

Singapore President Pays Tribute To Republic's Strong Ties With Malaysia
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By Tengku Noor Shamsiah Tengku Abdullah

SINGAPORE, May 20 (Bernama) -- Singapore President Dr Tony Tan Keng Yam has paid tribute to the bilateral relationship between the republic and Malaysia, saying the ties are on a strong footing.

"This is underscored by our respective state visits and, most recently, by the successful 5th Malaysia-Singapore Leaders Retreat last month.

"Our leaders have frequent exchanges with each other and people-to-people ties are strong. These interactions both draw on and add to our deep reserves of trust and goodwill," he said in his address at a state banquet at the Istana Monday evening.

President Tan and Mrs Mary Tan had hosted the banquet in honour of Malaysia's Yang di-Pertuan Agong Tuanku Abdul Halim Mu'adzam Shah and Raja Permaisuri Agong Tuanku Hajah Haminah who are on a three-day state visit to Singapore from Sunday.

Singapore Deputy Prime Minister Teo Chee Hean, Minister in the Prime Minister's Office Lim Swee Say, Malaysian Minister of Works Datuk Fadillah Yusof, Malaysia's High Commissioner to Singapore Datuk Husni Zai Yaacob and Tunku Laksamana Kedah Tan Sri Tunku Abdul Hamid Thani Almarhum Sultan Badlishah also attended the banquet.

Tan stressed that the ties between Singapore and Malaysia extended beyond material interest as the two countries shared a storied past.

"It is especially fitting that, as the Supreme Commander of the Malaysian Armed Forces, your Majesty will be visiting Reflections at Bukit Chandu.

"The centre commemorates the Battle of Pasir Panjang during World War II. Four hundred brave soldiers from the Malay Regiment made a valiant last stand against an invading force nearly 10 times their size.

"Such sacrifices by our forebears are well worth our remembrance and reflection. It is also crucial that we pass down our shared heritage to our future generation," he said.

Touching on the Malay Heritage Centre here, Tan said he was heartened that the centre was exploring new areas of collaboration with their Malaysian counterparts.

He hoped that these efforts would continue and expand.

Tan said greater cultural and historical understanding would bring both neighbours closer

together.

Against the backdrop of this geopolitical uncertainties, Tan said, it was even more important that Asean worked towards the realisation of an Asean Community by 2015.

"Malaysia will take up the mantle of (Asean) chairmanship next year. We look forward to working closely with Malaysia and the other Asean member states to chart the course for our region's future," he said.

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