



PERDANA  
LEADERSHIP  
FOUNDATION  
YAYASAN  
KEPIMPINAN  
PERDANA

PERDANA LIBRARY  
PERDANA LEADERSHIP FOUNDATION  
NEWSPAPER CLIPPING

Newspaper	The Star
Date	9/4/2014

DIJUAL HARIAN 9 APRIL 2014

18 THE STAR

The Star, WEDNESDAY 9 APRIL 2014

IEWS 19



# A literally fruitful visit

*The Star - 9/4/2014*

Singapore leader Lee Hsien Loong travelled to Kuala Lumpur on a Malaysia Airlines flight for his annual retreat with Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak. As bilateral ties move up another notch, Lee came to show support to Najib in the wake of the MH370 tragedy.

It may be a coincidence but when Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong arrived at KLIA on Sunday, he was on flight MH606 from Singapore. It didn't go unnoticed.

One Malaysian official opined that it reflected his confidence in Malaysia during the MH370 crisis.

On Monday after the retreat, Lee made clear his support for Malaysia during the joint press conference with Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak.

"Singapore stands with Malaysia in this tragedy. We participated in SAR in the South China Sea and Straits of Malacca.

"As I told Prime Minister Najib, we stand ready to help Malaysia also in the next phase of investigation and its handling and follow-ups.

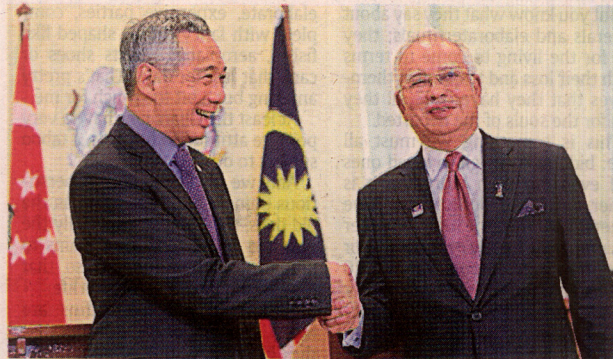
"I thank PM Najib for hosting the meeting in this difficult time for Malaysia in handling the aftermath of MH370. I also express sympathy to the families of crew and passengers on board," Lee said as a sombre-looking Najib stood next to him.

The last few weeks have been tough for Malaysia, and Najib, who has struck a great personal relationship with Lee, has always enjoyed meeting him.

A Cabinet Minister, who has been attending meetings involving the two leaders, said they are comfortable in each other's company.

"You can see that the chemistry is there - from the body language of the two leaders," he observed.

The good rapport the leaders enjoy



**Firm ties:** The good rapport Najib and Lee enjoy has paved the way for improved bilateral relations between Malaysia and Singapore. — AP

has paved the way for improved bilateral relations between Kuala Lumpur and Singapore.

Joint iconic projects involving Temasek Holdings and Khazanah Nasional, the investment arms of both countries, are progressing well especially in Iskandar Malaysia.

Iskandar is contributing to greater cooperation between the two countries and the integration of their economies.

Talks on other proposed projects like the Malaysia-Singapore high-speed rail (HSR) link service and Rapid Transit System (RTS) link are

also progressing well.

The rail link which was announced last year has created a lot of excitement as it will shorten the rail travelling time between Singapore and Kuala Lumpur from six hours to 90 minutes.

The 330km rail line is slated to be completed by 2020 and will connect two terminus stations (Kuala Lumpur and Singapore) via five transit stops spread out across Negri Sembilan, Malacca and Johor.

The Malaysia-Singapore Joint Ministerial Committee for Iskandar Malaysia (JMC) has endorsed phase

one of the joint engineering study for the RTS which is to improve connectivity between Johor Baru and Singapore.

The RTS link is supposed to leverage on the complementarities between Iskandar and Singapore.

A proposal to venture into joint border control, the first in the region, has been made by Singapore as an initiative to resolve traffic congestion at entry and exit points.

And there is also a proposal for a friendship bridge linking the two countries.

Najib said the suggestion of a friendship bridge was a long-term initiative to enhance road connectivity between the two countries.

"A friendship bridge will also create a much stronger link between the two countries and be a symbol of a growing friendship.

"Both countries have decided that we should ask our ministers to study it as a long-term initiative," Najib said.

Lee said his visit to Kuala Lumpur this time had been fruitful.

Upon arrival, he went for a two-hour tour of the Bangsar and Bukit Bintang areas and also visited the Petronas Twin Towers for the first time.

His visit was also literally fruitful. Soon as he landed at the airport,

Lee, who is known to be a durian lover, was asking about the Malaysian agro bazaar to be held in Singapore and was excited about the famous Musang King variety of durian.

He was then served the Musang King during dinner on a boat cruise on the Putrajaya lake hosted by Najib.

Lee couldn't help mentioning the durian at the leaders' joint press conference.

"Malaysia is planning to hold an agro bazaar in June, and I believe one of the agro products should be the Musang King durian.

"So many Singaporeans will get to enjoy the Musang King that we had on the boat sailing around Putrajaya," he quipped, much to the amusement of his host and Cabinet ministers from both countries.

The close ties and enthusiasm shown by the two leaders should be the catalyst for officials and ministers to work hard on the various projects and proposals already on the cards.

It will also bring a different psychology to the people in the two countries that Malaysia and Singapore can indeed be good friends and that they benefit from a strong partnership.

> Mergawati Zulfakar can be reached at [merga@thestar.com.my](mailto:merga@thestar.com.my)