

Singapore and China share common interests: DPM Teo

These trump any occasional differences, and both sides work well together to advance these interests, he says

Charissa Yong
Political Correspondent

Singapore and China share a common interest in building a peaceful and growing region, and this is much greater than any occasional differences of views between them, Deputy Prime Minister Teo Chee Hean said yesterday.

The two countries have worked closely together, hold similar views on most issues, and have worked well together to advance these common interests, said Mr Teo, who is also Coordinating Minister for National Security.

"But even among close neighbours and friends, there may be different perspectives on some issues," he said at a public forum on China's role in the global order.

Despite these differences, Singapore and China continue to hold the same fundamental position of wanting the region to grow and develop peacefully, said Mr Teo.

"Singapore will continue to be a strong and principled supporter of China's peaceful development and constructive engagement in the region," he added.

The forum at the Shangri-La Hotel was held by the National University of Singapore's East Asian Institute to mark its 20th anniversary.

Mr Teo's speech comes amid perceptions in some quarters that Singapore-China ties are going

through a rough patch, following media reports that speculated on Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong's absence at last week's One Belt, One Road forum in Beijing. Singapore was represented by National Development Minister and Second Finance Minister Lawrence Wong.

Yesterday, Mr Teo spent much of his 20-minute speech on the "broad and longstanding relationship" between Singapore and China.

He highlighted how he and Chinese Vice-Premier Zhang Gaoli co-chaired the 13th Joint Council for Bilateral Cooperation meeting in Beijing in February. Similarly, Mr Teo and Mr Zhao Leji, a Politburo member and Central Organisation Department minister, both led the 6th Singapore-China Forum on Leadership in Singapore last week.

"Such dialogues reflect a high level of mutual trust between our countries, and our mutual desire to learn from the experiences of each other," said Mr Teo.

The three government-to-government projects in Suzhou, Tianjin and Chongqing have also supported China's developmental priorities at key stages, he added.

Mr Teo also spoke on how China's weight in the world has grown in the economic, social, international relations and political arenas.

China's maturing economy is shifting towards innovation and productivity, and it is now a big player in international trade.



DPM Teo Chee Hean said Singapore hopes to continue its mutually beneficial exchanges on social governance with China for a long time. PHOTO: LIANHE ZAOBAO

STAUNCH SUPPORT

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DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER TEO CHEE HEAN

Singapore is optimistic that China will develop an innovative, productive economy, and a prosperous and stable China benefits the region and the world, said Mr Teo.

China also has to address domes-

tic hot-button bread-and-butter issues such as unemployment, inflation, housing and air pollution.

Mr Teo said Singapore hopes to continue its mutually beneficial exchanges on social governance

with China for a long time.

Internationally, China is playing a more significant role, and has launched two key initiatives to connect countries across regions.

These are the One Belt, One Road planned infrastructure network, and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank to fund infrastructure along trade routes.

Singapore supports both initiatives, which encourage further economic integration and infrastructure development, said Mr Teo.

Also, China's navy has been undergoing major developments, and joined other navies, including Singapore's, to protect global shipping against piracy in the Gulf of Aden. He noted that Chinese frigate Huangshan, which visited Changi Naval Base last week, was one Chinese ship that Singapore's navy frequently interacted with in the Gulf.

China is evolving politically and will hold its 19th National Congress later this year. It will shape the political landscape in China for the next decade, said Mr Teo.

"I am optimistic about China's potential to continually reinvent itself and play a greater leadership role in the region and globally," he added.

Mr Teo, who also gave his reading of international politics in East Asia, reiterated Singapore's position on Hong Kong and Taiwan.

He said the stability and prosperity of Hong Kong, which recently elected a new chief executive, are best assured under the "one country, two systems" framework.

Singapore wishes Hong Kong well and will continue to seek to partner it, added Mr Teo.

With regard to Taiwan, he said: "Cross-strait relations have become more complicated as the politics in Taiwan become more complex."

He added: "Singapore has always maintained our 'one China' policy."

"As an old friend of both sides, we have hosted the 1993 Wang-Koo talks and the 2015 Xi-Ma meeting, and will continue to support the peaceful and stable development of cross-strait relations."

charyong@sph.com.sg

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