



8th Malaysia-Singapore Leaders' Retreat

NAJIBRAZAK.COM

16 Januari, 2018

In the last two days, I held several formal and informal discussions with Singapore Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong over a number of issues concerning our two nations. We also explored further ways to deepen the already close relations that we share.

During the high tea session with the Malaysian community in Singapore, I mentioned that getting together with Malaysians is one of the things I look forward to most when travelling abroad as it gives me the opportunity to get to know and learn from my fellow Malaysians abroad.

There is so much to be gained from greater cooperation with Singapore which will bring mutual benefits to both our countries. Yesterday evening was a very good testimony of that when Singapore Prime Minister Lee and I, launched two very significant and iconic projects, Marina One and DUO – mixed development projects undertaken by Khazanah Malaysia and Temasek Singapore. They are landmark projects and will be remembered for generations to come because it is a turning point in terms of our bilateral relations.

The heavy traffic jams at the Causeway are a concern, especially to those who travel to work in the morning and return to Johor Bahru that evening. Both sides are well aware that in order to improve relations, especially at the people-to-people level, it is important to make travelling to and from Singapore seamless. It is because of this that we signed an Agreement on the Rapid Transit System this morning. Together with the High Speed Railway, which was signed in December 2016, both sides are truly committed to enhance connectivity and ease the movement of peoples travelling to and from Singapore.



Malaysia removed the Eastern Dispersal Link (EDL) toll on 1 January 2018, and Singapore will reduce its toll rate effective from 1 February 2018. I hope this will ease the burden for Malaysians who travel often between Johor Bahru and Singapore. I also discussed with Singapore Prime Minister Lee some interim measures on how to ease congestion at the existing two links. This will include making CIQ procedures more efficient as well as the possibility of additional ferry services between the two countries. Thus, we are making efforts to reduce the burden on the peoples and improve connectivity in a comprehensive manner.

The discussions with Singapore Prime Minister Lee were not only confined to connectivity. We also discussed many aspects of our bilateral relations. Among them include education in which we signed an MOU on Educational Cooperation. This will allow educators, officials and students to carry out collaboration on matters of mutual interest. Other matters discussed include tourism, water supply, the environment and many others.

The warm relations and strong cooperation in a wide range of issues have been made possible by the common desire of both sides to work with each other. It has allowed us to address issues and solve problems amicably, as well as make full use of the opportunities presented to us.

Both Singapore Prime Minister Lee and I are working hard to ensure that we continue moving in that direction in the decades to come. Gone are the days of the “roller coaster ride” of the past. 20 years ago, relations between Malaysia and Singapore were tumultuous at best. There were meetings between the two leaders, but they were more often than not acrimonious rather than constructive. We cannot allow the state of our relations to be as it was. How would the country benefit and more importantly, what would the people gain when relations are strained between the two countries. Absolutely nothing. It is because of this that Singapore Prime Minister Lee and I have chosen a win-win relationship – a relationship in which both sides stand to gain.



In spite of the economic challenges due to the drop in commodity prices and global tensions, Malaysia has done remarkably well over the past decade. When I tabled Budget 2018 to the Parliament in October 2017; I announced that the first half of 2017, the economy recorded a growth of 5.7%, and continued to accelerate to 6.2% in the third quarter of 2017. Private investment has also increased significantly to more than RM211 billion compared to RM81 billion in 2009.

For this year, total investments in the country are expected to increase by 6.7%, accounting for 25.5% of GDP. We are also on track in reducing the nation's fiscal deficit. As of now, we have reduced it to 3% of GDP in 2017 from 6.7% in 2009. We are confident that we can reduce it further to 2.8% by the end of the year.

Our first MRT line, which is truly impressive, became fully operational in July 2017. The project was constructed at a cost of RM21 billion, below the budget of RM23 billion. These achievements show that our economy continues to prosper and we are stronger than ever as a result of the transformation programmes the Government has put in place.

But we are not without flaws. By all means no. We are not perfect in many areas, but we are continuously improving. We are a Government that is committed and responsible to the people. We are open to your views, yet we make decisions that will benefit the entire country.

Take for example when we implemented the GST. Although unpopular, there is no denying that it was the right decision especially in view of the changing economic circumstances. We knew it wouldn't be popular. But it would have been irresponsible not to have introduced the GST.

In 2016, I announced the TN50 transformation plan. It aims to transform Malaysia into a nation of calibre, with a new mindset. Not only do we want to hear from you but we want to ensure that everyone has a shared responsibility to be part of the country's future. TN50 is a vision for Malaysia to become a top 20 country in the



world by 2050 – a top 20 country in all aspects – economic, social, cultural and environmental. To achieve it, we have to start from now.

The younger generation should speak up on your desired model of a nation by 2050. The vision of the future should come from the people, especially you students who are with us today. You will inherit our future, so please make your views and aspirations known.

The Government of the day is fully responsible to the people. We are here not only to assure the delivery of the policies or promises, but also to ensure the actions taken on the ground would benefit the entire society.

At this juncture, let me tell you that the Government is committed to continue its pro-business, prudent and pragmatic policies in order to ensure its competitiveness and preferred destination for investments, to enable us to achieve our vision of being a developed country.

Yet, Malaysia cannot be complacent. We need to continue to struggle and adapt to this new world we are living in – a world of technological advancements as well as with the “disruptive change” that it has brought. In this, we must also remain united. As such, I hope all of you will join us in charting our future together.

© 2017 NajibRazak.com. Hak Cipta Terpelihara

Source: <https://www.najibrazak.com/bm/blog/8th-malaysia-singapore-leaders-retreat/>