

Series of talks launched to mark 55-year milestone of S'pore-US ties

Lim Min Zhang

Apart from the traditional areas of cooperation on defence and trade, Singapore and the United States can work on newer areas such as climate change, the digital economy and global healthcare needs, said Ambassador-at-Large Chan Heng Chee.

Speaking yesterday at a panel discussion to mark the 55th anniversary of Singapore-US diplomatic relations, Professor Chan said that good bilateral relations between both countries are the norm, and Singapore works well with both

Democratic and Republican administrations.

"We hope in this era of American foreign policy, we will continue to recognise the importance of conducting relations on the basis of non-interference in domestic matters, a principle Singapore cherishes.

"We look forward to working with the US to deepen its engagement with Asean, and we hope the US will intensify our contacts," she added.

Titled An Overview Of US-Singapore Relations, the panel discussion was the first of four organised by the US Embassy and the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy

to mark the 55-year milestone.

The 1½-hour dialogue was streamed live on Facebook and covered topics such as political polarisation in the US, backlash against globalisation and vaccine diplomacy.

In his opening remarks, US Embassy charge d'affaires Rafik Mansour said that while the two countries established diplomatic relations 55 years ago when the United States opened its embassy in Singapore, their shared history dates back 185 years to the establishment of consular relations in 1836.

He said the US and Singapore share deep economic, security and

people-to-people ties, with more than 140 Singaporean companies currently located in the US, and more than 4,500 American companies based in Singapore.

"We value Singapore's generous hospitality, level playing field, and boundless opportunity, and will continue contributing to our local communities as good neighbours, friends and colleagues," he added.

Prof Chan, in her remarks, said that US President Joe Biden's administration has placed emphasis on values in foreign policy – on democracy and human rights.

"We hope this policy will be handled with care and nuance. Countries in the region have different

traditions and sensitivities," she said. She added that the last time there was a campaign to promote democracy and human rights, it was at the end of the Cold War.

"It carried the spirit of triumphalism, the end of history, and unfortunately came across as something akin to cultural imperialism or cultural imposition, as some analysts have commented."

She called for the US-Asean Foreign Ministers' Meeting to be rescheduled soon, and for Mr Biden to visit the region.

Responding to a question on the rise of populism and the perceived failures of globalisation from Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy

dean Danny Quah, who chaired the session, Prof Chan said a world without globalisation is an impoverished one.

"By and large, the world has in fact become much better off. What we need to do with globalisation is to go on to Globalisation 2.0, which is to be conscious of the populist concerns... Political leaders must address that."

Mr Mansour said both Singapore and the US believed in the rules-based order, and the willingness and desire to work with America's partners and allies will be a key priority for the Biden administration.

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