

## **Lee Kuan Yew Says Singapore, Malaysia Unlikely To Merge, Praises Najib's Effort In Boosting Ties**

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SINGAPORE, Sept 22 (Bernama) -- Singapore's former prime minister Lee Kuan Yew said it was unlikely that Singapore and Malaysia would merge in the future.

However, he praised Malaysian Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak for his effort in enhancing bilateral relations between the two nations.

Lee was speaking at the Sentosa Roundtable Dialogue, held at the Shangri-La Hotel, on Thursday evening. The dialogue was attended by some 400 participants from all over world.

Lee was asked by a Malaysian citizen if he foresaw both countries coming to a political or economic union in the future, given the growing strength of Indonesia, reported local television Channel NewsAsia.

Lee, who is also former minister mentor, said having gone through a failed merger in the 1960s, such a move was unlikely.

But he gave a positive outlook of bilateral relations, noting Najib's efforts.

These include developing the Iskandar region in southern Johor, which will complement Singapore's own economic growth.

"Najib has brought forth a positive view of bilateral relations and the desire to develop southern Johor, the Iskandar region, using Singapore as a kind of Shenzhen. (This) means a complementary set of forces will be let loose, which will make it unprofitable for either side to be unfriendly," Lee said.

"You want our investments, we want to invest. Having invested, we don't want problems with Malaysia, and Malaysia which wants more investments will not give us problems. So, that's a positive development."

Touching on Singapore's growth, Lee said that as a diverse society, the country would not be sustainable if economic growth was confined to only one section of society.

At the dialogue, one question raised was on what Lee saw as the two or three key factors that would continue to push Singapore's growth in the next 10 years.

Lee replied that factors such as meritocracy, pragmatism and a clean government had taken Singapore to where it is, and losing sight of any of them would cause the country to lose momentum.

When asked how he hoped to be remembered, Lee said he had no desire to be remembered for any particular reason, but "I have a job to do, that is, to maintain a fair distribution of growth for the country and to maintain good relations with neighbours".

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