

'Our ties always good'

> Tun M: Malaysians and Singaporeans civilised and do not believe in violence

PUTRAJAYA: The prime ministers of Malaysia and Singapore yesterday discussed in detail unresolved bilateral issues in a friendly and constructive manner and agreed to work towards amicable solutions.

At a joint press conference with Singapore Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong after the conclusion of the 9th Malaysia-Singapore Leaders' Retreat, Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad said ties between the two countries have always been good, Bernama reported.

"At least, we are always on talking terms. If we have problems, we air our problems, sometimes publicly or privately.

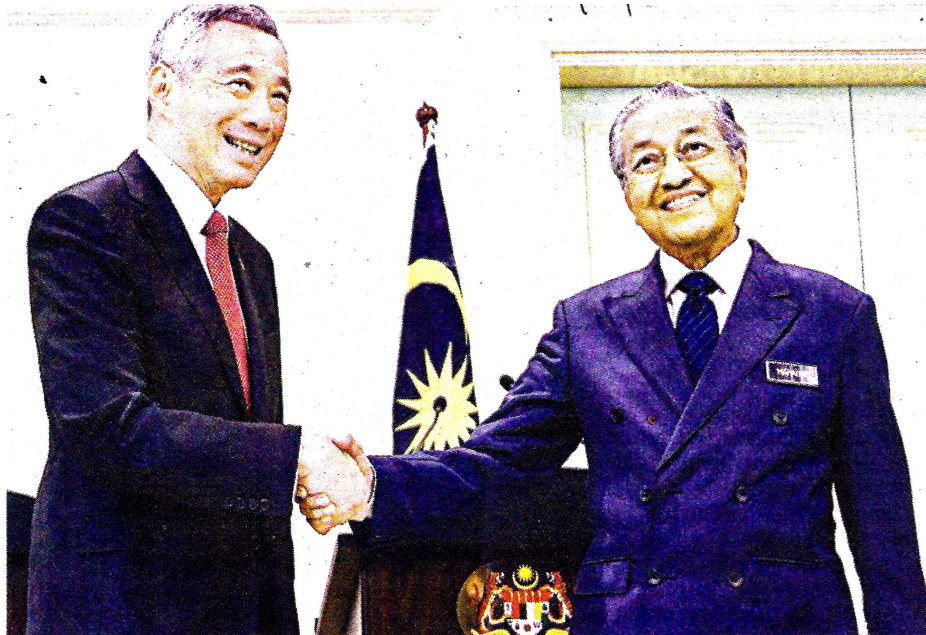
"What we have not done is confront each other or even suggest that we should resolve our problems through violent action, like going to war," said Mahathir.

He said some countries with problems with their neighbours will solve them through violence or war, with both sides losing.

"The people of Malaysia and Singapore are civilised. We do not believe in violence."

Mahathir said the discussions at the retreat covered topics that included issues concerning maritime boundaries, airspace, cross-border railway projects, congestion at the Causeway and the 1962 Johor River Water Agreement.

"We spoke about bilateral relations and how to strengthen and improve them," he said.



Mahathir and Lee shake hands during a joint press conference after the conclusion of the 9th Malaysia-Singapore Leaders' Retreat in Putrajaya yesterday. -AFPPIX

Lee said the two countries have worked very hard to develop and manage their relationship.

"If you look within Asean and the global context, Malaysia and Singapore are very similar countries in terms of heritage, rule of law, the connection we have with one another, and the comfort we have with one another. We even argue about who invented some of our (dishes).

"Therefore, there is tremendous potential for us to move ahead in a cooperative and

mutually beneficial way," Lee said.

On whether maritime and airspace disputes would have lasting damage on bilateral relations, Lee said it will depend on how it is managed.

"This is a continuing issue because we always have a maritime boundary with each other. If it is managed well, then it can be productive for both countries and the overall relationship can prosper. If it is not managed well, it can cause troubles and poison the overall relations," he said.