



Cultural exchange: PM Lee being led in a dance by Mutallip Obul, the Commissioner of the Kashgar Prefectural Administrations of Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, at a musical instruments shop in Kashgar's old handicrafts lane. PHOTO: DENNIS THONG/LIANHE ZAOBAO

High hopes for economic ties between two Silk Road cities

PM Lee hails the opportunity for deeper ties between Kashgar and S'pore

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PRIME Minister Lee Hsien Loong welcomed the opportunity for deeper ties between Kashgar and Singapore yesterday, during his meeting with Kashgar Party Secretary Zeng Cun.

"Although our circumstances are very different,

there are interesting points of similarity and comparison between Singapore and Kashgar. You are on the border, looking outwards towards five countries all the way to Europe and we are also in a way, on a border, looking outwards towards South-east Asia and, beyond that, to the whole world," Mr Lee told Mr Zeng at a pre-lunch meeting in Kashgar.

Mr Lee was in Kashgar as part of a week-long official visit to China.

Once a key city along the historic trading vein that

was the Silk Road, Kashgar's economic ambitions have begun to take shape, with the establishment of a national economic development zone there in 2010.

"I hope we will be able to deepen and strengthen our ties, and make a cross link between the land Silk Road which you're on, and the sea Silk Road which we're on," Mr Lee said.

Mr Lee also alluded to the different interests that Singapore had to manage, going forward. "We're trying to have balance between development and

change, and tradition and continuity. And that's the challenge that we will have to continue to manage each year as we move ahead."

Some degree of exchange is already happening between Kashgar and Singapore. Over the last few years, 160 of Kashgar's scholars and officials have come to Singapore to observe the country's style of social management and economic development.

"I also believe that there are broad prospects for cooperation between China and Singapore," said Mr Zeng.

Yesterday, this cooperation was widened further by the signing of a memorandum of understanding between Singapore Management University (SMU) and Kashgar Teachers College (KTC) for the organisation of an SMU-KTC English Week that will be held in May or June next year.

This event, a student-driven effort under the auspices of SMU's Centre for Social Responsibility, will feature conversational English and debates and be open to all 12,000 students of the college.