

Kelantan: Uphill battle for BN to oust PAS - STATE OF THE BATTLE: Midway through the Malaysian general election campaign, Straits Times correspondents assess the sentiment on the ground in the various states

✗ **SPE-01**

Straits Times, The (Singapore)-March 3, 2008

Seats up for grabs: 14 parliamentary seats and 45 state seats.

State of play: The ground situation is fluid, with conflicting reports over who will emerge victorious.

But overall, leaders of Parti Islam SeMalaysia (PAS) are quietly confident they are going to retain the state, and Barisan Nasional (BN) leaders agree privately they are fighting an uphill battle.

'We are still leading, and the lead is going to get bigger,' PAS state finance chief Datuk Husam Musa said yesterday.

However, on the ground, indications are that the gap is narrow, and BN is slowly catching up, helped by national leaders who have asked for a chance in the next few years to show what they can do.

BN in Kelantan, led by Umno, is also helped this time by its subdued culture of 'cah keting' (back-stabbing in Kelantan dialect), where party warlords sabotage each other's efforts.

'BN right now is strong and nearing victory. We can see clearly the winds of change blowing towards us,' said Datuk Awang Adek Hussin, BN chief campaigner in the state.

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On paper, strategists from both sides say PAS will win roughly 15 to 18 seats, compared with some 10 to 12 for BN. This means that 15 to 20 are undecided, with some seats expected to be won by several dozen votes.

Young voters and people who work outside Kelantan, who return to cast their ballots, are seen as the king-makers.

In 2004, one state seat was won by PAS by just two votes, and eight other seats secured by either side with fewer than 200 votes.

PAS eventually won a total of 24 state seats in 2004, while BN took 22. PAS then lost one seat to BN in a by-election. BN won nine parliament seats against five by PAS.

Reme Ahmad's take: PAS looks set to win, but a narrow upset victory by BN cannot be ruled out.

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Smear tactics, banner war... all's fair game in fight for votes
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Straits Times, The (Singapore)-March 7, 2008

Author: Jeremy Au Yong

SPE-02 *Notes*

KUALA LUMPUR - FIFTEEN minutes before the 8pm rally was due to start, it was still not immediately clear where it would take place.

The address given was a Parti Keadilan Rakyat (PKR) office in Petaling Jaya, Selangor, but no chairs had been set up inside the small shop lot and there was no open field or tent anywhere to be spotted.

Nearby was a parked truck covered with party flags. At 8pm, a party worker emerged, walked towards it and turned on a sound system that had been set up

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inside the vehicle.

Former deputy prime minister Anwar Ibrahim was to address the crowd that night - it then became clear that he would do it standing on the flat-bed of the truck.

The rally began and a crowd gathered. About 1,000 people listened, some seated in coffee shops nearby, some craning their necks from the balconies of their flats, but most of them standing in the middle of the road, blocking traffic.

During the campaigning throughout the country, such scenes were repeated at night markets, side streets and carparks.

A PKR worker at the rally said there was a good reason for using trucks instead of halls or open fields: 'No need to pay rent.'

After all, the point of a rally for opposition parties in Malaysia is to solicit, not spend, funds. On a good night, supporters drop up to RM20,000 (S\$9,000) into the cardboard and plastic collection boxes passed around.

To Singaporeans, the scenes of Malaysia's latest political campaign are a throwback to the early days of campaigning in Singapore, and a far cry from the more orderly system that the Republic is now accustomed to.

As in Singapore, Malaysia has rules to govern most aspects of campaigning. But the police here rarely enforce them.

For example, it is against the law to have a rally run past midnight. But some just go past the witching hour.

'It all depends on how fussy the police are in that area,' said Democratic Action Party national campaign manager Foo Yueh Chuan. 'It used to be they controlled rallies more strictly, but during the past two elections, they seemed to have let go.'

Indeed, even the Election Commission's website lists only the most basic of rules, and adds that police will 'from time to time issue separate guidelines to candidates contesting for the peaceful conduct of the elections'.

There are no restrictions on who can speak at rallies.

Mr Anwar is currently banned from running for political office.

In Singapore, such a person cannot address rallies. Here, as the de facto leader of the PKR, he is among the busiest politicians, sometimes making a dozen stops in a day.

Prominent bloggers like Raja Petra Kamarudin have also been rousing the crowds for the opposition, while pop stars like Siti Nurhaliza have gone on stage for Barisan Nasional.

Door-to-door visits are also a campaign staple here. Candidates often go the distance, literally, to reach voters.

Works Minister S. Samy Vellu hopped into his four-wheel drive to visit a small Orang Asli settlement deep in rural Perak; Prime Minister Abdullah Badawi trekked through mud to see some of the poorest villagers in rural Penang.

Then there are the banners, flags and bunting. Again, parties are left to their own devices. The only requirement is a cash deposit that will be returned if banners are cleared away within two weeks after the polls.

'As long as we don't incite violence and our banners don't block road signs, it's okay,' said Ms Foo.

They may eschew violence, but political parties love smear campaigns.

PAS has banners with the Prime Minister clasping actress Michelle Yeoh's waist, an action that is taboo among conservative Muslims. It has also put up pictures showing him nodding off at events.

BN candidate Carol Chew in Selangor has taken to using large banners featuring caricatures of her opponent Teresa Kok.

The no-holds-barred approach also means you find party material in various shapes and sizes and in the most unlikely places.

Trees, flower pots and even water bottles are adorned with party paraphernalia. Bus stops can be seen completely covered in party flags. In Kuala Lumpur, one building features a BN banner that is 23 storeys tall.

The ruling coalition has the budget to rent large commercial billboards. It has also bought full-page advertisements daily in newspapers and taken up advertising spots on TV.

Opposition parties turn to the Internet to get their material out, with several candidates running daily blogs.

During the campaign, parties accuse one another of cheating. Campaign chit-chat is often riddled with innuendoes about supporters being paid to sabotage or switch sides. But no one provides proof.

Such murmurings along with the other quirks of the campaign are fodder not just for bloggers, but also for comedians. Already, Comedy Court, a company that puts up satirical plays, has released four politically related song parodies on its website.

Mr Zachary Sze-To, 35, an IT consultant who used to work in Singapore, summed up the Malaysian election campaign like this: 'In Singapore, it's possible, if you don't read papers and watch the news, to not know an election is going on. Here, it's in your face.'

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State tussle, national crisis? - Impasse over appointment of Terengganu MB is another blow for PM Abdullah

SPE-03

Straits Times, The (Singapore)-March 25, 2008
Author: Carolyn Hong, Malaysia Bureau Chief

KUALA LUMPUR - PRIME Minister Abdullah Badawi's showdown with the Terengganu royal house over the choice of a menteri besar in the state is leading his administration into rocky times with the powerful Malay rulers.

The stalemate has wide implications, and not just for Terengganu, whose Sultan is also the current King.

It is yet another fire for the Prime Minister to douse in the aftermath of the March 8 polls which left his ruling Barisan Nasional (BN) and administration weakened.

Malaysia's constitutional monarchs seem to be forming an independent power base. In Terengganu now, as in Perlis last week, the palace has refused to endorse Datuk Seri Abdullah's choice of a chief minister.

The palace prevailed in Perlis.

'Would anyone have imagined the royal houses stepping out as a major influence on the post-polls course of events? Surely not,' wrote The New

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Straits Times in an editorial yesterday.

Malaysia's nine hereditary state rulers, and the King, are bound by the Constitution. This generally means that they follow the advice of the Prime Minister, but the outcome is uncertain if they refuse.

'That's what we call a constitutional crisis,' said constitutional expert Professor Shad Faruqi.

The government has said that the Terengganu palace is acting unconstitutionally by refusing to swear in the Prime Minister's choice of chief minister after 22 of the 24 BN state assemblymen pledged support for the candidate.

Instead, the palace appointed another BN assemblyman.

The new Law Minister Zaid Ibrahim yesterday said that it was up to the palace to 'undo' the crisis, otherwise it would not end.

But veteran Umno leader and Kelantan prince Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah, who is already looking to replace PM Abdullah as the head of Umno, the main BN component party, disagreed with the government's stance.

In a statement yesterday, he said that the palace had acted within its powers and that the Prime Minister's actions 'suggest stunning ineptness in managing fundamental relationships and straightforward functions of government'.

Constitutional lawyer Malik Imtiaz Sarwar also said that the Sultan had the right to make his own decision.

'What if the Sultan felt that those who pledged support were merely acting according to party dictate?' he said.

State assemblymen who disagreed with the palace's choice could pass a vote of no confidence when the state assembly was convened, he said.

The assembly must be called within 90 days of the election.

If there was a vote, constitutional experts said, the menteri besar could either step down or advise the Sultan to dissolve the assembly and call for fresh polls.

'That's a new ball game altogether. It may bring a new result altogether,' said Prof Shad.

On March 8, BN won 24 of the 32 seats in the state.

Senior Umno leader Muhyiddin Yassin has urged PM Abdullah to resolve the stalemate by seeking an audience with the Sultan to ask for forgiveness if they had hurt him.

Analysts suggest that the impasse could lead to difficult months ahead.

In Malaysia, the King has three main discretionary powers - the appointment of the Prime Minister, dissolution of Parliament before its five-year mandate ends, and the convening of the Conference of Rulers.

Significantly, PM Abdullah might find it difficult to call snap polls - an option widely speculated to be the response should the Barisan Nasional be in danger of losing power if enough of its MPs cross to the opposition.

'But what if the King refuses to act on advice? I have no answer,' said Prof Shad.

The Constitution, he said, relies on acceptance of its rules without sanction.

The government's difficulty is that it cannot afford to be seen attacking the Malay rulers.

'The last few years have seen a discernible upsurge in popular perception that the Rulers constitute a vital check and balance mechanism of the Constitution,' said Prof Shad.

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Lessons in democracy - from Taiwan and Malaysia
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Straits Times, The (Singapore)-March 28, 2008
Author: Clarissa Oon

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BARELY a week after a political tsunami shook Malaysia's once-formidable ruling party, a similar shake-up at Taiwan's presidential election saw blue skies return again to the island.

Those were the colourful metaphors that dominated the headlines this past fortnight following the dramatic results of the Malaysian and Taiwanese

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and, finally, its steady losses in local and then government elections, which led to the opposition DPP coming to power in 2000.

The DPP's years in power showed, however, that speedy political liberalisation has not ended the graft and vote-buying endemic in Taiwanese politics, but may even have fanned it.

The island's economy has also suffered in the past eight years under DPP's outgoing President Chen Shui-bian's ineptitude and independence-minded agenda.

Hopefully, Mr Ma can institute a 'middle way' between strong leadership and freewheeling pluralism.

In all likelihood, communist China is quietly observing the Taiwan experience and gleaning lessons for its own long-haul process of controlled democratisation. Already, it has learnt not to interfere in the outcome of Taiwan's presidential election, unlike eight to 12 years ago when it would issue threats or conduct military exercises near the Taiwan Strait.

What about Singapore, where one party dominates but which has had clean, corruption-free government - a feature lauded by Mr Ma himself?

Singaporeans have given the ruling People's Action Party a long run in power in exchange for good governance, strong laws, improvements to both economic livelihoods and quality of life, as well as the assurance of continued sensitivity to the ground through feedback and consultative mechanisms.

If these pledges and mechanisms should one day unravel, then the impact will be felt at the polls.

While a two-party democracy may be the most unimaginable thing for Singapore right now, election histories elsewhere in the region are a reminder that politics is unpredictable. As they say in football parlance, the ball is round.

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Abdullah to face party elections in December - Umno leaders reject bid to delay polls; Malaysian PM accepts Terengganu ruler's choice of chief minister

SPE-05

Straits Times, The (Singapore)-March 28, 2008
Author: Carolyn Hong, Malaysia Bureau Chief

3/28/08

IN KUALA LUMPUR - PRIME Minister Abdullah Badawi yesterday declared that he is ready to face challenges to his leadership after Umno leaders rejected a bid to delay party polls to next year.

The polls will now be held in December instead of in August, as was expected.

Datuk Seri Abdullah has found himself besieged on many fronts after his ruling Barisan Nasional coalition suffered stunning losses in the recent general election, and could face a challenge from Kelantan prince Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah, 71, for the party presidency.

Asked about possible challenges, PM Abdullah, 68, told reporters after yesterday's Umno governing council meeting: 'If they have the support, if they want to challenge me, why not? I have to face. I am not going to run away.'

In what was seen as yet another blow, he announced that he had accepted the Terengganu palace's choice of chief minister for the state.

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After days of a deadlock after the royal house rejected his candidate, the PM said he was accepting its choice to avoid further delays in setting up a government for the oil and gas-rich eastern state.

He also accepted the resignation of a third deputy minister from his government, a mere eight days after his Cabinet was formed.

Deputy Minister of Natural Resources and Environment Ghapur Salleh resigned on Wednesday, and might throw his support behind Tengku Razaleigh.

PM Abdullah is fighting for his political survival after the BN lost its two-thirds majority in parliament and control of five states in the election.

The monarchy has been increasingly asserting its power, with the rulers of Perlis and Terengganu rejecting his choices of chief minister.

Aside from three Umno deputy ministers quitting the government, there have been signs of rebellion within Umno ranks angered by the crushing electoral losses.

Earlier this week, some Umno leaders aligned to the PM broached the idea of postponing the party polls to June next year. It was seen as a bid to enable PM Abdullah to consolidate his position, while allowing anger over the elections to dissipate.

But the idea was met with strong resistance at the grassroots as well as in Umno's powerful management committee chaired by deputy premier Najib Razak.

The party polls will now be held from Dec 16 to 20, with lower-level branch and divisional elections held in July and October respectively.

Tengku Razaleigh must muster support from at least 30 per cent of the 191 divisions before he can qualify to run for the presidency. This is an uphill battle, and he has failed once before.

But he has already begun seeing party leaders, and reportedly met representatives from 51 Umno divisions yesterday at his Kuala Lumpur residence.

If PM Abdullah chooses to hand over the reins, the next in line is his deputy, Datuk Seri Najib. But Umno vice-president Muhyiddin Yassin, who has been sounding statesman-like since the general election and has been promoted in the Cabinet, is also being seen as a possible contender for the top job.

But PM Abdullah has said repeatedly that he is not ready to give up the fight, and that he has the support of the party.

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SPE-06

Mahathir no longer supports Najib for prime minister

Straits Times, The (Singapore) - Wednesday, April 2, 2008

Author: Carolyn Hong, Malaysia Bureau Chief

PETALING JAYA - TUN Dr Mahathir Mohamad yesterday said he no longer supported Deputy Premier Najib Razak for prime minister.

At a raucous event attended by more than 1,500 Umno members, he said: 'Previously, I said Najib but I have changed my mind.'

Tun Dr Mahathir had called on his successor, Prime Minister Abdullah Badawi, to resign and hand over power to Datuk Seri Najib the day after the ruling Barisan Nasional suffered unprecedented losses in the March 8 polls.

But the Deputy Premier himself quickly pledged loyalty to Datuk Seri Abdullah.

Last week, it is understood that the Prime Minister announced to Umno's governing council that Datuk Seri Najib would be his running mate at the Umno election in December.

But while he withdrew his endorsement of Datuk Seri Najib, Tun Dr Mahathir stopped short of saying which candidate he preferred.

The most credible challenge to Datuk Seri Abdullah could come from Kelantan prince Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah who has said he will take on the Prime Minister in the party polls.

But observers believe that Tun Dr Mahathir has moved a step closer to Tengku Razaleigh or Umno vice-president Muhyiddin Yassin as his choice for the top job.

And his support can be influential. 2-4c

Despite the baggage that the 82-year-old still carries from his own years as prime minister, his attacks on his successor over the last two years have caused Datuk Seri Abdullah serious damage.

The former premier, who launched his attacks against Datuk Seri Abdullah two years ago, has again become one of his harshest critics. 2-4c

Indeed, it was Tun Dr Mahathir who led the charge at yesterday's boisterous event held to analyse the electoral losses.

He urged the crowd, mostly Umno grassroots members, to speak up to ensure an open contest for party president, who has traditionally also been Malaysia's prime minister.

The participants subsequently turned the event into an angry tirade against Datuk Seri Abdullah and his son-in-law Khairy Jamaluddin.

In fact, the event had the air of an opposition rally - except that it was Umno members expressing their disgust with their top leadership.

Shouts of 'Hidup Mahathir' punctuated the noisy event, and calls for the Prime Minister's resignation were met with cheers.

Umno governing council member Mohd Khir Toyo, who defended the leadership by saying that a change of leaders would not help if policies remained the same, was heckled.

An Umno Youth branch leader set off cries of 'traitor' when he called for the return of opposition leader Anwar Ibrahim to the party. He was forcibly removed from the hall by two men.

There was standing room only inside the hall, and hundreds more crowded around a big screen outside.

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NewsBank *Access World News*

Making Umno relevant to all races - Kicking off campaign for party presidency, Kelantan prince speaks of a 'supra-ethnic party'

Straits Times, The (Singapore) - Saturday, April 5, 2008

Author: Carolyn Hong, Malaysia Bureau Chief

GUA MUSANG (KELANTAN) - KELANTAN prince Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah yesterday called for a remaking of Umno into a 'supra-ethnic' party that is relevant for all races, in the wake of its crushing losses in the general election.

'We want Umno to be a supra-ethnic party, a national party that is fair to all people regardless of race but still defending its traditional vision,' he said.

He is the first senior party leader to broach the idea of Umno facing up to the new political landscape, setting out a vision of a Malay party which had multiracial sentiments at heart.

He, however, did not suggest opening the party to non-Malays.

'Umno's vision has to cross ethnic boundaries and it cannot be seen as a party for Malays only,' he said.

The prince was speaking at a meeting of his Gua Musang division in rural Kelantan and kicking off his campaign yesterday to challenge Prime Minister Abdullah Badawi for the party presidency.

The meeting was convened to call for a national extraordinary general meeting (EGM) to discuss the electoral losses.

But the 3,000 Umno grassroots members who turned up at the hall in Bukit Cekati, about 150km from the Kelantan capital of Kota Baru, were there to hear Tengku Razaleigh lay out his vision for a new Umno.

Observers note that the speech was almost presidential in nature, as he made his most serious bid yet for the top party post, which traditionally comes with the prime minister's job.

Datuk Seri Abdullah has been under intense pressure since the March 8 polls, battling internal rebellion in his own party and attempts by the opposition to woo party leaders.

The idea of non-racial politics has become increasingly appealing to Malaysians, who voted overwhelmingly for the opposition which campaigned on that platform. But Tengku Razaleigh is taking a calculated risk here as it is not certain whether the Umno ground will be receptive.

'Umno must be trusted by not just the Malays but also non-Malays,' said the prince.

He noted that in the polls, Indians and Chinese did not hesitate to vote for Islamist candidates because they believed them to be God-fearing.

He said that to non-Malays, Umno is a fanatical Malay party prone to waving the keris to threaten other races. And to many others, it is a corrupt party filled with 'crocodiles' and 'sharks' who lobby shamelessly for contracts.

The difficulty now, he said, was to prevent Umno members from abandoning a sinking ship because of a weak captain.

Umno can only be saved if the 'bad, corrupt, uncultured, immoral and unwise' people at the top are removed, he said.

Speaking to supporters at another function on Thursday, he used even stronger words: 'Today, we have a president of Umno, a chairman of Barisan Nasional and a prime minister. What we lack is leadership.'

Tengku Razaleigh will take his battle to Muar in Johor next week when he speaks at a meeting organised by Umno branches.

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✓ He is, so far, the only challenger to Datuk Seri Abdullah but the Umno veteran has not won the support of any of the powerful warlords. No big names were at his meeting yesterday,

This can be crucial as he needs 30 per cent of the party's 191 divisions to nominate him for the contest. His division called for an abolishment of this ruling and other leaders have expressed support but none has taken concrete steps towards it.

He needs half of the divisions to vote for a national EGM, at which time the abolishment of this ruling can come in for a vote.

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Access World News

Windfall for a million Perak villagers - New state government will issue land titles to them, ending their 50-year wait

Straits Times, The (Singapore) - Saturday, April 5, 2008

Author: Hazlin Hassan, Malaysia Correspondent

KUALA LUMPUR - THE new Perak state government is issuing permanent land titles to scores of villages, including those set up to resettle the Chinese during the communist insurgency in the 1940s.

The move, which will benefit some one million villagers - nearly half of the state's population of 2.3 million - have big implications for Barisan Nasional (BN), which failed to give such titles for more than 50 years.

The state government was taken over by the three-party Pakatan Rakyat coalition in the March 8 general election.

Analysts say the move could erode the support of the Chinese community for BN's Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA).

The original purpose of the Chinese new villages was to segregate villagers from the communists, who were operating out of rural areas.

The announcement was made by Perak Menteri Besar Mohammad Nizar Jamaluddin from Parti Islam SeMalaysia (PAS), a party which BN had made out as an enemy to the Chinese for years.

'It is not merely a setback for MCA, it is the last nail in their coffin,' political analyst Khoo Kay Peng told The Straits Times.

The decision would benefit 134 Chinese new villages in Perak set up during the emergency period and 100 Malay villages.

Perak Local Government Committee chairman Nga Kor Ming told The Straits Times: 'It is the dream of the villagers. We will guarantee them their proprietary rights. The new freehold titles will last 999 years.'

'Their land value would increase many fold with the land title. It is a big hongbao for them.'

He said village land which costs RM50,000 (S\$22,000) now could fetch up to RM150,000 with the new land titles.

The plan caused an earthquake in the MCA because it makes the Chinese party look incompetent.

The BN government failed to give permanent land titles to such villages because 'it is akin to conceding bumiputera rights to non-bumiputeras, and land issues are especially sensitive for Malays, particularly Umno', said Mr Khoo.

Said former MCA secretary-general Ting Chew Peh: 'Upon hearing the good news, my townsmen, relatives and friends applauded till their hands hurt.'

'One who wins the hearts of the people wins the world. Pakatan Rakyat has brought the house down this time,' he was quoted as saying by the Chinese-language Oriental Daily.

In 1948, the Perak government moved Chinese residents to the new villages with a 30-year lease, said Mr Nga. Upon expiry, the former government extended the lease by another 30 years.

'But the proprietary rights of the villagers are not guaranteed. Upon expiry, the government can take back the land,' said Mr Nga.

Now this uncertainty will be taken away.

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SPE-09



Kedah Umno chiefs blame Abdullah - PM responsible for party's dismal performance in elections, they say

Straits Times, The (Singapore) - Friday, April 11, 2008

Author: Chow Kum Hor, Malaysia Correspondent

IN SUNGAI PETANI - LOCAL Umno leaders in Kedah have blamed Prime Minister Abdullah Badawi for the party's dismal performance in last month's polls in an unusually frank closed-door dialogue.

Yesterday's meeting, the first of several nationwide planned by Umno as it gathers feedback from the grassroots on the poll results, is expected to put more pressure on Datuk Seri Abdullah to quit.

A clear sign of Kedah Umno members' rejection of the Premier came when the master of ceremony welcomed those present, said a division leader who was among the 300 attendees. The floor signalled support for party deputy president Najib Razak to take over from Datuk Seri Abdullah and vice-president Muhyiddin Yassin to also move up the party hierarchy.

'When Najib's name was mentioned, the floor shouted 'president'. And when it came to Muhyiddin's turn, they shouted 'deputy president', he said.

He added that Kedah Umno's top complaint involved the selection of candidates for the election by the party leadership. 'The common theme during the dialogue was that the grassroots were not happy that they had not been properly consulted over the choice of candidates,' he said.

The three-hour dialogue was organised by the Umno management committee, which is headed by Datuk Seri Najib. Among other things, it revealed that the grassroots wanted Umno's state and national leadership to take the blame for the election results, said Pokok Sena division secretary Ramli Mohd Yunus

petani

Kedah, a northern state with a substantial number of Malay voters, fell to the opposition in the election - for the first time - with the Barisan Nasional (BN) coalition taking just four of 15 parliamentary seats and 14 of 36 state seats.

Some, including Datuk Seri Abdullah, have blamed Umno's dismal election performance on sabotage by local leaders who were not chosen as candidates.

Local Umno leaders by convention nominate their candidates to the state party chairman, who then submits his own recommendations to the Umno president and BN chairman.

In Kedah, however, Datuk Seri Abdullah reportedly did not heed the grassroots' wish that more locals be fielded.

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Instead, 'parachute candidates' were floated into parliamentary seats such as Sik, where the Prime Minister's own political secretary, Datuk Osman Desa, stood and lost.

Datuk Seri Najib admitted that many Kedah Umno leaders were unhappy about not being consulted over the choice of candidates. 'We will inform the Supreme Council about this so that the problem will not recur in the future,' he told reporters.

He also met Penang party members in the second leg of the tour, and reiterated that Umno would seek the views of local leaders before deciding on candidates for elections.

The feedback from Kedah is expected to ramp up the pressure for Datuk Seri Abdullah to quit. The Prime Minister is scheduled to meet Johor Umno officials today. Reports say they are likely to ask him to set a timetable for his departure.

The rumblings on the ground promise to make the coming Umno elections intense with former finance minister and Kelantan prince, Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah, already publicly announcing that he is ready to mount a challenge for the party presidency.

But it will not be made easy for him with Datuk Seri Abdullah yesterday making it clear that the party's quota

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system would be maintained at its polls in December.

Under the current rules, Tengku Razaleigh needs 30 per cent of Umno's 191 divisions, or at least 57 of them, to nominate him to contest the post.

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SHOW OF SUPPORT

'When Najib's name was mentioned, the floor shouted 'president'. And when it came to Muhyiddin's turn, they shouted 'deputy president'.'

AN UMNO DIVISION LEADER IN KEDAH who attended the closed-door dialogue. He said the participants showed their support for party deputy president Najib Razak to take over from PM Abdullah and for vice-president Muhyiddin Yassin to also move up the hierarchy.

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Pro-Umno press tells party: Enough is enough - Let Abdullah get on with job, editorials say, adding that all should share blame for election losses

Straits Times, The (Singapore) - Thursday, April 17, 2008

Author: Carolyn Hong & Hazlin Hassan

KUALA LUMPUR - THE drawn-out power tussle in Umno, the dominant member of the ruling Barisan Nasional (BN) coalition, has come under harsh criticism by two mainstream newspapers with close links to the party.

The New Straits Times (NST) and Berita Harian - sister papers in the same stable - carried identical front-page editorials yesterday telling the Umno-led BN coalition to 'get on with the job'.

They said it had been five weeks since the March 8 polls, but Umno was still bickering, pointing fingers, baying for vengeance and doing everything but governing.

'Enough is enough,' the two papers said.

Both papers are owned indirectly by Umno, and have often been regarded as its voice.

Umno has been caught in internal fighting and rebellion since the polls, with the grassroots agitating for the resignation of Prime Minister Abdullah Badawi after he led the party to a disastrous polls showing.

Several states, including the influential Johor Umno and the Prime Minister's home state of Penang, have urged him to set a timetable for succession.

The NST noted that Malaysians are tired of this 'moaning and groaning'.

The truth is that the people have long been disgusted with the kind of boorish, loutish behaviour that Umno leaders had exemplified because of their grip on power since independence in 1957,' it said.

The NST editorial took to task several leaders, including Education Minister Hishammuddin Hussein for wielding the keris at Umno conventions, an act seen as a symbol of aggression against non-Malays.

The newspaper defended Datuk Seri Abdullah, saying that he should be allowed to get on with governing.

'Abdullah is not solely to be blamed, and everything will not suddenly be all well again if he goes,' it said, adding that Umno as a whole had to share the blame.

But this is unlikely to silence the restive Umno ground or ease the pressure on Datuk Seri Abdullah.

Datuk Nur Jazlan Mohamed, the outspoken Member of Parliament for Pulai, Johor, wrote in his blog yesterday that 'only a smooth transition will stop the party from splitting up'.

'And that has to be done sooner than later,' he wrote.

He is the second MP to openly call for Datuk Seri Abdullah's resignation.

He told The Straits Times that Umno is unable to tackle the challenges of governing if its leadership is in disarray.

'We are caught in the defensive mode now,' he said.

Yesterday, Deputy Prime Minister Najib Razak said Datuk Seri Abdullah had not given any indication of the succession timing.

'As I have said, he has the wisdom to decide what is best for the party. I believe in that,' he told reporters after meeting leaders of Selangor Umno.

Datuk Seri Najib also dismissed opposition leader Anwar Ibrahim's claim that enough BN MPs were ready

to defect to topple the central government.

'So far, there is no indication of anyone wanting to cross over. We understand it could be gamesmanship, but we cannot take things for granted either,' he said.

2-36

He insisted that the BN was not in such a state of crisis that it could be toppled.

Selangor was Datuk Seri Najib's latest stop on a roadshow to hear views from the Umno ground.

Intensifying the pressure, a growing number of Umno divisions are planning to hold extraordinary general meetings at which they are expected to call for the removal of a rule that makes it difficult to stand for the top party post.

Kelantan prince Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah has indicated that he will challenge Datuk Seri Abdullah for the party presidency in December. But under the rule, he needs 30per cent of the 191 Umno divisions to nominate him.

Pressure from the ground could force the party leadership to remove this rule.

Datuk Seri Abdullah has insisted he will not go until the party is on a stronger footing. On Monday, he said he would seek re-election as party leader. When asked if he would be contesting in the party polls in December, he shot back: 'Why shouldn't I contest?'

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NewsBank Access World News

Malaysian opposition plans 'noisy Parliament' - Lawmakers being sworn in today are no pushovers and vow to keep govt on its toes

Straits Times, The (Singapore) - Monday, April 28, 2008

Author: Chow Kum Hor, Malaysia Correspondent

2.4f2 KUALA LUMPUR - WHEN Malaysia's new Parliament sits today, it will have a significantly larger opposition bloc that is all set to give the ruling coalition a hard time in the legislature.

The meeting is the first since last month's historic elections, which saw the opposition denying Barisan Nasional (BN) its traditional two-thirds majority.

e.g. Out of the 222 lawmakers, 82 are from the opposition alliance known as the Pakatan Rakyat. In the previous parliament, the opposition had only 20 MPs in the then 219-seat legislature.

The coalition is made up of Parti Keadilan Rakyat (PKR), the Democratic Action Party (DAP) and Parti Islam SeMalaysia (PAS).

2.4g echo ✓ Now, government-sponsored Bills face the prospect of being defeated in the House - a possibility unthinkable just a few months ago when BN controlled 90 per cent of the seats in Parliament.

'We are going to give an even more difficult passage to Bills now. It won't be as easy as before,' said DAP's Tanjung MP Chow Kon Yeow.

The DAP will continue to bring up issues like corruption and transparency. We are not letting up on these,' he added.

2.5b ✓ Besides the enlarged opposition presence, the Dewan Rakyat (Lower House) will also see the return of several notoriously vocal lawmakers.

They include PAS' Mahfuz Omar, the DAP's Lim Guan Eng and PAS-aligned independent Ibrahim Ali.

The Kedah MP for Pokok Sena, Mr Mahfuz, told The Straits Times: 'We are going to make sure we keep the BN government on its toes. In the past, it may have been able to get away, but not now. We have more MPs now.'

He represented the same seat between 1999 and 2004.

PAS, he said, has also set set up a shadow Cabinet with each of its 23 MPs tasked with monitoring specific portfolios in the BN government.

For example, PAS president Hadi Awang, who is Marang MP, is in charge of the Prime Minister's Department.

⊗ ✓ The recent elections also brought mavericks into the house.

e.g. Among them is Mr Tian Chua, who was arrested for trying to enter the Parliament building to protest against a constitutional amendment which activists say would curtail civil rights.

Mr Chua said he would push to address civil liberty issues, such as the Internal Security Act and corruption.

✓ Taking his place among new opposition members is prominent blogger Jeff Ooi, who wrote fiery anti-government articles during the campaign, attracting a huge following in cyberspace.

⊕ ✓ Mr Ooi, 52, a former advertising executive, said: 'Parliament is going to be a noisy place...I think we are going to give the backbenchers a run for their money.'

Another surprise winner in the elections was Mr Loh Gwo Burne, who had not even thought of entering politics until this year.

211 & C
He shot to fame when he stepped forward as the person who had secretly filmed lawyer V.K. Lingam allegedly brokering judicial appointments.

236 The video found its way to opposition leader Anwar Ibrahim, who released it last September, using it as a major weapon to flog the government with.

Mr Loh said that Datuk Seri Anwar had persuaded him to stand for elections.

'My political aspirations are about a month old now. I will try to do as much as I can. There is too much nonsense going on in the country,' said the 34-year-old.

221 The ruling coalition's MPs, however, are not perturbed by the prospect of facing potentially tough opponents across the aisle.

BN backbenchers club deputy chairman Bung Mokhtar Radin told The Straits Times that the ruling coalition MPs would continue to do their job, including offering constructive criticism to the government.

'We have enough experience dealing with the opposition. We are not afraid,' he said. There are now 77 BN MPs to the opposition's 82.

MPs, led by Prime Minister Abdullah Badawi, will be sworn in today. The swearing-in will be followed by the election of the Speaker, who is expected to be Tan Sri Pandikar Amin Mulia.

Tomorrow, the Malaysian King will open the sitting and deliver a royal address.

The meeting proper will begin on Wednesday when the MPs will debate the King's speech.

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION FROM ASSOCIATED PRESS

Many firsts for Parliament

140 Barisan Nasional MPs against 82 from the opposition

The first woman opposition leader - PKR leader Wan Azizah Ismail

The first mother-daughter team - Datin Seri Wan Azizah Ismail and daughter Nurul Izzah Anwar

Two father-and-son teams - Lim Kit Siang-Lim Guan Eng and Karpal Singh-Gobind Singh

? Maverick opposition members:

Mr Tian Chua, an activist arrested for trying to enter the Parliament building to protest against a constitutional amendment

Prominent blogger Jeff Ooi, who wrote fiery anti-government articles during the election campaign, attracting a huge following in cyberspace.

Mr Loh Gwo Burne, who shot to fame when he stepped forward as the person who had secretly filmed lawyer V.K. Lingam allegedly brokering judicial appointments.

For the first time, question time will be carried live on TV

The first Speaker from East Malaysia if Tan Sri Pandikar Amin Mulia from Sabah is elected as expected

Index Terms: Prime News

Record Number: 120543DC03D9AFF0

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NewsBank Access World News

Win, lose or draw over Pedra Branca? - Senior Political Correspondent Lydia Lim, who covered the recent international court hearing in the dispute between Singapore and Malaysia over Pedra Branca, looks back on the case and ahead at the possible outcomes

Straits Times, The (Singapore) - Saturday, December 1, 2007

THE year was 1979.

The global community was in the midst of negotiating new laws to govern the use of the seas and oceans.

The talks, involving representatives from some 160 countries, would culminate in 1982 with the signing of the landmark United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

✓ But Malaysia decided not to wait.

That year, in 1979, it went ahead to publish a map which extended its territorial sea limit to 12 miles (19km) from its coast.

Such limits mark out the sea area within which a state is free to enforce any law, regulate any use and exploit any resource.

Malaysia's move was a pre-emptive response, ahead of a key change set out in the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea. This entailed the expansion of a country's territorial waters from the traditional 3-mile limit to a new 12-mile limit.

The move came in response to shifting world opinion but would be formalised only in 1982.

✓ Malaysia's new map of 1979 triggered official protests from seven of its neighbours, including Singapore, which was surprised to find Pedra Branca marked for the first time within Malaysian territorial waters.

Brunei, China, Indonesia, the Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam also took umbrage, over other islands.

At stake were not just isolated islands in the Singapore Strait and South China Sea but the principle of how maritime boundaries between states were to be settled.

✓ Malaysia acted unilaterally, without consulting any of its neighbours, and out of step with international law.

As Deputy Prime Minister S. Jayakumar noted before an international court last week: 'One map, seven countries affected.'

✓ ✓ Malaysia's map set a worrying precedent.

✓ ✓ It also marked the start of a long-drawn-out dispute between Kuala Lumpur and Singapore over sovereignty of a small rocky island at the mouth of the Singapore Strait.

A month in The Hague TWENTY-EIGHT years on, following several unsuccessful rounds of negotiations, occasional periods of tense exchanges through the media and at sea, and long stretches of inaction, the Pedra Branca dispute finally went before the International Court of Justice (ICJ) last month.

That was in itself an achievement for Singapore.

It has long championed the view that if negotiations make no headway, bilateral disputes are best referred to third-party adjudication or arbitration for settlement in accordance with international law.

As the start of the 12-day hearing before the ICJ drew near, a 30-strong Singapore team gathered in The Hague as a wet and windy November descended on the historic Dutch city.

They included veterans like DPM Jayakumar, whose involvement in the case stretched back to 1979, as well as legal officers who were still in primary school when the quarrel first broke.



During his 14 years as Attorney-General from 1992 to last year, current Chief Justice Chan Sek Keong led the legal team working on the case.

When appointed to head the judiciary last year, he agreed to the Government's request to continue acting for it until a resolution was reached.

Also on the team were Attorney-General Chao Hick Tin and Ambassador at Large Tommy Koh, who from 1980 to 1982 was president of the United Nations conference that resulted in the landmark Convention on the Law of the Sea.

Backing up the generals were the soldiers - support staff who included Foreign Ministry officers.

They took charge of logistics and made sure all were well fed and watered during their month away from home.

Also on board was the Maritime and Port Authority's chief hydrographer.

✓ He had surveyed the waters around Pedra Branca for years and immediately smelled a rat when Malaysia produced in court a photograph that exaggerated the island's proximity to the Johor coast.

All were fiercely dedicated to the cause of retaining Singapore's sovereignty over what some of them fondly nicknamed 'The Rock'.

Ahead of the hearing, a minor drama occurred. A few days after several members of the team's advance party arrived in The Hague, a fire broke out in their hotel.

Like the other guests, the Singaporeans evacuated the five-storey building - but not before grabbing their laptops.

The young legal officers from the Attorney-General's Chambers were not about to let their years of hard work on the Pedra Branca case go up in smoke.

The fire, which turned out to be small, was quickly extinguished.

The Singapore delegation took over the hotel's largest suite and turned it into a command centre, equipped with computers, a library of law and history books, and a 'war room' where the lawyers and diplomats among them would spend long hours strategising and debating how best to put across their arguments.

As the 12-day hearing got under way, a handful of Singaporeans showed up at the ICJ's home in the century-old, red-brick Peace Palace, to watch the home team in action.

They included three Oxford University undergraduates who had sought permission from their tutors to be excused from lessons, then caught three trains to cross the English Channel and arrive just in time for Singapore's final rebuttals.

Law lecturer Eleanor Wong arrived a week earlier.

The case centred on the two states' opposing claims of sovereignty. Malaysia's claim rested on the argument that Pedra Branca - which it calls Pulau Batu Puteh - was part of the Johor Sultanate from the time of the sultanate's establishment in 1512.

By contrast, Singapore argued that the island was terra nullius - that is, it belonged to no one when Britain took lawful possession of it in 1847.

As Britain's successor, Singapore then maintained its title through a continuous exercise of state authority over the island for more than 150 years.

Singapore fielded eight speakers in all: DPM Jayakumar, CJ Chan, Attorney-General Chao, Ambassador Koh and four international counsel.

It was a slate showcasing diverse strengths and personalities.

The Deputy Prime Minister was calm, controlled yet forthright in his presentation, while the Chief Justice impressed with his mastery of the historical backdrop to the case.



Ambassador Koh, the team's most natural diplomat, disarmed both friend and foe alike with his smile and even, gentle tone.

Malaysia's team, twice the size of Singapore's, was just as diverse and included renowned foreign counsel. Leading the charge was the pugnacious Foreign Affairs Adviser to the Prime Minister Abdul Kadir Mohamad. He had led Malaysia to victory in a previous sovereignty dispute with Indonesia before the ICJ.

Watching the Singapore and Malaysia teams in action, Ms Wong was struck by how national character shaped the arguments on each side and the way counsel presented them.

- ✕ The Malaysians did well, in my view, to present a simple case... their points were presented consistently, repeatedly, with touches of folksy humour and some well-placed analogies.
- ✕ 'Singapore, on the other hand, came across as precise, detailed and serious-minded,' she says.
- ✕ 'Both felt authentic to me, and ultimately the judges will no doubt look past style to decide on the law and the facts,' she adds.

Back here in Singapore, there was a gamut of reactions ranging from the view that the case was much ado about nothing, to staunch support for those at the frontline of the legal battle to keep Pedra Branca.

Among the latter group was Mr Thomas Gan, 56, an operations officer at the HarbourFront Passenger Terminal.

He supported the Government's decision to invest much time, effort and money on fighting the case.

'Otherwise you may lose the case, the Malaysians will feel you are weak and they will claim that other things also belong to them,' he tells Insight.

'If something doesn't belong to Singapore, we will return it. But since it belongs to Singapore, we will not give up,' he adds.

For Malaysians as well, the outcome of the case is strongly tied to their sense of national pride.

Ms Lim Bee Hoon, 49, a secondary school teacher from Muar in Johor, says: 'I hope Malaysia eventually wins because this would instil some national pride into us and our children.'

'Far too often, we're seen as Singapore's backward neighbour. It's about time we found our feet on the international stage.'

Associate Professor Joseph Liow of Singapore's Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies says for Singapore, the Pedra Branca case is about sovereignty, which is a fundamental issue, especially for a small state.

'Singapore's foreign policy has long been premised on opposition against the sudden redrawing of universally accepted geopolitical boundaries,' he says.

Win, lose or draw

THE 16 judges of the ICJ are now deliberating over which state has sovereignty over Pedra Branca and two other maritime features - Middle Rocks and South Ledge.

The verdict is expected next year.

There are three possible outcomes.

Singapore wins, Malaysia wins or the court splits the three rock outcrops under dispute, and awards Pedra Branca to one state and the other two to the other.

Both governments have said they will accept and abide by the ICJ's decision, for which there is no appeal.

They have also underscored that the whole point of taking the dispute to the world court was to prevent it from festering into a sore that could infect otherwise healthy bilateral ties.

Analysts on both sides of the Causeway are optimistic that whichever side wins, the impact on ties will be minimal.

Datuk Seri Mohamed Jawhar, chairman of Malaysia's Institute of Strategic and International Studies, says the key will lie in how well both governments manage popular reactions to the verdict.

The problems, if any, will arise from political groups, probably some non-governmental organisations and others,' he says via e-mail.

'I believe that both governments should do their best to manage the fallout. The party that wins the case must moderate exuberance among its citizens. The party that loses must moderate any resentment.

'Win or lose, I believe both sides will eventually get over it,' he adds.

That is, after all, what seems to have happened after the ICJ ruled in Malaysia's favour in its dispute with Indonesia over the islands of Sipadan and Ligitan.

Will the reaction be any different in Malaysia if Singapore wins?

Dr Ooi Kee Beng, a fellow at the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies here, says: 'There are certain elements in Malaysia who are bound to choose to see a defeat as the latest instance of creeping expansion on the part of Singapore, and as another case of Malay land being lost.'

But he adds that 'these make up only a small segment of Malay society'.

Dr Ooi also believes that the case is of greater importance to Singapore's government than Malaysia's.

'A defeat will be felt more strongly in Singapore than in Malaysia, mainly because the former is now the party exercising control over the islands.

'For Malaysia, a loss will just mean it tried its best to regain an island and failed,' he says.

What Malaysia tried to impress on the ICJ was that if it were awarded sovereignty over Pedra Branca, it would continue to respect Singapore's role as the operator of Horsburgh Lighthouse.

Responding to that point, Singapore stressed that its rights and activities with regard to Pedra Branca went well beyond those of a lighthouse operator.

'Singapore's rights in relation to Pedra Branca are the rights of a country having sovereignty over the island, not that of a lighthouse operator,' DPM Jayakumar said.

'Singapore's activities in relation to Pedra Branca go well beyond the operation of a lighthouse operator,' he added.

In other words, there is a big difference between running a lighthouse and exercising sovereignty over a strategically located island, no matter how small.

Sovereignty gives Singapore the right to maximise the island's location for its national interests, whether in defence or navigation, though DPM Jayakumar stressed that it would always do so in accordance with international law.

In the event of a loss, both countries will have to grapple with their share of domestic fallout.

In Malaysia, the impact is likely to be largely political, with opposition parties and NGOs seizing on the chance to blame the Umno-led government for losing Pulau Batu Puteh.

For Singapore, it means ceding sovereignty over an island it has controlled and used as its own since independence.

If both sides manage to keep bilateral ties on an even keel whichever way the court rules, that will indeed signal a coming of age in their relationship.

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Arguing Malaysia's case

ABDUL KADIR MOHAMAD Foreign Affairs Adviser to the Prime Minister

NOOR FARIDA ARIFFIN Ambassador to the Netherlands

ABDUL GANI PATAIL Attorney-General

'I hope Malaysia eventually wins because this would instil some national pride in us and our children.' MS LIM BEE HOON, a secondary school teacher from Muar in Johor

Arguing S'pore's case

S. JAYAKUMAR Deputy Prime Minister

CHAN SEK KEONG Chief Justice

TOMMY KOH Ambassador at Large

'If something doesn't belong to Singapore, we will return it. But since it belongs to Singapore, we will not give up.' MR THOMAS GAN, an operations officer at HarbourFront Passenger Terminal

Index Terms: Insight

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KL says it has good case against S'pore

BY LYDIA LIM
Senior Political Correspondent
IN THE HAGUE (NETHERLANDS)

Malaysian Foreign Minister arrives in The Hague to show support on eve of KL's 4-day oral pleading

Justice (ICJ).
It follows Singapore's presentation, also over four days last week.
On the eve of Malaysia's big day yesterday, Malaysia's Ambassador to the Netherlands, Datuk Noor Faridi Ariffin, said the team's preparations were going well.
"We are very well prepared to respond to all the arguments and points made by the Singapore team," she told The Straits Times via e-mail.
"We are confident that we have a good case. The Malaysian public can rest assured that every relevant point raised by Singapore will receive a satisfactory response from the Malaysian team," she said.
About 60 officials from the Malaysian Foreign Ministry and Attorney-General's Chambers have been here since last week.
The Malaysian delegation is about twice as large as Singapore's, with the Tan Sri Abdul Kadir Mambelli, Malaysia's Attorney-General, as Prime Minister and its Agent for the

case. Each State appoints an agent to communicate with the ICJ and receive court instructions on its behalf.
As Singapore's Agent, Ambassador-at-Large Tommy Koh did his opening speech last week. Tan Sri Abdul Kadir will likely lay out the broad framework of Malaysia's case.
lydia@sp.com.sg

» MALAYSIA'S CASE

History to be cited to back claims

ACCORDING to its written pleadings, Malaysia's claim to Pedra Branca rests on four pillars.
The first is that the Johor Sultanate exercised sovereignty over Pedra Branca from time immemorial, and held what is called an "original title" to the island.
Pedra Branca, which the Malaysians call Pulau Batu Puteh, is an island the size of a football field and is at the eastern entrance to the Singapore Strait.
To back its claim, Malaysia asserts on the basis of several history books on Johor that for centuries, the island was part of the Johor Sultanate's "north and south of the Singapore Strait" and included "all islands within and at the entrance of the Singapore Strait".
It argues that by contrast, Singapore's claim dates only to 1960 when it lodged a protest against a 1979 Malaysian map that placed Pedra Branca within Malaysia's territorial waters.
The second pillar is that Britain acknowledged Johor's title and sought permission to build a lighthouse there in the 1840s.
Malaysia has produced an 1844 letter from the then-governor of Johor to the British Crown in which permission was granted.
Its third argument is that the British did not exercise sovereignty over the island, but only built and operated Hounsburgh Lighthouse there. Singapore's activities, it claims, have also been limited to those related to the running of a lighthouse.

» SINGAPORE'S CASE

Long, non-stop display of state authority

SINGAPORE'S proof of sovereignty over Pedra Branca rests on two legs.
The first is that the British took lawful possession of the island in 1847 when it was *terra nullius*, a Latin phrase meaning empty or no man's land.
It backed this up with an 1850 letter by the General Secretary of the Dutch East Indies, in which he wrote of the construction of a lighthouse "at Pedra Branca on British territory".
In its oral pleadings last week, Singapore also highlighted Malaysia's absolute lack of documentary evidence to support its claim of an original title to Pedra Branca.
The second leg of Singapore's case is that since 1847, Britain has long and openly exercised sovereignty over the island through activities that were an open, continuous and effective display of state control.
These included naval patrols as well as the control of access to the island.
Among the incidents Singapore brought to the court's attention last week was one that took place in 1974, when a group of Malaysians who wanted to visit Pedra Branca sought permission to do so from the Singapore authorities.
Singapore's case, it said, was that the island was "exclusively" Malaysia's late claim to the island, through a map published in 1979.
The move, it said, came after 130 years of silence in the face of Singapore's exercise of state control on and in the waters around Pedra Branca.
During those 130 years, Malaysia had also acknowledged Singapore's sovereignty, it added.
Legal expert Michael Hwang, who has represented the British authorities in Singapore that "the Johore Government does not claim ownership of Pedra Branca".
They also highlighted six maps published by the Malaysian government between 1962 and 1975, which showed Pedra Branca as belonging to Singapore.

» SINGAPORE'S CASE

Why Singapore is fighting to keep island

Malaysia's sudden claim in 1979 that Pedra Branca should be its territory is the least extraordinary.
That was the phrase Deputy Prime Minister S. Jayakumar used in a speech last Friday, as he wrapped up Singapore's first round of oral pleadings before the International Court of Justice.
To some, Pedra Branca may seem insignificant.
It is after all but a grain-covered granite island the size of a football field, located some 25 nautical miles from Singapore's southern tip.
But for the Singapore Government, there is an important principle at stake, which is that no country should be able to suddenly and unilaterally claim its territory over which it has exercised continuous sovereignty in this case, Singapore has held the island for some 150 years.
In a way, Singapore is acting as any home owner would if his neighbour suddenly decided to encroach on his land, no surprise if the owner strenuously resisted any such attempt, for otherwise, he would forgo his claim.

Long, non-stop display of state authority

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ST FILE PHOTO

So it found
pedra branca is a 2-2 way tie
pedra branca is a 2-2 way tie

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ICJ HEARING ON PEDRA BRANCA

KL accuses S'pore of trying to 'subvert' the status quo

Malaysia also says S'pore never replied to requests for copies of Johor's 1844 letters

BY LYDIA LIM
Senior Political Correspondent
IN THE HAGUE (NETHERLANDS)

LAUNCHING its case before an international court yesterday, Malaysia lost no time in attacking Singapore's claim on Pedra Branca as an attempt to overturn the status quo in the Singapore Strait.

First speaker, Tan Sri Abdul Kadir Mohamed, questioned Singapore's motivation in asserting such a claim.

He called it a bid to "subvert" a 150-year-old arrangement by Malaysia for the Horsburgh lighthouse on Pedra Branca to be operated from Singapore.

The lawyer and Foreign Affairs Adviser to Malaysia's Prime Minister also sought to paint to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) an image of Singapore as an expansionist state.

He suggested that the Republic would - if allowed to - upset the

peace and stability of the eastern part of the Singapore Strait, the site of the disputed island.

"Singapore, he told the court, has a 'very active reclamation policy' claim, the waters around Pedra Branca to construct an artificial island some 3,000 sq m in size, he noted.

Quite apart from the possible effects on the environment and navigation, the court, he said, could lead to potentially destabilising changes to the security arrangements in the eastern entrance of the Strait," he said.

"Singapore and Malaysia are appearing before the ICJ to resolve their dispute over the sovereignty of Pedra Branca, an island 40km east of Singapore.

Malaysia is giving its oral pleading this week, after Singapore did so last week.

In its arguments, Singapore had made no secret of its 1978 tender to reclaim land around Pedra Branca.

It had argued that the reclamation tender was proof that it had all along exercised state authority over the island. No state, it pointed out, would set out to reclaim land around an island it thought belonged to someone else.

HD, occurs primarily because of a delay in brain development, not from a deficit or flaw - the brain grows more slowly than in unaffected children.

The findings of the two studies, published yesterday in separate journals, offer hope for parents particularly of the 4,000 or so children in mainstream schools in Singapore who have learning difficulties, including ADHD.

The studies could also change the way scientists, teachers and parents understand and manage children who are disruptive or emotionally withdrawn in the early years of school.

"I think these may become landmark findings, forcing us to ask whether these acting-out kinds of problems are secondary to the inappropriate behaviour of children, or whether they enter classrooms," said Dr Sharon Landesman Ramey, director for Health and Education at the Georgetown University Center in the US.

In one study, published in the scientific journal, *Developmental Psychology*, an international team analysed measures

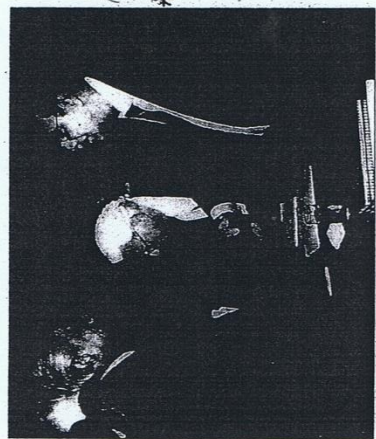


PHOTO: BERHAMA
CORDIAL RELATIONS: The sitting in court began on a friendly note, with Singapore Deputy Prime Minister S. Jayakumar (left) exchanging greetings with Malaysian Foreign Minister Syed Hamid Albar.

Yesterday, Tan Sri Abdul Kadir also charged that Singapore began approaching the area without provoking a skirmish, he added.

Malaysia, he said, chose "non-confrontation" in the face of Singapore's actions.

Singapore had made clear in its pleadings that it had been patrol-

ling the waters there since the inception of its navy in 1975, well before the dispute arose.

Tan Sri Abdul Kadir and Malaysia's international counsel, Sir Eihlu Lauterbach, also sought to cast aspersions on Singapore's conduct in its dealings with its neighbour.

They referred to two letters of 1844 in which the Johor rulers gave permission to the Governor of Singapore to build a lighthouse on any of the islands near Point Nomina.

Malaysia has argued that the letters proved that Pedra Branca was thus among those islands under Johor's sovereignty.

Yesterday, Sri Abdul Kadir said that in 1994, Malaysia wrote to Singapore asking for a copy of the Governor's letter. But Singapore never replied.

"If this letter exists today, it is likely that it is in Singapore's archives in the file entitled 'Letters to Native Rulers'. Unfortunately, Malaysia does not have access to these archives," he said.

In its written pleadings, Singapore had pointed out the letters should be in Malaysia's possession as the Governor had sent them to the Johor rulers.

Yesterday, Malaysia also argued that Pulau Batu Puteh, its name for Pedra Branca, had always been part of the Johor sultanate.

Despite the tough talk in court, the sitting began on a friendly note with Deputy Prime Minister S. Jayakumar exchanging greetings with Malaysian Foreign Minister Syed Hamid Albar, he said.

Malaysia continues its arguments today.

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MORE REPORTS, HOME 16

Betting on 2008



Equities and currencies, property and gold. How good are these as investment classes in the year 2008? Analysts answer that question in a special section in today's BI.

THE BUSINESS TIMES

Rochor Road hostage drama

Armed man drags girlfriend out of workplace



HD - consistent with the international estimate of between 3 per cent and 5 per cent.

To help them cope better in mainstream schools, the Education Ministry here plans to provide more training for 10 per cent of all primary school teachers and 20 per cent of all secondary school teachers.

Dr Ng remained cautious about the new findings. "These studies provide hope for people with children with such problems," he said.

"But all these group studies have attempted to individual differences, and these can be important."

NEW YORK TIMES
ADDITIONAL REPORTING BY HO AI LI

HD developed normally, but more slowly in some children than the brains of children without the disorder.

Doctors said the report, being published in *The Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, helps to explain why so many children grow up with learning problems in middle school or later.

Singapore psychiatrist Ng Koon Hock, who is also vice-president of non-profit organisation Spark, which aims to promote public awareness about ADHD, estimates that about 5 per cent of children here are affected by AD-

of social and intellectual development of over 16,000 kids.

It found that mathematics skills are a better indicator of academic success than language, and that disruptive or aggressive behaviour did not distract from later learning.

The study's authors suggest that children might consider developing more effective maths training.

The other study, done by researchers from the National Institute of Mental Health and McGill University in the United States, used imaging techniques. It found that brains of children with AD-

tionally withdrawn in the early years of school.

"I think these may become landmark findings, forcing us to ask whether these acting-out kinds of problems are secondary to the inappropriate behaviour of children, or whether they enter classrooms," said

Dr Sharon Landesman Ramey, director for Health and Education at the Georgetown University Center in the US.

In one study, published in the scientific journal, *Developmental Psychology*, an international team analysed measures

TWO new studies suggest that children who suffer from attention deficit hyperactivity, disorder and enter school with behaviour problems are being easily doomed to fail before they even begin.

Kindergarten children disrupted the teacher, defied instructions and even picked fights performed as well in reading and mathematics as well-behaved children of the same abilities when they both reached fifth grade, one study found.

The other study concludes that attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, known as AD-

<http://docs.newsbank.com/s/InfoWeb/aggdocs/AWNB/11ECE00BB08278E8/6C0D49BF1AB948DD9F68919AE0E716E1>

Secretary's bombshell - 'Threats' after she alleged KL lawyer penned judgment
Straits Times, The (Singapore)-February 14, 2008
Author: Reme Ahmad

A FORMER secretary for prominent lawyer V. K. Lingam said she has been threatened after giving damaging testimony about him with shocking allegations of corruption in the country's courtrooms.

'She has been contacted by phone and received threats,' said a source close to her, without specifying the nature of the threats.

The source told The Straits Times yesterday that Ms G. Jayanti Naidu, 45, will stay out of sight until tomorrow, when she is expected to continue with her testimony.

On Tuesday, she told the Royal Commission of Inquiry that her former boss wrote a judgment in favour of his client in a historic defamation case and the presiding judge used it in delivering his verdict.

Her sensational claim was the most damaging testimony so far against Datuk Lingam, who has been accused of brokering judicial appointments with his high-level political and business connections.

Ms Jayanti told the inquiry that she had worked for Datuk Lingam for 13 months from April 1994.

Some time in November or early December 1994, she and two other secretaries were called in by him to take down 'confidential notes'.

She said she had typed a statement dictated by Datuk Lingam in his office. It involved a defamation case against two journalists by Lingam's client, business tycoon Vincent Tan.

The statement, she said, turned out to be the very judgment made by the presiding judge, Justice Mokhtar Sidin.

'I later discovered that the judgment as written by Datuk V. K. Lingam was fully incorporated as the official judgment of the said judge,' she said.

Tycoon Vincent Tan, who engaged Lingam in the case, won it and was awarded RM10 million (\$4.4 million), which lawyers said was unprecedented in Malaysia's legal history.

Yesterday, Ms Jayanti's lawyer, Mr R.S.N. Rayer, said that she had come under tremendous pressure after her testimony made headlines.

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Another lawyer, Datuk Muhammad Shafee Abdullah, told the commission that his client, Datuk Lingam's former driver, Mr D. Ramachandran, was also being pressured.

'Perhaps it is sufficient for me to ask the counsel to advise their respective clients or their agents not to have contact with the two witnesses,' he said.

Ms Jayanti testified that she had kept the handwritten corrections to the draft notes and in April 1998 submitted them to lawyer Datuk Muhammad Shafee.

She said that her former boss had in 1994 owned one million shares in multi-industry Berjaya Group which Tan Sri Tan controls.

Asked if there was any direct communication between Tan Sri Tan and Datuk Lingam, Ms Jayanti said that an intercom linked their two rooms.

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Access World News

Abdullah to unveil judicial reforms today - Judicial Commission to appoint judges. Greater independence for the judiciary Financial compensation to sacked judges. Expression of regret by PM Abdullah

Straits Times, The (Singapore) - Thursday, April 17, 2008

Author: Leslie Lopez, South-east Asia Correspondent

FIGHTING back stiff opposition from his own Cabinet and administration, Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi is set to unveil major reforms to the country's much-maligned judiciary.

The reforms will include the setting up of a Judicial Commission that will be responsible for the selection and the promotion of judges. It will also feature changes to the Federal Constitution that will restore greater independence to the judiciary, senior government officials and lawyers said.

The reform agenda, which will be announced at a special dinner hosted jointly by the government and the country's Bar Council tonight, will also see Datuk Seri Abdullah make an expression of regret over the 1988 judicial saga that led to the sacking of the country's top judge.

The government's effort to make amends to the jurists disgraced by the events in 1988 will also include some form of financial compensation, one senior government official involved in the judicial reform plan told The Straits Times on condition of anonymity.

'The amounts are being worked out,' he said without elaborating. Malaysia's once-robust judiciary was dealt a severe blow when it clashed with former premier Mahathir Mohamad in the late 1980s.

That face-off led to the suspension of six Supreme Court judges and the subsequent removal of three of them, including the head of the judiciary at the time, Tun Salleh Abas.

The sackings damaged the integrity of the judiciary, which came under fresh attack again 10 years later during the controversial corruption trials of former deputy premier Anwar Ibrahim.

Shortly after taking office in November 2003, Datuk Seri Abdullah declared that he would push for reforms in the judiciary.

But those efforts were often stymied by his own Cabinet colleagues, who served under Tun Dr Mahathir and were not keen on reforms that could embarrass the former premier, senior government officials and lawyers say.

Even the Prime Minister's move to establish a Royal Commission late last year to investigate a damning video-recording that implicated a prominent lawyer allegedly attempting to broker the promotion of judges was privately criticised by senior members of his own ruling United Malays National Organisation Party.

But last month's stunning election results, which saw the ruling Barisan Nasional lose its two-thirds majority and control of five states, changed everything, close aides of Datuk Seri Abdullah say.

The Prime Minister signalled that judicial reform was his key priority when he appointed prominent lawyer Datuk Zaid Ibrahim to his new Cabinet to push his agenda.

Lawyers and government officials credit Datuk Zaid for convincing the government to bring closure to the controversial events in 1988 and to establish a more transparent system of selecting and promoting judges.

Under the current practice, the country's Chief Judge recommends candidates to the Prime Minister and in the case of senior judicial appointments, the Chief Judge's recommendation must be approved by the Conference of Rulers.

But Datuk Zaid had to fight hard during Cabinet meetings, say senior government officials. There is also some unease among senior judges over Datuk Seri Abdullah's efforts.

Still, lawyers say that tonight's event could boost his battered public standing.

IA-02

Sources say that the Prime Minister insisted that the six judges who were disgraced by the events in 1988 be present at the dinner where he will deliver a short address titled Delivering Justice, Renewing Trust.

Government officials say that former chief judge Tun Salleh Abas, his three other colleagues in the Supreme Court at the time - Datuk George Seah, Tan Sri Azmi Kamaruddin and Tan Sri Wan Hamzah - have confirmed their attendance.

The two other Supreme Court jurists - the late Tan Sri Wan Sulaiman and the late Tan Sri Eusoffe Abdoolcader - will be represented by their families, the government officials say.

Bar Council sources say that opposition leader Datin Seri Wan Azizah Wan Ibrahim, who is Datuk Seri Anwar's wife, and Mr Lim Kit Siang of the Democratic Action Party, will also attend tonight's event.

'We hope this will bring closure to the 1988 judicial crisis,' said a senior government official involved in the judicial reform plan.

But to some Malaysians it may not be enough.

'An apology or expression of regret would be sweeping everything that happened 20 years ago under the carpet,' said Datuk V. C. George, a former Court of Appeal jurist. 'We need an investigation into the events of 1988 and to expose the conspiracy and its conspirators.'

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TIME TO SHOW LEADERSHIP

There are more important things than private peevs and settling scores. Neither the brewing crisis over soaring food prices nor other major issues are going to wait for Umno to put its own house in order. Now is the time for the grand old party to move on, do the things its leaders have promised and show that it still has what it takes to lead the nation.' MALAYSIA'S NEW STRAITS TIMES in a front-page editorial yesterday

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Shoot-out in KL airport heist: Four arrested

Straits Times, The (Singapore) - Monday, April 21, 2008

Author: Hazlin Hassan, Malaysia Correspondent

KUALA LUMPUR - MALAYSIAN police have arrested four suspects in connection with a S\$1.5 million heist at the Kuala Lumpur International Airport which left five people injured after a dramatic shoot-out.

A source, meanwhile, said the police are also investigating a man employed by the two money changers who were robbed.

Armed robbers ambushed the money changers and their security guard outside the airport departure hall in the holdup on April 9.

Malaysian police chief Musa Hassan said yesterday that four suspects, who were found with firearms and part of the loot, were arrested in three separate raids on Friday in Johor.

Tan Sri Musa said police confiscated cash worth RM779,622 (S\$336,000) in Malaysian, Singapore and US currencies in the raids and seized five automatic pistols, as well as handcuffs and bullets.

The four suspects are believed to have stayed overnight in a budget hotel in Sepang, where the airport is located, before fleeing to Johor, The Star newspaper said.

In the April 9 incident, five people, including the two money changers and their security guard, were shot during the heist.

A Nepalese bystander and an off-duty policeman were caught in the crossfire which lasted for five minutes before the armed robbers escaped with S\$1.5 million in cash.

Police have not ruled out the involvement of a staff member employed by the two money changers, the Bernama news agency said yesterday.

'Investigators want to know why four gunmen exercised extreme caution during the robbery and fired only at the legs and hands of the victims,' it quoted a source as saying.

Some reports said the money was meant to be handed to two Singaporean businessmen, who are suspected of attempting to take the money to Singapore.

Police are now trying to ascertain whether the transaction was legal and whether it had the approval of Bank Negara.

The heist has highlighted the country's worsening crime situation and raised questions about airport security.

All four suspects will be held in Kuala Lumpur for seven days to help in investigations.

But Malaysian police are still looking for more culprits.

'We have a few more to go,' Selangor police chief Khalid Abu Bakar told The Straits Times without elaborating.

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