Like-minded countries must join capabilities, work closely on shared challenges amid divided world: President Tharman

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President is in Sweden for a state visit



President Tharman Shanmugaratnam (second from left) with King of Sweden Carl XVI Gustaf (second from right) and their spouses during a welcome ceremony at the Royal Palace for the Singapore President on Monday (Oct 19).

PHOTO: Ministry of Digital Development and Information

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Amid a more divided and uncertain world, like-minded countries must join-up their capabilities and work closely to address shared challenges and grow opportunities together, said President Tharman Shanmugaratnam.

The President, on a five-day state visit to Sweden till Oct 21, made this comment in a joint press statement on Monday (Oct 19), after he was accorded a welcome ceremony at the Royal Palace by King Carl XVI Gustaf and Queen Silvia.

President Tharman noted that both Singapore and Sweden are small nations that have prospered through constant innovation and connections to the wider world.

"We believe in investing in our people, building strong institutions, and working actively to develop domestic solidarity. And we are like-minded in upholding international law, and a rules-based multilateral order."

And it is this common outlook that has provided a strong foundation for practical cooperation over the years, President Tharman noted, pointing to over 40 years of defence cooperation and Swedish-British biopharmaceutical company AstraZeneca's upcoming $2 billion facility in Singapore.

Most recognisably, Singapore's started its underwater fleet with four second-hand Sjoormen-class submarines between 1995 and 1997, and with two Vastergotland-class submarines in 2005.

Swedish defence technology firms Karlskronavarvet and Saab Kockums have also collaborated with Singapore defence engineering firms such as Singapore Technologies Engineering Marine on its surface ships.

Meanwhile, AstraZeneca's facility in Tuas, when completed in 2029, will be the company's first end-to-end antibody drug conjugates (ADCs) production site globally.

Unlike conventional chemotherapy drugs which are unable to distinguish between healthy and cancerous cells, ADCs are next-generation treatments that deliver highly potent cancer-killing agents directly to cancer cells through a targeted antibody.

Singapore companies also have an active commercial presence in Sweden, with the Stockholm Metro now operated by Connecting Stockholm, which counts Singapore's ComfortDelGro as a joint venture partner.

At the same time, Temasek is growing its engagement with Swedish partners, as it explores long-term investment opportunities in Sweden and Europe, President Tharman said.



In his remarks at the joint press statement on Monday (Oct 19), President Tharman Shanmugaratnam noted that the common outlook between Singapore and Sweden have provided a strong foundation for practical cooperation over many years. PHOTO: Ministry of Digital Development and Information

Expanded areas of cooperation

Beyond the present, the two governments will also conclude a new joint declaration that will expand their cooperation in emerging technologies, including quantum.

Sweden's Royal Institute of Technology, Ericsson and Singapore's Nanyang Technological University will also collaborate on next-generation positioning technologies that use artificial intelligence (AI) and 6G, the next generation of mobile networks.

Other areas of strengthened linkages include between research and academic institutions, and Sweden's engagement of Southeast Asia and ASEAN, including the signing of the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in July this year.

Summing up his remarks, President Tharman said: "The bottom line is clear. Singapore and Sweden share the conviction that as the world becomes more divided and uncertain, like-minded countries must join-up our capabilities and work closely to address shared challenges and grow opportunities together."

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