

Malaysia-Singapore Bilateral Ties At Best Level Ever In History: Najib

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SINGAPORE, May 6 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak described bilateral ties between Malaysia and Singapore as at the best level in history between the two countries where both sides could leverage in creating better opportunities to go forward.

The Malaysian prime minister said with the relationship that he and his colleagues had with Singapore, "I can simply say that relations between our two countries are at its best level ever in our history.

"With that kind of relationship, we can look forward to creating opportunities," he told the Malaysian community at a high-tea event organised by the Malaysian Association in Singapore on Tuesday here.

Najib said he had always believed that Malaysia and Singapore were inextricably linked.

He said whatever was said and done, both sides might have had their own differences over the years but "since I have taken over, I have placed our relations with Singapore as one of our priority areas."

"Singapore (whether) you like it or not, is an advanced economy...an advanced economy right at your doorsteps. You should take advantage or leverage on the existence of a first world country in terms of gross domestic product (GDP), the infrastructure and other facilities here in Singapore.

"I believe that if we are able to set a stage in terms of strong political relationship at the highest level, then we will be able to send the right signal into our communities both in Singapore and Malaysia," he said.

Citing Iskandar Malaysia, Najib said the development in Iskandar depended by large on the demand from Singapore.

"Our Tourism industry for example, out of the 29 million people who are characterised as tourists, 50 per cent of them are Singaporeans. So you have 50 per cent ..14 million visitors a year..most of them are repeat visitors from Singapore obviously," he said.

Najib noted that Singaporeans constituted the bulk of tourists visiting Malaysia.

He said if Malaysia could increase not only the number of tourists but also the purchasing power of each tourist, "you can imagine the kind of flow that we can benefit from that kind of support from Singaporeans as tourists."

Citing the Johor Premium Outlet as an example, Najib said: "We want Singaporeans not only

to cross over for food in Johor but also to come over, spend money, to buy things and enjoy some of the outlets we have in Iskandar area ..Legoland for example and all that attraction.

"And if possible we want them to go even further up...not just Johor but to other parts of Malaysia..Klang Valley, not forgetting Kuantan, Pahang..my own state and all other places (including) Sabah and Sarawak," he said.

Najib however reminded Malaysians that Singaporeans must feel that they were welcome as our tourists.

Touching on the Leaders' Retreat, Najib said he had a very fruitful and productive discussion to move forward relationship between Malaysia and Singapore.

The prime minister pointed that "we must not be a true prisoner of our history ..history is a guide for us..but I always believe that we must be forward looking."

"We cannot change history and we cannot turn the clock back, (but) we can and we should always move forward and think positively.

"After all, we are moving to become a community ..Asean is becoming a community of nations and a community of nations must have a sense of being part of a bigger and wider community..the Asean community," he added.

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