

Singapore Endeavours To Strengthen Relations with Immediate Neighbours
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SINGAPORE, Jan 18 (Bernama) -- Singapore will endeavour to strengthen relations with immediate neighbours, Malaysia and Indonesia, which have made steady and substantive progress in recent years, says the Singapore Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Its minister, Dr Vivian Balakrishnan said some upcoming projects in Malaysia would bring the two countries closer.

"With upcoming projects like the joint developments in Singapore and Iskandar Malaysia, the High Speed Rail and the Rapid Transit System, there is a strong impetus for closer cooperation between Malaysia and Singapore," he said in an Addendum to President Tony Tan's opening address of the 13th Parliament.

He pointed out that as a small nation-state, developing strong, sustainable and multi-faceted partnerships at all levels was vital for Singapore's long-term security and continued prosperity.

Last Friday, Tan spoke about the Singapore Government's commitment to building, among others, a safe and secure Singapore.

Dr Balakrishnan said maintaining Singapore's relevance to the world and expanding its international space was one of the three key thrusts that it would focus on, in this challenging environment.

In this regard, he said Singapore would have to navigate an increasingly complex and unpredictable strategic and security landscape.

The shifts in global power and competition for influence among the major powers, particularly in Asia-Pacific would impact the global and regional order, bringing both unprecedented risks and opportunities for Singapore as a nation, he said.

"The rise of nationalism, protectionism and the polarisation of society in many regional countries have further exacerbated the challenges faced by Singapore.

"The geopolitical challenges in the Middle East, particularly the threat of the Islamic State, and the disputes in the East and South China Sea, will remain intractable."

Economically, the global outlook was uncertain, although landmark initiatives such as the ASEAN Economic Community and Trans-Pacific Partnership offered promising prospects, said Dr Balakrishnan.

On ASEAN, he said it remained a cornerstone of Singapore's foreign policy, and provided the necessary bedrock for a stable, peaceful and prosperous region.

"ASEAN creates a platform for us to engage key major powers at a regional level," he added.

He said Singapore would assume the role of ASEAN Chair in 2018, which would see the country hosting a number of important meetings, including the ASEAN Summit, ASEAN Plus Three Summit and the East Asia Summit.

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