India and Singapore sign naval cooperation agreement

Prime Minister Narendra Modi said there was a need to combine innovation and technology to address the challenges of the 21st century.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday said Indian businesses use Singapore as a staging board for the Association of Southeast Asian Nations. Modi is on the last leg of his three-day tour of Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore. The prime minister said a bilateral agreement on naval logistical cooperation had been signed.

During a joint press conference with Singaporean Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong, Modi said cyber security, extremism and terrorism will be important areas of cooperation. Lee Hsien said, "We will also celebrate the 50th anniversary of annual Singapore-India maritime bilateral exercise this year."

Modi said the air traffic between India and Singapore is growing rapidly and that the two governments were working on an air traffic agreement. "We have been able to conclude successfully the second round of comprehensive economic cooperation agreement but we agreed this is not just our target and goal but this only means to an end."

Modi stressed on the importance of ensuring the freedom of navigation in Asian waters for free trade, just two days after pledging to help develop a strategic port in Indonesia, reported Reuters.

At Singapore's Nanyang Technological University, where Modi participated in a discussion with varsity president Tan Chorh Chuan, he said there was a need to combine innovation with human values to resolve the challenges of the 21st century.

"The biggest challenge before us is that the 21st century belongs to Asia," he said. "But do we have this sentiment, I think that is the biggest challenge," according to PTI.

Modi said developing skills for the digital age, creating adequate jobs in the age of digital revolution, agricultural productivity, pollution, climate change were some of the challenges faced by several governments, and that innovation and technology would help address these challenges.

Citing a report published by a university in the United States on the economic development of countries for 1,006 years, he said India and China contributed to 50% of the world’s Gross Domestic Product for 1,006 years. "If human history, India and China have dominated global trade for centuries, he said, adding that Asian countries must think of furthering connectivity without any conflict."

Modi also handed over the Padma Shri award to Tommy Koh, a former diplomat of Singapore. Koh was among the 10 recipients from the Association of Southeast Asian Nations of the award this year.

Modi is scheduled to deliver a keynote address at the Shangri-La Dialogue, an annual security summit, later on Friday.

After arriving in Singapore on Thursday, Modi launched three Indian mobile payment apps – Payzapp, BHIM and PayTM, and showcased India’s “digital payments revolution”. "The international launch of Payzapp, BHIM and UPI based payment app in Singapore, represents Digital India initiative and our renewed partnership,” Modi said.