

S'poreans in Malaysia urged to keep ties strong with friendships

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Singapore and Malaysia have forged strong ties over many years, anchored in mutual trust and respect, President Halimah Yacob said yesterday as she encouraged Singaporeans who work and live in Malaysia to maintain these strong networks and friendships.

Speaking at a breakfast reception at the Singapore High Commission in Kuala Lumpur on the second day of her visit to Malaysia, she said it was important for these ties to remain strong.

Both countries are founding members of Asean, and share similar cultures. "We want Asean to prosper. Asean prospers only because

the countries within it are strong, independent, and respect, and work well with, each other. Asean presents tremendous opportunity for us," Madam Halimah said, citing the grouping's population and the size of its economy.

She added that Singaporeans abroad played a crucial role as "ambassadors" in other countries because the friendships and networks built are the most enduring aspects of any bilateral relationship.

In her speech, she noted that many Singaporeans still have family members and friends living in Malaysia, and vice versa, and there is a sense of familiarity on both sides.

"The linkages between Singapore and Malaysia have been built up over many years and are anchored in mutual trust and respect," added Madam Halimah.

Both Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong and Deputy Prime Minister Teo Chee Hean visited Malaysia after the May 9 general election to meet its new leaders.

Madam Halimah is on her first official visit to Malaysia as head of state.

On Tuesday, she met Malaysia's King, Sultan Muhammad V. She also witnessed the University of Malaya-National University of Singapore (UM-NUS) annual games, and met UM's chancellor, Sultan Nazrin Shah, who is Deputy King.

Yesterday, she also said she had met several leaders, including Economic Affairs Minister Mohamed Azmin Ali.

Madam Halimah noted that Singapore has welcomed several visiting Malaysian ministers in the last few months, adding that she was especially happy to meet one of them,



President Halimah Yacob opening a new heritage gallery that documents historic moments in the ties between the two countries at the Singapore High Commission in Kuala Lumpur yesterday. Beside her is Singapore's High Commissioner to Malaysia Vanu Gopala Menon. PHOTO: ISTANA

Housing and Local Government Minister Zuraida Kamaruddin, at an event at Tanjong Katong Girls' School in Singapore in July. Both Madam Halimah and Madam Zuraida are alumni of the school.

Several of the new Pakatan Harapan ministers and deputy ministers had also studied in Singapore.

"I am very happy that ministers are

making an effort to meet each other to strengthen our relationship. That is how it should be," she said.

She also urged the Singaporean community to keep in touch with developments back home.

Madam Halimah, who was accompanied by her husband Mohamed Abdullah Alhabshee, also officiated at the opening of a new heritage

gallery at the Singapore High Commission that documents historic moments in the relationship between the two countries. They include how Singapore joined the Federation of Malaya with Sabah and Sarawak to form Malaysia, its separation in 1965 and how ties have grown since then.

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