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Boost S'pore-Jakarta exchanges at people-to-people level

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It is heartening that Singapore and Indonesia continue to recognise the importance of maintaining stable bilateral ties and good working relations between their respective leaderships ("PM Lee, Jokowi set to meet for leaders' retreat this year"; Jan 14).

Both nations share an interest in ensuring continued stability and economic prosperity in the region. As the largest ASEAN (Association of South-east Asian Nations) member, Indonesia plays an increasingly important role as the region grapples with political, security and environmental challenges, such as the competing territorial claims in the South China Sea, terror threats from the Islamic State group, and the haze.

While bilateral ties may face challenges, it is vital that our two nations focus on the mutual benefits of cooperation on a broad range of issues, and still ensure that ties are unaffected by nationalistic rhetoric.

Given the large numbers of Indonesian tourists coming here, as well as Indonesian students who study in Singapore schools, we can do more to boost exchanges at a people-to-people level. Our school curriculum could include more Indonesia-related content, and our cultural institutions such as museums and performance venues could continue to enhance collaboration with their Indonesian counterparts.

Such initiatives will not only strengthen mutual understanding, but add more depth to the newly established ASEAN Economic Community.

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