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SINGAPORE TO STAND FIRM ON TIES WITH KL

SINGAPORE, Sept 27 (Bernama) -- Singaporeans have been told to stand firm and not allow themselves to be pushed around in the present state of downturn in relations with Malaysia, reported the Sunday Times.

It quoted Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong as saying in New York that Singaporeans should also learn lessons from the bout of bilateral bickering. Goh is currently on a visit to the US.

He told Singaporeans to be aware that things could get terribly wrong suddenly and not to assume that economic growth would continue forever nor strong ties with other countries would be a permanent feature.

Goh said the recent surfeit of issues which had caused tension between Singapore and Malaysia were unfortunate and unexpected.

This is because when he met Malaysian Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad earlier this year, they had signed a joint declaration to forge stronger ties based on a "prosper thy neighbour" policy.

"But, what has happened? It would appear that we are doing exactly the opposite," he said, noting that now the policy appeared to be one of "beggaring each other".

"They think that we are trying to beggar Malaysia and some of the steps they take would appear to be making Singapore poorer. I think this is an unfortunate turn of events," he said.

Goh said Singapore should take the downturn as part of the relations with Malaysia as there would be upturns and there would be downturns and in the meantime, to work towards stronger relations.

-- BERNAMA

THG RM