

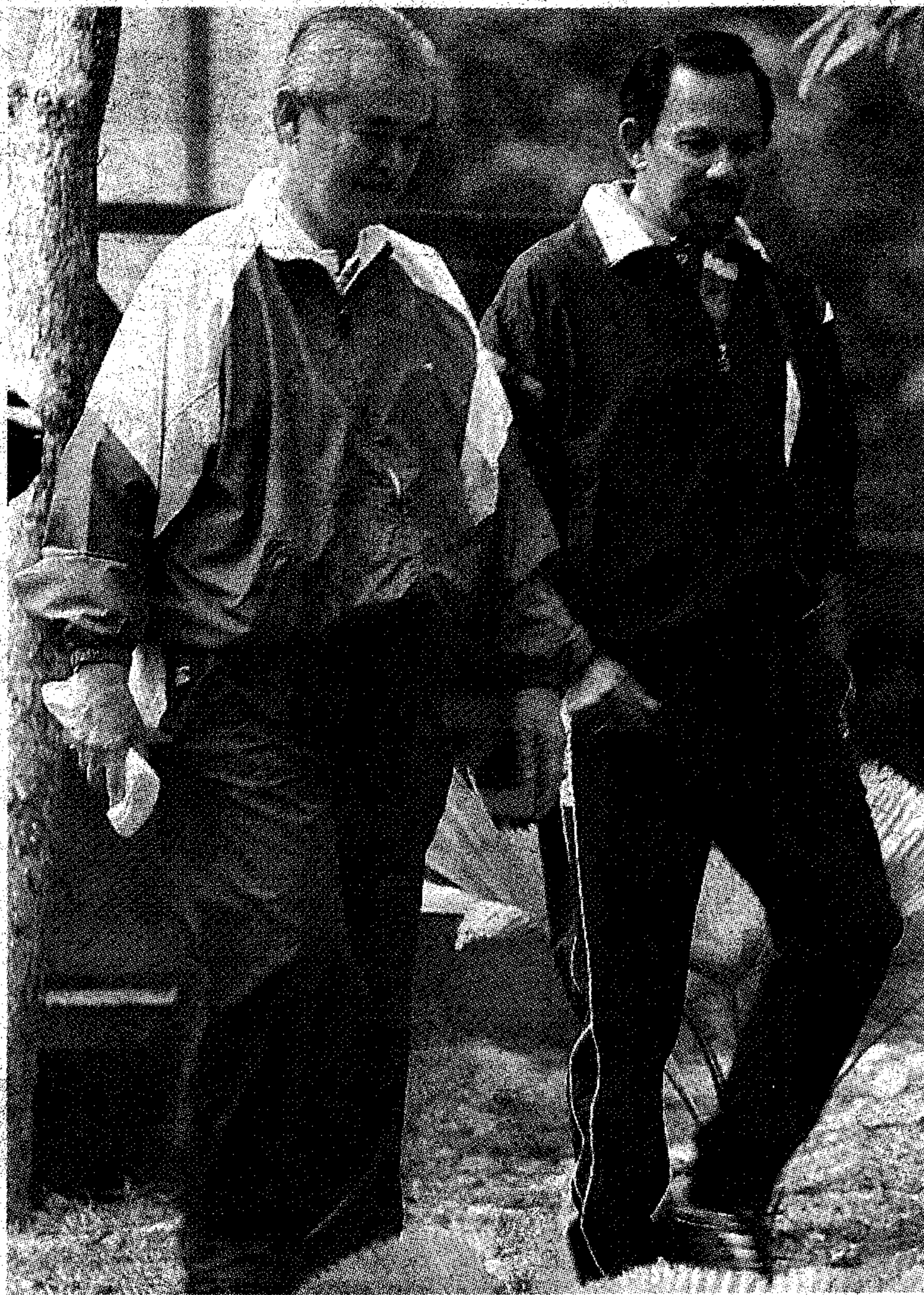
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No need for passports

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Malaysia and Brunei to allow frequent travellers to use ICs



Leisurely walk: Abdullah (left) and Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah taking a morning stroll at Taman Rekreasi Tasek Lama near Bandar Seri Begawan yesterday. — Bernama

By **STEPHEN THEN**
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BANDAR SERI BEGAWAN: Malaysia's MyKad and Brunei's identity card can be used by those travelling frequently between the two countries, eliminating the need for passports.

The agreement to allow the MyKad and Brunei IC to be used as frequent travellers cards (FTCs) was reached during high-level talks between Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi and Brunei's Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah here yesterday.

Abdullah is in the sultanate for the 11th annual consultative meeting, which concluded yesterday.

This is the first FTC agreement in South-East Asia.

Abdullah said Malaysia and Brunei would sign the FTC agreement on Sept 10.

"The agreement on the FTC between Malaysia and Brunei is very important as it will enable smooth travel between the two countries.

"It also signifies the excellent ties we have with each other," he said at a press conference here.

Abdullah added that Brunei would be actively involved in the development of Malaysia's regional corridors, especially in Sarawak and Sabah.

Malaysia and Brunei carried out a six-month trial last year where the MyKad and Brunei identity card were used as FTCs for crossing the Sungai Tujuh-Kuala Belait checkpoint.

Malaysians and Bruneians who cross the border at least three times every month can register with the Immigration Department of their respective countries to have their identity cards endorsed as FTCs.

Meanwhile, Home Minister Datuk Seri Radzi Sheikh Ahmad said Malaysia now wanted to have similar agreements with Singapore and Thailand where millions crossed the borders for work and leisure every week.

"We want to use this system at the Iskandar Development Region in Johor. We will make adjustments and amendments if necessary to suit the situation," he said.

Radzi, who was part of the Malaysian delegation to Brunei, said the FTC deal showed how well Asean members could work and co-operate for mutual benefit.

On another matter, Abdullah said an amicable solution to the maritime boundary dispute between Malaysia and Brunei was not too far away.

"There are a few more things that we need to sort out. Malaysia and Brunei agree on the need to resolve this urgently.

"This is an important issue, but any issue concerning the boundary of any country is always a difficult issue to resolve," he said.

Brunei and Malaysia have been engaged in lengthy high-level talks to settle overlapping territorial claims in the waters off Limbang Division in northern Sarawak.

Limbang is sandwiched between two parts of Brunei.