

27/06/2009 - At The Dinner in Conjunction With The 32nd Malaysia-Singapore Public Sector Games

Bismillahir rahmanir rahim

Assalamualaikum Warahmatullahi Wabarakaatuh

Selamat Malam, Good Evening

His Excellency Mr. Peter Ho,
Head of Singapore Civil Service,

Tan Sri-Tan Sri, Puan Sri-Puan Sri, Dato' Seri- Dato'Seri, Datin Sri-Datin Sri, Dato'-Dato', Datin-Datin

Colleagues

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We meet this time just over a month after the official visit of the Prime Minister of Malaysia, Y.A.B. Dato' Sri Najib Tun Abdul Razak to Singapore. In his speech at the official dinner, Dato' Sri Najib used the symbol of the orchid to describe Malaysia-Singapore relationship. This relationship he said, and I quote, "if it is cultivated, if it is nurtured, can blossom into something beautiful like that orchid" unquote. Our two Prime Ministers also stressed the importance of regular exchange of visits and not necessarily in an official capacity. My Prime Minister gave as examples a game of golf or sitting down to a meal of nasi kandar. And I must say that over more than three decades, that is precisely what the Malaysian and Singapore civil service has been doing through our annual games.

2. As leaders of the public sector we have through our informal interactions built rapport and camaraderie. You and I know that these games are just an excuse for us to take time off our schedules and focus on nurturing this important bilateral relationship. For that was the spirit which gave shape to this initiative more than three decades ago.

3. The informal environment we have created has contributed in a significant way to the state of our relationship today. The confidence, trust and comfort we have with each other now must be further nurtured if we are to navigate the difficult waters of the years ahead together. And clearly the challenges are many and from multiple fronts, bilateral, regional and multilateral: the global economic and financial crisis that is affecting all of us; the challenge of meeting our goals for the establishment of the ASEAN Economic Community; working towards a meaningful conclusion of the Doha Round of negotiations at the WTO; the challenge of ensuring the security of our region, just to name a few.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

4. When our two Prime Ministers met they ushered in a new phase to Malaysia-Singapore relations, the phase of a new generation of leaders and I quote "that should not be encumbered by the baggage of history" unquote. And yes, over the years we have had a bilateral issue or two to resolve. We still have some of them. However, these are minor irritants and are not insurmountable. With patience, goodwill and understanding of each other's interests, they can and will be resolved.

5. Clearly, there is no lack of willingness to engage and nurture our relationship. In fact, but for a short period in our history, we have managed to meet annually for these games. Let us now take the cue from our leaders and forge ahead, enhancing the depth and breadth of our relationship. Perhaps we should consider having a similar programme for the second echelon of the members of the public sector.

Peter, friends from Singapore and colleagues,

6. It is indeed a great pleasure for me to formally welcome you to Kuala Lumpur. This visit despite its brevity is significant, coming on the heels of two high level exchanges of visits of our leaders. The foundation of a sound, healthy relationship has been set. Let us continue to work together to have many

orchids bloom!

On this note, ladies and gentlemen, I wish you enjoy your stay in Malaysia, and a safe journey back to Singapore.

Thank you.