

Large Cabinet team joins PM Lee on M'sia visit

By **CHUANG PECK MING**

IN a show that Singapore values its "very good" ties with Malaysia – and wants to take cooperation with its neighbour to new heights – two-thirds of its Cabinet ministers will be present when Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong meets his Malaysian counterpart in Putrajaya today for their regular Leaders' Retreat pow wow.

A brief statement issued yesterday by Singapore's Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) said Mr Lee will be accompanied on the day-long visit by nine other ministers – Deputy Prime Minister Teo Chee Hean; Trade and Industry Minister Lim Hng Kiang; Information, Communications and the Arts Minister Yaacob Ibrahim; Defence Minister Ng Eng Hen; National Development Minister Khaw Boon

Wan; Environment and Water Resources Minister Vivian Balakrishnan; Foreign Affairs and Law Minister K Shanmugam; Transport Minister Lui Tuck Yew; and Acting Community Development, Youth and Sports Minister Chan Chun Sing.

The presence of so many Singapore ministers also reflects the extensive cooperation between the two countries since the breakthrough meeting between their leaders in May 2010.

That meeting between Mr Lee and Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Razak resulted in a landmark deal involving Malayan Railway land – an issue that had plagued ties for the past 20 years.

The MFA statement said that Mr Lee and Mr Najib, both of whom will be seeing each other for the fifth time

as leaders of their respective countries, will discuss ways to further boost bilateral ties after the full implementation of the Points of Agreement on Malayan Railway Land in Singapore on July 1, 2011.

"The two Prime Ministers will also take stock of the progress of the joint iconic project in Iskandar Malaysia and explore ways to further enhance connectivity and cross-border exchanges between the two countries," the statement said.

The project includes two joint ventures of Singapore's Temasek Holdings and Malaysia's Khazanah Nasional: an urban wellness development and a resort wellness development in Johor's Iskandar development region. A rapid railway link between Johor Baru and Singapore will also be operational by 2018.