Building on Deng, LKY legacy

Today marks the 40th anniversary of Deng’s historic visit to Singapore.

**Tommy Koh**

Deng Xiaoping visited Singapore twice in his lifetime. In 1970, Deng was 68 years old. He was one of the 84 erudite from Sichuan province going to France to participate in a work-study-see programme. His ship, the Liao, stopped over in Singapore for two days. Deng was escorted by the way the British rulers had treated the local people.

The second time he visited Singapore was 38 years later. He was the paramount leader of China but wore the modest titles of vice-chairman of the Communist Party, vice-premier and vice-chairman of the Central Military Commission.

In November 1978, Deng visited Thailand, Malaysia and Singapore. The purpose of his visit was to mobilize the support of the three countries to join China in opposing the Soviet Union and Vietnam. Deng was in Singapore from Nov 12 to 14. He and Singapore Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew had met before. When Lee visited China in 1979, Deng had been dismissive from power by Mao Zedong for the second time and was under arrest. Lee received Deng graciously at the airport and escorted him into the Istana Villa, the state guest house.

On Nov 12, 12 delegations met. Lee invited Deng to speak first. He spoke for 2½ hours speaking China’s position. He warned that, with the support of the Soviet Union, Vietnam was preparing to invade Cambodia.

The next day, Lee responded to Deng’s presentation. He spoke for only half an hour. Lee said that China wanted the Asian countries to unite with China to make the “Russian bear” not our neighbors want to meet with them to isolate their “Chinese tiger”. Why did they have China? They feared China because China supported the developing nations. On Nov 13, 1978, the South East Asia, appealed to the wheat China wanted to help the motherland and made a note sent to the British China denouncing the regional government. Two years later, Deng stopped all practices.

**THE DENG-LEE FRIENDSHIP**

Although Deng and Lee met for the first time in 1978, the meeting led to a special relationship between the two great men. They admired and respected each other. They established a relationship of mutual trust.


Deng missed Lee. He knew that Lee visited Taiwan frequently and was close to President Chiang Kai-shek and all the leaders of the United States. On several occasions, Deng had requested Lee to pass on messages to Chiang and to American leaders.

Lee said that it was in Singapore’s national interest to support Deng’s policy of reform and opening. He believed that Lee had been a friend of China. At the 2008 Beijing Summer Olympic Games, Lee wrote, "I have a special affection for China because of Lee Kuan Yew’s kindness and respect for China."

**CORPORATE FOR MUTUAL BENEFIT**

China and Singapore have sought to build on their long-standing relationship by building Deng and LEE in many ways. Let us review some of the more important ways in which the two countries have worked together in their mutual benefit.

China is the only country with which the Singapore government has entered into many development projects. The first project was the Suzhou Industrial Park. It had two objectives. First, it revitalized the ancient and beautiful city. Second, to build a new city next to the old city. The city would be a model for the world, providing jobs, social amenities and public services in a clean and green environment.

The objective of the project was not to make money but to truly develop Singapore’s south-east west. Today, the Suzhou Industrial Park has encouraged the two governments to work on the 10,000-acre Tai Po development project, which is a piece of wetland on the periphery of the city. It is a joint venture with China.

Shanghai is the only city in the world that can be equated with Singapore, the Chinese are proud of their city. The city has been described as an "urban paradise.

Then Chinese vice-president Xi Jinping (left) and Minister Mentor Lee Kuan Yew at the unveiling of the Deng Xiaoping commemorative park in November 2010. Mr Xi has been invited to Singapore to unveil a marker and bust of Deng under the programme, Visitors To Our Shores.

**SOURCE**

Source: The Straits Times, pA17
Date: 12 November 2018

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