

Malaysia, Singapore Have To Work Together As Partners, Neighbours In The Region - Najib Bernama

May 5, 2015

By Tengku Noor Shamsiah Tengku Abdullah

SINGAPORE, May 5 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak says what Malaysia and Singapore share and have in common are great opportunities as partners and neighbours in the region.

"Throughout the shared history of Malaysia and Singapore relations over the last five decades, it is clear that our two nations are intertwined and, in particular, enjoy very strong people-to-people connectivity," he said in his speech entitled "Malaysia-Singapore: The Ties That Bind" at the Economic Society of Singapore's (ESS) annual dinner, here tonight.

Also present at the event were Najib's wife Datin Seri Rosmah Mansor, Singapore Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong, his wife Ho Ching, Singapore Minister of Trade and Industry Lim Hng Kiang, Minister in the Prime Minister's Office S. Iswaran, Malaysian High Commissioner to Singapore Datuk Husni Zai Yaacob and ESS president Professor Euston Quah.

Najib spoke about the state of Malaysia-Singapore bilateral relations, the Malaysian economy and its direction, and also ASEAN - where Malaysia holds the chairmanship.

Najib said the closeness of the bilateral ties was underlined soon after he became the Prime Minister.

Nevertheless, as close neighbours, he said: "We do have challenges like having to manage our differences. We have a Malay proverb for it: "Sedangkan Lidah Lagi Tergigit". We are like tongue and teeth. In other words, we are close and need to work together to find positive solutions," he said.

Citing an example, Najib said: "Our resolution of the Points of Agreement (POA) in 2010 after a 20-year deadlock is a good case in point.

"It was an example of how we chose to move forward in the spirit of friendship and mutual benefit, putting a long-standing stumbling block behind us.

"So, I am delighted that relations between Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong and me, and between our two governments, are now warm - indeed, I feel it would be no exaggeration to say they have never been better in the history of our countries," he said.

According to Najib, this closeness, and the agreements that followed, are of tangible economic and security benefit to all Malaysians and Singaporeans.

"This should be the priority of national leaders - the people's interests above all else," he said.

He said fruitful discussions on a number of issues were held, including on iconic projects such as the planned High Speed Rail linking Singapore and Kuala Lumpur, that he and Lee had discussed this morning and which would bring great benefit to both countries.

He said these ties were being further strengthened through regular exchange of visits at the highest level and that such bonds of friendship between the two countries should be the norm and the future.

"As it is, we are linked in so many ways. The economies of Malaysia and Singapore, for instance, have always had a high degree of interdependence. Bilateral trade between Malaysia and Singapore remained strong at RM209 billion last year," he said.

Najib noted that Singapore remained one of the top investors in Malaysia, with a total value of approved projects last year standing at RM8.3 billion.

"Foreign direct investment (FDI) Stock from Singapore alone amounted to RM80.7 billion in 2013.

Najib said three years ago he and Lee agreed that the Joint Ministerial Committee between the two countries should explore more ways to enhance collaboration in Iskandar Malaysia for mutual benefit.

He believed Malaysia and Singapore have already seen the fruits of this cooperation - it is a win-win situation for both, on either side of the Straits of Johor.

-- BERNAMA

Copyright © 2015 BERNAMA

Source : <http://www.bernama.com/bernama/v8/newsindex.php?id=1132137>