

Better ties under Pak Lah, writes ex-envoy

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KUALA LUMPUR: Having endured a tense period in his country's relations with Malaysia, Singapore's former High Commissioner to Malaysia K. Kesavapany has penned his thoughts on the way things have improved and on the future path of bilateral ties.

As co-author of the book *Singapore-Malaysia Relations: Under Abdullah Badawi*, he outlined the role played by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi and the impact of his leadership on relations between the two countries.

Kesavapany, who served as High Commissioner here between 1997 and 2002, noted that the period he was here was by far the most stressful in the short history of relations between Singapore and Malaysia.

Failure to resolve issues despite many rounds of negotiations had caused confusion and concern, with bitter exchanges between the top officials of both countries, which led to unhealthy trends at the people-to-people level, he said. He wrote that the impasse came to an end when Abdullah became Prime Minister on Oct 30, 2003.

The eight-chapter book is a project undertaken under Singapore's Institute of South-East Asian Studies (Iseas) Malaysia Study Programme to document the series of important events under Abdullah's leadership that had contributed towards better bilateral ties.

There are also four appendices,



Kesavapany: Says that the period he was in Kuala Lumpur was the most stressful

with the first two containing speeches by Yang di-Pertuan Agong Tuanku Syed Sirajuddin and Singapore President S.R. Nathan during their state visits to Singapore and Malaysia.

Kesavapany, who is Iseas director, co-wrote the book with Iseas professorial fellow Saw Swee-Hock.

The former envoy to Malaysia, who was born in Kuala Lumpur, has a wide circle of friends here and has more family members in Malaysia than on the other side of the Causeway.

During a recent trip, he caught up with Singapore's new High Commissioner here T. Jesudasan, and presented copies of his new book to his close friends.