

Iskandar Malaysia's success is in Singapore's interests

Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong sees developing the linkage between Republic and Malaysia's administrative capital as beneficial to both sides

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PUTRAJAYA — The Prime Ministers of Malaysia and Singapore have agreed that the Joint Ministerial Committee should explore more ways to enhance collaboration in Iskandar Malaysia for the mutual benefit of both sides.

The agreement was reached during discussions between Singapore Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong and his Malaysian counterpart Najib Razak at their third leaders' retreat at the Malaysian administrative capital of Putrajaya yesterday.

At a news conference after their meeting, both leaders said they have directed that a new workgroup on industrial cooperation be formed. The aim is to promote mutually beneficial economic activities between Iskandar Malaysia and Singapore.

Mr Lee said this will be useful for Singapore, which has a large manufacturing base in its economy, but faces constraints of space and manpower.

Both Prime Ministers said the Iskandar Malaysia project in Johor has helped enhance ties between the two countries. Mr Lee said: "It sets the basis

for us to move forward and develop our bilateral relationship another step forward.

"Singapore sees it very much in our interests that Iskandar Malaysia prospers and succeeds. It has been doing well, it has attracted many investments. But most importantly, I think if we can develop the linkage between Singapore and Iskandar, we will be able to have benefits to both sides."

Mr Najib added: "There is no doubt that the synergistic development based on the impetus of Singapore and the existence of Southern Johor as a large hinterland has been proven to be a very workable and do-able concept."

The two Prime Ministers also agreed that the Joint Ministerial Committee would also explore the possibility of establishing ferry and water taxi services as another means of transportation between the two countries. They may also work together in other areas such as aviation, with Singapore's Changi Airport potentially cooperating with Malaysia's nearby Senai.

The two Prime Ministers were also pleased with the collaboration between Khazanah Nasional and Temasek Holdings through joint investments in M+S Pte Ltd. The company has also submitted the designs for the

Marina South and Ophir-Rochor developments in Singapore for planning approval.

On the Malaysian proposal for its power generating companies to sell electricity to Singapore, Mr Lee said Singapore is in the process of working out the proper framework for managing the import of electricity.

He said: "Once this framework is ready, we welcome Malaysian companies to participate and to bid to supply electricity to Singapore and we hope of course some of them would succeed."

"But when you supply electricity, there is also the consideration of the environmental impact of the power generation companies, because if you are burning fossil fuels, particularly coal, you also have to make sure there are environmental controls and that is something we will be taking seriously in mind. It affects the immediate neighbours of the power station but there could be cross border implications as well, and that is something we have to pay attention to."

Mr Lee and Mr Najib have also directed officials to look into further collaboration in the fields of information, culture, the arts, youth and sports, with the view of enhancing mutual goodwill and understanding between Malaysians and Singaporeans.

One potential area of bilateral cooperation is the alignment of the radio frequency spectrum plans in both countries for digital broadcast and mobile broadband services.

The alignment would allow both countries to meet the growing demand for digital TV and mobile broadband. It will also improve regional mobile roaming and provide more competitive mobile broadband services.



Singapore's Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong and Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Razak shaking hands in front of Putra Mosque yesterday. REUTERS