

Singapore, China leaders laud deep, growing ties

BEIJING – Singapore and China leaders yesterday lauded the deep, growing ties between the two countries as both sides signed four agreements on the sidelines of a key annual bilateral meeting in Beijing.

Deputy Prime Minister Teo Chee Hean met Chinese Vice-Premier Zhang Gaoli for talks at the Diaoy-

utai State Guesthouse, during which the latter noted that ties between China and Singapore have grown from strength to strength.

Mr Zhang, who is a member of the Communist Party's apex Politburo Standing Committee, also called on Singapore and China to take advantage of the opportunities in the region

to step up bilateral cooperation.

“China places high importance on developing ties with Singapore and wishes to work together with Singapore to deliver on the various agreements between the leaders, enhance political trust, strengthen strategic cooperation, build closer

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FOUR BILATERAL PACTS INKED

Details of the agreements signed yesterday and witnessed by Deputy Prime Minister and Coordinating Minister for National Security Teo Chee Hean and Chinese Vice-Premier Zhang Gaoli:

1 Suzhou Industrial Park (SIP)

A Letter of Intent (LOI) on deepening collaboration in the biomedical industry was signed between SIP Administrative Committee, the National University of Singapore and the Institute of Molecular and Cell Biology. The LOI aims to encourage Singapore biomedical start-ups to expand into China through the SIP and to encourage collaborative partnerships between Singapore and China biomedical institutes and companies.

2 Sino-Singapore Tianjin Eco-city

The Ministry of National Development and China's Ministry of Housing and Urban-Rural Development agreed to form a Joint Expert Panel, comprising experts from government and private sectors, academic institutions and research organisations, to exchange ideas, and advise on how the city can continue to develop in a sustainable manner. The 30sqkm development broke ground in 2008 and currently has over 70,000 residents and 4,500 companies with a total capital of 200 billion yuan (\$41 billion).

3 Chongqing Connectivity Initiative

International Enterprise Singapore and the Chongqing municipal government signed a Memorandum of Understanding to drive transport and logistics development in Chongqing and improve the municipality's transport links to the rest of China, South-east Asia and beyond. Since the launch of the Chongqing Connectivity Initiative in November 2015, cross-border financial flows and aviation connectivity between Singapore and Chongqing have grown significantly.

4 Sino-Singapore Guangzhou Knowledge City (SSGKC)

The Intellectual Property Office of Singapore signed a Memorandum of Understanding with China's State Intellectual Property Office and the Guangdong provincial government to explore new areas of cooperation to support Singaporean and Chinese businesses to protect, promote and commercialise their intellectual property (IP). It will leverage on SSGKC as an IP reform pilot zone. SSGKC is a private-sector-led and government-supported project aiming to become a vibrant and sustainable hub that is attractive to skilled manpower and knowledge-based industries.

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people-to-people ties and deepen bilateral cooperation," China's state media Xinhua said in a report on Mr Zhang's meetings with Mr Teo.

Both leaders later co-chaired the 13th Joint Council for Bilateral Cooperation (JCBC) meeting, an annual high-level bilateral platform to discuss ways to deepen and broaden Singapore-China cooperation.

Commenting on the outcomes of the meetings, Chinese Foreign Ministry Spokesman Geng Shuang said yesterday there was a high degree of strategic complementarity between the two countries.

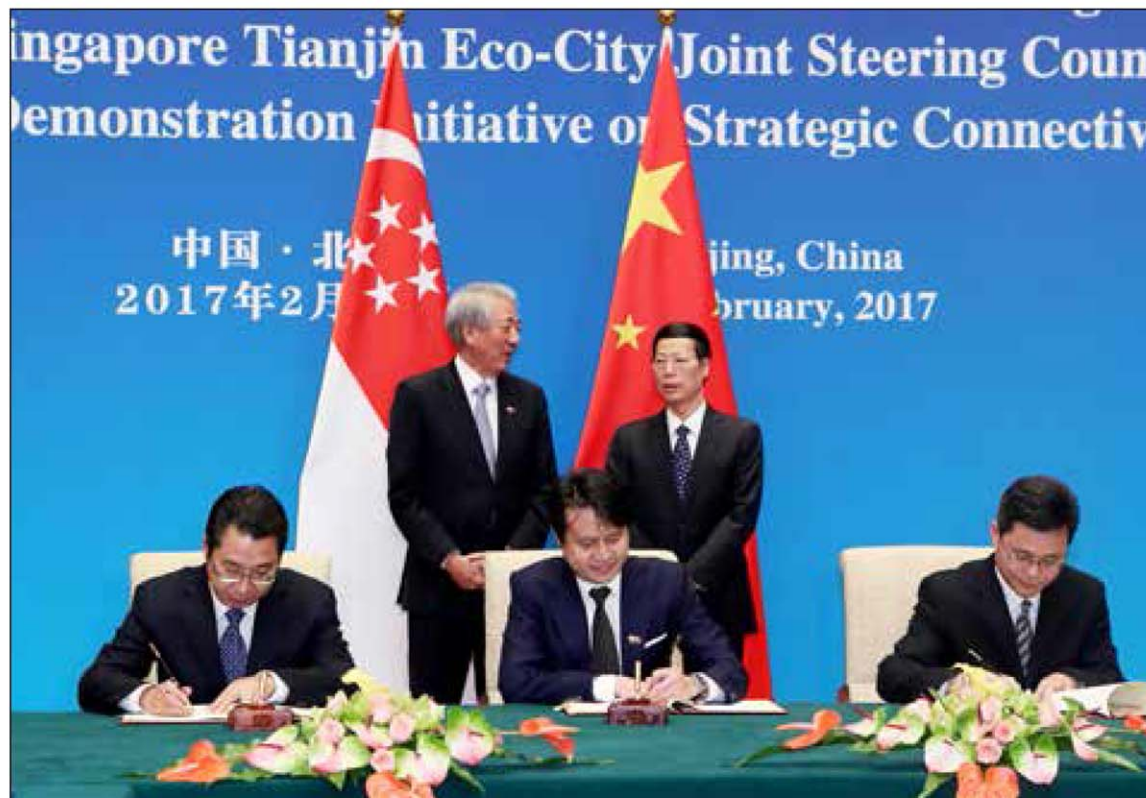
"The two sides agreed that there is great synergy between their development strategies and bilateral cooperation in fields such as infrastructure, information technology and finance under the framework of the Belt and Road Initiative which enjoys tremendous potential and bright prospects," he said, referring to President Xi Jinping's signature plan to expand infrastructure and connectivity across the region.

"I am confident that with the efforts of both sides, China-Singapore relations highlighted by practical cooperation will achieve greater development and deliver more benefits to the people of the two countries and this region."

Besides the JCBC, Mr Teo and Mr Zhang also presided over the steering council meetings of the three government-to-government cooperation projects — the China-Singapore Suzhou Industrial Park, the Sino-Singapore Tianjin Eco-city and the Chongqing Connectivity Initiative (CCI). Mr Teo said the meetings focused on how both sides can take cooperation on the three projects forward.

"I would say the meetings are characterised by three things. First, they were deep and broad-based. Second, there were practical outcomes and third, they were forward-looking," Mr Teo told Singapore journalists.

"The depth and the breadth of the relations (are) shown by a wide range of issues and matters in which we are cooperating in. The practical outcomes I think are demonstrated, for example, by the fact that we have



four MOUs signed and 15 others on the sidelines," he added. "So all in, it's a good meeting and I would say that our relations are progressing positively."

Mr Teo and Mr Zhang witnessed yesterday's signing ceremony of the four agreements to deepen collaboration in the biomedical industry in Suzhou, to form a panel of experts on the sustainable development of Tianjin Eco-city, to drive transport and logistics development in Chongqing and to cooperate in areas related to intellectual property.

Mr Teo also had meetings with Chinese leaders. "In particular, Central Organisation Department Minister Zhao Leji and DPM agreed that the 6th Leadership Forum will be held later this year," said a statement by the Prime Minister's Office.

National Development Minister Lawrence Wong yesterday said that the Tianjin Eco-city was a project that exemplified the "broad-based, practical and forward-looking" cooperation between both sides.

"No one at the start would have imagined living at this site, which was swampland and barren. But both

Deputy Prime Minister Teo Chee Hean and Chinese Vice-Premier Zhang Gaoli witnessing the signing of the MOU between the State Intellectual Property Office of the People's Republic of China, Intellectual Property Office of Singapore and the People's Government of Guangdong Province. PHOTO: MCI

China and Singapore made it happen, and we created a beautiful and green city literally from the ground up, and that's something both sides can be very proud of," he said, noting how in 2016 alone, the population of Eco-city went up by 75 per cent from 40,000 to 70,000, and the number of companies jumped by 60 per cent from 2,800 to 4,500.

"It's a symbol and showcase of what China and Singapore can do together," he said.

Singapore is China's top source of foreign investments, while the latter is the Republic's biggest trading partner. But bilateral ties have come under the spotlight recently, with the Chinese media carrying articles criticising Singapore for not siding more with China on the South China Sea issue. Last year, several of Singapore's armoured vehicles were detained in Hong Kong. The vehicles have since been returned.

Yesterday, Mr Teo reiterated that Sino-Singapore ties were long-standing and broad-based.

"Even among the best of neighbours and friends, from time to time,

* INCLUDING YOUNGER MINISTERS ON TRIP SHOWS FORWARD-LOOKING RELATIONSHIP

● The large Singaporean delegation to China as part of a high-level official trip to Beijing exemplified the "forward-looking" relationship between the two countries, said Deputy Prime Minister and Coordinating Minister for National Security Teo Chee Hean yesterday.

The delegation, which included a number of young ministers, showed the "forward-looking nature of the relationship that we are building with China," said the senior Minister.

"We took the younger ministers along so that they can continue with the relationship that was built by our senior leaders, Mr Deng Xiaoping and Mr Lee Kuan Yew, through the generations," Mr Teo said. "We have the opportunity also to meet with some of the new Chinese ministers who were recently appointed."

Mr Teo arrived in Beijing on Sunday. Yesterday, he and Chinese Vice-Premier Zhang Gaoli co-chaired the 13th Joint Council for Bilateral Cooperation (JCBC) meeting as well as steering council meetings on three government-to-government projects.

The Singapore delegation was also hosted to lunch yesterday by Mr Zhang. Mr Teo was accompanied by Minister for Trade and Industry (Trade) Lim Hng Kiang, Minister for Foreign Affairs Dr Vivian Balakrishnan, Minister for Culture, Community and Youth Grace Fu, Minister, Prime Minister's Office Chan Chun Sing, Minister for National Development and Second Minister for Finance Lawrence Wong and Minister for Education (Schools) and Second Minister for Transport Ng Chee Meng.

Also in the delegation were Minister for Education (Higher Education and Skills) and Second Minister for Defence Ong Ye Kung, Senior Minister of State for Environment and Water Resources and Health Dr Amy Khor, Senior Minister of State for Prime Minister's Office, Foreign Affairs and Transport Josephine Teo, Senior Minister of State for Culture, Community and Youth and Trade and Industry Sim Ann, Minister of State for National Development and Trade and Industry Dr Koh Poh Koon.

there will be differences in perceptions because of different sizes, different geographical areas, different interests, different vulnerabilities. I think we need to recognise that, both countries recognised that," he said.

"But the very broad area of cooperation, broad and deep cooperation that we have in many areas, I think came through clearly during our meetings, and this is what we will focus on and how to take this relationship forward."