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Singapore-Editorial

S'PORE DAILY LAUDS WISDOM OF SETTLING OUTSTANDING ISSUES

SINGAPORE, Sept 8 (Bernama) -- The Singapore Malay-language newspaper Berita Harian said it was wise for the republic and Malaysia to make the most of opportunities available now to resolve outstanding issues between.

This was more so given that developments in Malaysian politics could erode Umno's dominance and position as the lynchpin of the ruling Barisan Nasional (BN), the newspaper said in an editorial today.

The agreement in principle reached between Singapore senior minister Lee Kuan Yew and the Malaysian Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad on those issues "opened a new chapter in the history of bilateral ties between both countries".

The editorial referred to the impression Lee gave that Singapore had given in much to resolve the issues in talks during his visit to Kuala Lumpur early this week and that Singapore did so after taking into account political and long-term strategies.

"Mr Lee and Dr Mahathir are old generation leaders who know too well each other's feelings in terms of politics and survival.

"Bearing in mind that the present political situation can affect Umno's position as the pillar of the ruling BN, it is thus wise to make the most of the opportunities available.

"Of late Umno is undeniably facing challenges posed by PAS which is harping on Islam. Lee has frankly acknowledged that the Muslim militant movement is a cause of much concern for Singapore," the editorial said.

At a news conference on Wednesday, the last day of his visit to Kuala Lumpur, Lee envisaged that negotiations would be more difficult if Umno no longer leads the BN after the 2004 general election.

While expressing relief, the newspaper hoped that the spirit of give-and-take reflected by the agreement would lead to solid cooperation and to drawing up of plans for future cooperative endeavours between the two close neighbours.

"In fact accords should bring about win-win situations if all parties put in determined efforts in making good all pledges with efficiency, sincerity and transparency. There are immense potentials for the development of both countries given their historical links, the brotherhood between their people and investment partnership," the newspaper said.

Following this week's Mahathir-Lee talks Malaysia agreed to continue supplying water to Singapore upon expiry of the current agreement and allow Singapore military planes to use the Malaysian air space.

Malaysia also agreed to hand over to Singapore the Keretapi Tanah Melayu (KTM) Berhad land in Tanjung Pagar as well move the railway customs and immigration checkpoint from there to Kranji.

In return Malaysia would be compensated with a piece of land of similar value in Shenton Way in the city state.

Singapore also agreed to have the Johor Causeway replaced with a bridge and allow withdrawal of contributions by Peninsular Malaysians to its Central Provident Fund (CPF).

-- BERNAMA

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