

NTU centre can help China know region: DPM Heng

Think-tank must continue to innovate, build new bridges to tackle global challenges

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The Nanyang Centre of Public Administration (NCPA) can serve as an important node for China to understand Singapore and the region, and for the region to have a better appreciation of China, said Deputy Prime Minister Heng Swee Keat on Friday.

The centre, which is part of Nanyang Technological University (NTU), has come a long way in building bridges between China and Singapore over the last 30 years, he added.

DPM Heng was speaking at a gala dinner at Marina Bay Sands Convention Centre to celebrate NCPA's 30th anniversary and the Lien Ying Chow Legacy Fellowship's 15th anniversary.

He said that with a can-do "Nanyang spirit", NCPA has evolved over the years while buttressing signature programmes such as the Mayors' Class and the Lien Fellows.

The Mayors' Class has nurtured 1,700 graduates who are government officials, businessmen and tertiary institution officials from China. It also regularly runs seminars and forums to promote the exchange of views and ideas, and to facilitate collaboration.

The Lien Ying Chow Legacy Fellowship is a platform for government officials, professionals and academics from Singapore and China to gain useful insights from one another on public administration, corporate governance and management.

The world today is more fractured and inward-looking, marked by tension between the big pow-

ers. Countries have turned towards strengthening resilience and mitigating the risks of external shocks, said Mr Heng.

"But we must remember that the stressors that societies are confronting – like climate change, ageing populations, and the fourth industrial revolution – are common and global in nature," he added. "The case for collaboration and cooperation is stronger than ever."

There are positive signs of late, the most significant being the meeting between Chinese President Xi Jinping and US President Joe Biden in Bali earlier in November, he said.

This provides renewed encouragement to restore existing bridges and build new ones to tackle urgent global challenges, he added.

NCPA must progress with the times to maintain its relevance and grow its contributions, said Mr Heng, who suggested two ways it can do so.

First, it must continuously innovate to make its offerings relevant and valuable to its stakeholders. It

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must give its graduates a strong grasp of key global issues.

NCPA should also tie its research more closely to key issues on the policy agenda, and actively contribute to the thinking and implementation process in areas such as those identified by the Joint Council for Bilateral Cooperation between Singapore and China. The Lien Fellows could also be tapped on to build up NCPA's think-tank functions.

Second, NCPA should grow new roots in Asia and the region.

While it has been a bridge between China and Singapore, this role must be expanded to include programmes to facilitate interactions across nationalities and cultures.

It must find fresh ways to activate its 20,000-strong network of alumni and fellows to help grow new bridges to connect China, the region and the world.

Calling the relationship between Singapore and China an "exemplary one", Chinese Ambassador to Singapore Sun Haiyan said it is important "to compete and cooperate with the competent and progress together".

"Under strong leadership over the decades, China and Singapore have been advancing cooperation at all levels based on mutual respect and win-win outcomes," she said, adding that NCPA's programmes best illustrate this.

With the successful conclusion of the recent 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, a comprehensive plan for the next decade was laid out, including speeding up progress in education and science and technology. This will bring new opportunities for bilateral cooperation between both countries, she said.

Earlier on Friday, the 2022 Lien Development Conference opened online and at Marina Bay Sands Convention Centre. It was co-organised by NCPA with the Lien Ying Chow Legacy Fellowship, International Institute of Administrative Sciences, and business advisory firm Stratagem Group.

The theme of the two-day conference is "The Dynamics of Governance in a Volatile, Uncertain, Complex, and Ambiguous (Vuca) World". About 300 participants from 15 countries attended the hybrid event, held biennially.

In his recorded speech at the conference, Senior Minister of State for National Development and Communications and Information Tan Kiat How said to thrive in an uncertain and turbulent world, Singapore will work with like-minded partners to grow the region's economy and expand areas of cooperation. This includes not just governments but businesses and academia.

At the same time, governments must help their people thrive amid disruption, including creating new opportunities and providing assurance when needed.