

Singapore, Japan mark 50 years of diplomatic ties

Singapore's Minister for Foreign Affairs Vivian Balakrishnan is currently in Japan on an introductory visit and called on Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe.

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TOKYO: Singapore and Japan commemorate the 50th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations on Tuesday (Apr 26).

Strong economic ties and an emphasis on rules-based systems will continue to bind Japan-Singapore relations. Both are also the second-largest foreign direct investors in each other's countries.

Said Professor Tommy Koh, Ambassador-at-Large and co-chairman of the Japan-Singapore Symposium: "The Japan-Singapore relationship is one of the best we have with any foreign country. And over the last 50 years, we've built an excellent relationship in every direction - economically, politically, culturally and most importantly, between our people."

Mr Yoshiji Nogami, co-chairman of the Japan-Singapore Symposium, noted: "We envy Singapore in a way. We envy the agility and nimbleness of Singapore."

Both men spoke to Channel NewsAsia on the sidelines of the 11th Japan-Singapore Symposium attended by high-level delegations. The closed-door session saw officials exchange views on security, the economic outlook of Asia Pacific and the future of bilateral relations.

Mr Nogami said: "It is in our common interest to guard, preserve and strengthen rules based on global order."

Millions of Singaporeans continue to visit Japan annually, Prof Koh noted. "Young Singaporeans love the Japanese popular culture, whether its cuisine, manga, J pop or anime. Japan is very popular in Singapore," he said.

Singapore's Minister for Foreign Affairs Vivian Balakrishnan is currently in Japan to commemorate the 50 years of ties. He called on Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe on Monday as part of his introductory visit to Japan.

In a statement, Singapore's Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) said Dr Balakrishnan and Mr Abe reaffirmed the "excellent state of Singapore-Japan relations", which are underpinned by regular exchanges, strong economic links and a common strategic outlook.

MFA said Dr Balakrishnan welcomed Japan's "Proactive Contribution to Peace" policy and the related legislation that would enable Japan to play a greater role in the region within the framework of the US-Japan Security Alliance.

"Both sides agreed that constructive, peaceful and cooperative relations between Japan and its neighbours would benefit not only Japan but also the entire region," MFA said.

On the first day of his visit, Dr Balakrishnan also discussed developments in Japan and the region, as well as close Singapore-Japan relations when he met Japanese Minister of the Environment Tamayo Marukawa, Secretary-General of the Liberal Democratic Party Sadakazu Tanigaki, Komeito Chief Representative Natsuo Yamaguchi and members of the Japan-Singapore Parliamentary Friendship League.

Dr Balakrishnan also attended the 11th Japan-Singapore Symposium welcome reception hosted by State Minister for Foreign Affairs Seiji Kihara on Monday evening.

MFA added that Dr Balakrishnan will meet other Japanese political and business leaders, including Japanese Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida, on Tuesday. He will also deliver a keynote address at the 11th Japan-Singapore Symposium's Open Forum on Tuesday morning, MFA said.