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Mahathir-Link

MALAYSIA-SINGAPORE TIES GETTING STRONGER, SAYS PM

JOHOR BAHRU, April 18 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today the economic turmoil affecting the Asean region has brought Malaysia and Singapore closer despite the recent hiccup in relations between the two countries.

He said the turmoil had also made the two countries more aware of the strength that both countries possessed and how it could be harnessed for the benefit of its people.

"I wish therefore to reiterate here that Malaysia values its links with Singapore and has always regarded Singapore and Singaporean as friends.

"I therefore look forward with great optimism and confident to even closer cooperation between us," he said at the official opening of the Malaysia-Singapore second crossing at Tanjung Kupang here.

Dr Mahathir, who arrived at the crossing simultaneously with Singapore Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong, opened the crossing which is a two kilometre-long high level box-grider bridge linking Tanjung Kupang in south-west Johor with Jalan Ahmad Ibrahim in Tuas, Singapore.

Dr Mahathir said frequent consultations and discussions between the two countries, especially on ways to resolve the economic turmoil had made Malaysia and Singapore more aware of the sensitivity and the problems faced by the two nations.

"Despite the recent hiccup in the relations between Singapore and Malaysia, I am very heartened to note that the economic turmoil that is affecting the Asean region had, in fact, brought us closer together to try and resolve the problems besetting us.

"Of more importance is the fact that it has made us more aware of the strength that both possess and how this can be harnessed for the benefit of our people," he said.

Dr Mahathir said the second link would certainly enhance the partnership between the two countries as well as play a pivotal role in facilitating the economies and infrastructure development of both Singapore and Malaysia.

"Indeed, I can say that this second crossing will literally act as the bridge to carry our two countries into the 21st century," he said.

Dr Mahathir said that the new bridge could also be seen as a triumph for Asean as it demonstrated to all of the success of two of its members in working towards regional cooperation.

He said the bridge which took three years to complete stood before Asean as a monument to the skill, patience and cooperation of those responsible for its construction.

He said the bridge is the culmination of the efforts of both countries working together to complete its construction.

"For Malaysia, the second crossing will provide new and important links in the national and regional highways system and will enable it to act as a catalyst in the development of an area which is very close to the consumer market and supporting facilities of Singapore.

"It will also help to open up new growth areas around Johor Baharu and towns further north and in the process will facilitate the relocation of selected industries within the region," said the Prime Minister. -- BERNAMA

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