

SINGAPORE

City-state marks 50 years of success

By AGENCIES in Singapore

Singapore marked 50 years of independence on Sunday with nationwide celebrations, including a huge military parade and firework display that will pay tribute to former founding leader Lee Kuan Yew.

As fighter jets screamed through the sky and nationalist songs blared, leaders made speeches and people took advantage of free rides on trains and buses.

Singapore became a republic on Aug 9, 1965, when it was ejected from the Malaysian federation following a stormy two-year union.

While marveling at the island's leap from a poor colonial port to a wealthy metropolis, Singaporeans are also grappling with an influx of foreign labor and a rising cost of living.

"This is a milestone. Coming from an older generation that has seen Singapore through the early years of independence, I know it took hard work by our leaders to get here," said William Nathan, 70.

The celebrations kicked off on Sunday morning when sirens blared at 9:00 am local time before national TV and radio stations broadcast a 2012 recording of Lee Kuan Yew rereading the original declaration of independence.

"At 50 years, as we stand at a high base camp, we look back and marvel at how far we have come," Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong said in a televised message.

The government intended to showcase its success in an elaborate parade that was to include a flyover by fighter jets and fireworks for an audience of 200,000, plus millions watching on television from their living rooms.

The weekend of celebra-



The number "50" is displayed in Singapore's financial district on Saturday to celebrate the city-state's half-century of independence from Malaysia. WONG MAYE-E / ASSOCIATED PRESS

for the parade at the historic Padang grounds, facing scenic Marina Bay.

The prime ministers of Malaysia and Thailand, along with Brunei's Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah and Indonesian Vice-President Jusuf Kalla are among regional leaders attending, along with officials from China, Australia and Japan.

Former colonial ruler Britain will be represented by Foreign Secretary Philip Hammond and Prince Andrew, while the United States has sent former trade representative Ron Kirk.

When the population boomed to over 2 million in the 1970s from 1.89 million at independence, Lee vigorously campaigned for women to have only two children, fearing it would impede economic growth. He also carved a place for a second language in the English-language education system to make Singaporeans more marketable.

But as Singaporeans grew more educated and wealthy, and wages rose, the ruling party looked to the rest of Southeast Asia for manpower to keep the wheels turning.

A government policy paper in 2013 predicted that foreigners will make up nearly half of the population of nearly 7 million by 2030.

The People's Action Party, which Lee Kuan Yew co-founded, has ruled uninterrupted since independence and is widely credited with turning Singapore into one of the world's richest countries.

Lee, a British-trained lawyer, came to power in 1959 as prime minister when Britain granted the island a degree of self rule and stayed as premier until 1990.

AFP - AP - REUTERS

Chinese leaders send congratulations

President Xi Jinping and Premier Li Keqiang congratulated Singaporean leaders on Sunday on the 50th anniversary of the founding of Singapore.

In a message addressed to Singaporean President Tony Tan Keng Yam and Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong, Xi said that China and Singapore are good neighbors and that the two countries have witnessed enhanced political mutual trust, ever expanding practical cooperation and more people-to-people and cultur-

al exchanges over the 25 years since the establishment of diplomatic relations.

Xi expressed China's willingness to work with Singapore to inject impetus to bilateral ties and lift them to a new level.

Li, in a message to his Singaporean counterpart, also suggested strengthening political mutual trust and deepening practical cooperation so as to elevate China-Singapore relations to a new height.

- XINHUA

tions was scheduled to culminate with fireworks after a military parade.

The sense of unity and pride in Singapore's achievements was to be reinforced with a bouquet of flowers being placed on Lee Kuan Yew's seat, and a five-minute video tribute about his life and political career was to be played at the start of the event.

His son, Prime Minister

Lee Hsien Loong, is now facing a general election next month.

Lee Hsien Loong, who took over as premier in 2004, said on Saturday the festivities will "celebrate how we turned vulnerabilities into strengths" and "journeyed from Third World to First".

The premier will be joined by leaders of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations

WORLD WAR II ANNIVERSARY



A woman prays for victims of the 1945 atomic bombing in front of the Peace Statue before a ceremony commemorating the 70th anniversary of the bombing, at Nagasaki's Peace Park in Nagasaki, western Japan, on Sunday. TORU HANAI / REUTERS

Debate sought over Japan security bills

Nagasaki mayor warns that nation's support of postwar Constitution's 'peaceful ideology' is weak

By XINHUA in Nagasaki, Japan

The mayor of Nagasaki urged Japanese leaders on Sunday to dispel the public's concerns over proposed government-backed national security bills by conducting "careful and sincere deliberations".

Speaking in the city at the 70th anniversary of the US atomic bombing there, Tomihisa Taue warned that the pacifist nature of the Japanese war-renouncing Constitution is "wavering", referring to the controversial bills that, if enacted, would allow Japan to engage in armed conflicts overseas for the first time since the end of World War II.

"There is widespread

unease and concerns that the (peaceful) oath that was engraved onto our hearts 70 years ago and the peaceful ideology of the Japanese Constitution are wavering," said the mayor, urging the government and the Diet, Japan's parliament, to listen to the voices of unease and concerns.

The security legislation, which is being pushed by the ruling coalition led by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, is considered by over 90 percent of Japanese constitutional experts to be unconstitutional since the Japanese supreme law bans the country from engaging in combat abroad.

Recent polls also showed

that the majority of Japanese people are opposed to the bills. Support for Abe's Cabinet dived about 10 percentage points in July, immediately after the ruling bloc rammed the bills through the Diet's lower house.

Meanwhile, the mayor emphasized that the peaceful path Japan has pursued in the past 70 years should never be changed for Nagasaki's sake.

He also asked Japan's young generation not to push aside wartime experiences told by the older generation, saying what the elders experienced could happen to the Japanese again.

Abe didn't mention the security bills in his speech, saying only that Japan will make efforts to reach its goal of a world free of nuclear weapons.

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