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Bid to resolve Brunei boundary issue

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■ From Joniston Bangkuai in Bandar Seri Begawan

MALAYSIA is optimistic about achieving an amicable solution to long-running maritime boundary issues with Brunei Darussalam.

It was among the topics of discussion at the 11th annual consultation between Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi and the Sultan of Brunei, Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah, here yesterday.

The outstanding issues are the border demarcation in Limbang and maritime matters such as the dispute over an oil field and the exclusive economic zone off the Borneo coast.

"The boundary issue is in the process of being resolved through meetings between senior officials from both countries," Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar told reporters.

He said resolving the issue would take time and that it could not be discussed in the open as it involved technical matters.

Abdullah, accompanied by Datin Seri Jeanne Abdullah, had an audience with the sultan and his two consorts at Istana Nurul Iman soon after their arrival here.

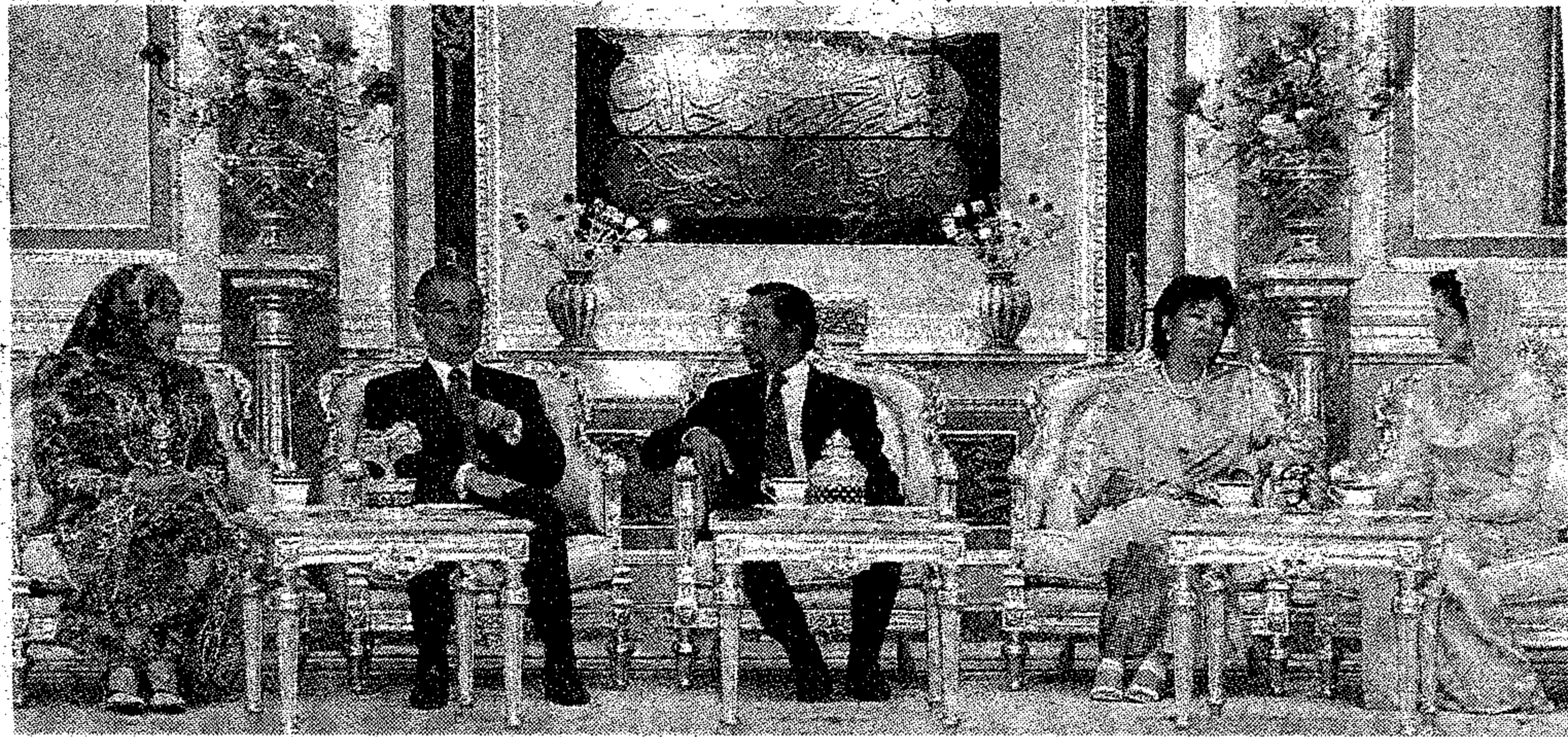
This was followed by a one-on-one meeting which lasted about 90 minutes.

After the meeting, Abdullah proceeded to the Malaysian High Commission building for a high tea hosted by the High Commissioner Datuk Ku Jaafar Ku Shaari.

Besides Syed Hamid, the prime minister's delegation included Home Affairs Minister Datuk Seri Radzi Sheikh Ahmad, Higher Education Minister Datuk Mustapa Mohamed, Sabah Chief Minister Datuk Seri Musa Aman and Sarawak Chief Minister Tan Sri Abdul Taib Mahmud.

The annual consultation is a platform for both leaders to discuss bilateral issues and other matters of common interest.

The consultation allows both leaders to exchange ideas on how Malaysia and Brunei can



enhance bilateral relations in various areas, especially in trade and investment.

Syed Hamid said the two leaders revisited co-operation in education, communication and transportation between the two countries.

Abdullah also took the opportunity to inform Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah about the proposed development corridor for Sabah and Sarawak.

The two leaders also touched on regional and global issues such as the forthcoming Asean Summit in Singapore, co-operation in the Organisation of the Islamic Conference and conflicts in Palestine, Lebanon and Darfur.

They also deliberated on development in the East Asean Growth Area covering Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines.

A joint statement on the outcome of the meeting between the two leaders will be issued today.

At their last consultation, the two leaders had noted the progress made in various areas of co-operation, particularly in trade and investment, science and technology, aquaculture and agriculture.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi (second from left) and his wife Datin Seri Jeanne Abdullah having a chat with his host the Sultan of Brunei, Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah, and his wives Raja Isteri Pangiran Anak Saleha (left) and Pangiran Isteri Azrinaz Mazhar Hakim (right) at Istana Nurul Iman in Bandar Seri Begawan yesterday. — Bernama picture