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Separate but mutually prospering

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Singapore and Malaysia have found ways to live and work together since parting 50 years ago.



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comment

TODAY, on Aug 9, 2015, Singapore celebrates its 50th National Day. This year is also the 50th anniversary of Singapore-Malaysia bilateral relations, a significant milestone for our ties.

On this day 50 years ago, Singapore and Malaysia decided to go our separate ways. It was a difficult period for both countries.

Many Singaporeans and Malaysians had friends and family on the other side of the Causeway.

Both countries decided that despite the Separation, and whatever our differences, we had to live together and work together to create mutual prosperity.

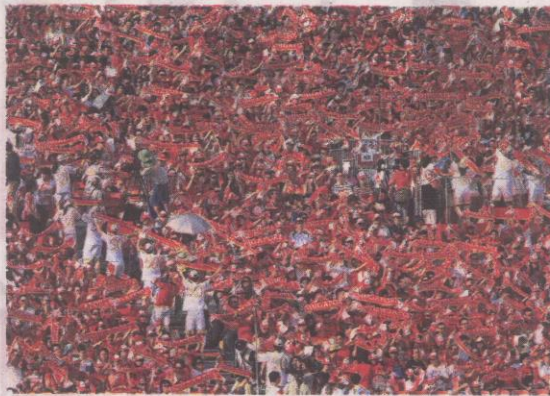
Our deep historical, social and cultural ties helped us to do so.

Our bilateral relations have since flourished. Today, Singapore and Malaysia enjoy a warm relationship, and good cooperation at all levels.

I met regularly with former Prime Minister Abdullah Badawi, and now with Prime Minister Najib Razak, to review our relations and explore new areas of collaboration.

Ministers and officials have frequent exchanges on a wide range of issues, including trade and investment, security and telecommunications. The Leaders' Retreat is an annual highlight in our bilateral relationship.

In recent years, we have resolved



Sea of red: Singaporeans holding scarves with 'SINGAPORE' inscribed on it during the National Day Parade preview in the republic. The country is commemorating its golden jubilee with a year-long campaign titled 'SG50'. — EPA

a number of long-standing bilateral issues. For example, we achieved the full resolution of the Points of Agreement (PoA) on Malayan Railway Land in Singapore in 2011.

Following from the PoA resolution, the joint venture projects between Temasek and Khazanah in both Singapore and Iskandar Malaysia are progressing well.

Our economic ties have grown. Malaysia and Singapore are each other's second largest trading partners, with total merchandise trade valued at \$111bil (RM315.1bil) last year.

Singapore is also the top foreign investor in Iskandar Malaysia. As of end-2013, Singapore investments into Malaysia totalled S\$37bil

(RM105bil) while Malaysian investments into Singapore totalled S\$27bil (RM76.6bil).

Singapore and Malaysia also cooperate well regionally. As founding members of Asean, we share an interest in maintaining regional peace and stability and promoting economic integration.

Malaysia is the Asean Chair at a crucial moment: this year we will establish the Asean Community. Singapore will continue to support Malaysia's Chairmanship, and work with Malaysia to foster a more integrated and prosperous region beyond 2015.

The depth of the friendship is evident in our shared family trees, festive seasons and food culture.



Strengthening ties: Lee (left) says he has been meeting regularly with Najib to review relations and explore new areas of collaboration.

Every day, hundreds of thousands of people cross the Strait of Johor, whether for work, play or to visit friends and relatives. Our citizens find the other country familiar, yet it also offers a change of scenery.

We have come to each other's assistance during difficult periods, such as the MH370 flight incident last year and the Sabah earthquake on June 5.

We are deeply grateful for the prompt support and assistance of the Malaysian authorities in the search, rescue and recovery efforts on Mount Kinabalu.

Looking ahead, our countries are pursuing many exciting developments together, like the Kuala Lumpur-Singapore High Speed Rail (HSR).

Discussions on the project are making steady progress. The HSR will provide a fast and convenient means of travel between Singapore and Kuala Lumpur. The Johor Baru-

Singapore Rapid Transit System (RTS), with co-located Checkpoint and Immigration Quarantine (CIQ) facilities in Johor Baru and Singapore, will also enhance cross-border connectivity, and speed up travel between Singapore and Johor Baru.

Malaysia will always be an important partner for Singapore. When Malaysia does well, Singapore also prospers.

Singapore is committed to a strong and mutually beneficial partnership with Malaysia.

As we celebrate the 50th anniversary of Singapore-Malaysia friendship, I look forward to both sides working together for the betterment of our countries, peoples and region.

> Lee Hsien Loong is the Prime Minister of Singapore. The views expressed here are entirely the writer's own.