

Malaysia, Singapore are like twins, good relations to continue - Tun M

Summits

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SINGAPORE, Nov 12 (Bernama) – Malaysia hopes to continue with good relations, both economically and in terms of mutual respect for each other with Singapore, says Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

The Prime Minister who arrived here today for a two-day official visit described Malaysia and Singapore as twins, except “the elder twin is little bit bigger and older than the younger twin”.

“But we have been able to live together in reasonably harmonious terms,” he said in his speech at the official lunch hosted for him and his wife, Tun Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali by his Singapore counterpart, Lee Hsien Loong and his wife Ho Ching at The Istana, here.

“It is not often that you see countries which came together and then separated, and still able to work together and help each other,” he said.

Dr Mahathir took the opportunity to record Malaysia’s appreciation for the help extended by Singapore during the financial issues the country had recently.

“We will always appreciate that. If there is any way we can return the hospitality, we will try to do so,” he said without referring to any specific assistance.

However, it is believed due to Singapore having agreed to suspend construction of the Kuala Lumpur-Singapore High-Speed Rail (HSR) project until the end of May 2020.

Following Malaysia's request for the deferment of the project, the government has agreed to

pay an abortive cost of S\$15 million to the Singapore government by Jan 31, 2019.

Dr Mahathir said the most important thing was of course continuing the good relations as between two countries there would be some differences.

“There will also be competition but the competition is always healthy. It helps us to really make any effort to win in any competition. This will help us grow even faster,” he said.

According to him, Malaysia and Singapore are mutually dependent.

“Singapore has got no hinterland but must regard Malaysia as its hinterland. On the other hand, for a very long time Malaysia had to depend on Singapore for its exports and imports because Singapore has developed into a great port that is comparable to the greatest in the world,” he said.

Dr Mahathir said Malaysia needed the services of Singapore port and other services related to trade and industry .

Singapore is Malaysia’s second largest trading partner after China and total bilateral trade between the two countries in 2017 stood at RM220.88 billion, representing 12.9 per cent of Malaysia’s global trade.

On his visit, Dr Mahathir said he was “very glad” to have this visit and discussion with Lee on the two neighbouring countries’ relations and how to improve it further.

He noted that Lee was the second leader to visit Malaysia after he won in the 14th General Election.

“Of course it was not a formal visit; no parade or inspection of guard of honour but nevertheless, the reception was as sincere as it could be.

“And we expect this close relations which started almost immediately after the new government took over will continue to be very close and cooperative. I hope this visit will cement the strong relations between our two countries and grow further.

“The relations should grow together so that each of us can benefit as two neighbours which are not at odds with each other, but at times competing with each other and mostly working with each other,” he said.

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