He said he sensed that both sides wanted to get back on keel.

--BERNAMA

AU AAM