

'PM, Lee able to resolve problems together'

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KUALA LUMPUR, Thurs: It is natural for Singapore elder statesman Lee Kuan Yew to say he has achieved more in resolving bilateral relations with Malaysia during the nine years of dealing with Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad than the earlier two leaders.

Former Malaysian representative to the United Nations Tan Sri Razali Ismail said today that when Mahathir became the Prime Minister, both countries were able to resolve many problems in the right spirit.

"There were plenty of structures for cooperation put together by both countries which were also burgeoning. During that time

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and in the process, there were no losers or winners," he said.

"Both countries, which were on the fast track of growth, also shared the 'baggage of separation' and it took two forward-looking leaders to stress on the positive even though there were ups and downs," he added.

Razali was asked to comment on Lee's second volume of his memoirs entitled **From Third World to First: The Singapore Story**.

In his book, Lee, who described Mahathir as a

"fierce and dogged fighter", also said: "Despite my differences with him, I made more progress in resolving bilateral problems with Mahathir in the nine years from 1981 to 1990, when I stepped down, than in the 12 years under the previous two leaders."

Razali said Mahathir's policy of "complementing while competing" had put him in good stead with his neighbours and this quality of the Prime Minister has also specifically helped to build relations with Singapore.

He said at a time when the whole of Southeast Asia was progressing at a tremendous pace, Malaysia was not one to be left out.

It took a special leader like

Mahathir to turn the nation around from being agrarian-based, to that of a modern value-added industrial nation.

"There are so many things that have not been written and spoken for many reasons about Singapore-Malaysia ties all these while, but the prosperity and stability of both countries today are due to the common aspirations of both leaders then."

However, Razali did not discount the contributions of previous Malaysian leaders saying it was the pace of progress in the region at that time which could have evoked different responses from both sides of the cause-way