

TOWARDS GREATER INTERCONNECTEDNESS

Room for stronger ties with Kashgar: PM Lee

S'pore leader to visit Liaoning before concluding trip to China

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KASHGAR – While their circumstances differ, Singapore and Kashgar are both multi-racial and multi-religious societies and there is room to strengthen ties between the two, said Singapore Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong on the final day of his maiden visit to China's Xinjiang province.

At a brief meeting with the prefecture's Party Secretary Zeng Cun yesterday, Mr Lee quipped that he hoped for more links between Kashgar, the Silk Road on land, and Singapore, the Silk Road on the seas.

He also took a whirlwind tour of the city, during which he sampled indigenous fried buns and even tried his hand at traditional Uighur musical instruments.

In the morning, he visited Old Kashgar to see how centuries-old traditional homes in the 90-per-cent Uighur population looked like, toured a traditional handicrafts lane, before being hosted to a tour of Id Kah Mosque by the Chief Imam. It was built in 1442 and is one of the largest mosques in China.

Mr Lee also visited Kashgar Bazaar, renowned for being the biggest market in Xinjiang, before departing for the north-eastern province of Liaoning.

He will meet Party Secretary Wang Min and Governor Chen Zheng-gao before concluding his week-long official visit to China.

Yesterday, the Singapore Management University (SMU) also penned a memorandum of understanding to hold annual English Week programmes for the 11,000 local students from Kashgar Teachers' College from next year.

The programme, which will be administered by SMU's Centre for Social Responsibility, will involve 30 to 40 Singaporean undergraduates who will facilitate English classes and debate sessions, among other things.



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