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Singapore Strengthens Ties with Saudi Arabia



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Featuring



**Sri Lanka High
Commissioner
HE Sashikala
Premawardhane**



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Presentation of Credentials

IN Diplomacy welcomes the new Heads of Mission following their presentation of credentials to the President of Singapore Her Excellency Halimah Yacob

19th December 2019



*The Ambassador of the Republic of Costa Rica
HE Victor Hugo Rojas Gonzalez*



*The Ambassador of the Republic of Estonia
Her Excellency Katrin Kivi*

Why Diplomacy Matters

Singapore is home to 70 resident foreign High Commissions and Embassies, 43 Consular Posts and 11 International Organisations. They act as a conduit between Singapore and their respective countries. Diplomatic missions are headed by influential newsmakers who open doors for business, trade, investment, education, the arts and culture. IN Diplomacy has a mission to communicate and be a bridge between the diplomatic community and Singaporeans.



*The Ambassador of the State of Qatar
HE Saoud Bin Jassim Mohammed Al Jufairi*



President Halimah Visit to Kuwait: Opportunity to Reaffirm Warm Ties



welcome they reaffirmed the warm and longstanding friendship between both nations.

She also had separate meetings with former Prime Minister Sheikh Nasser Mohammed Al Ahmad Al Jaber Al Sabah and Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Sabah

Khalid Al Hamad Al Sabah. During these meetings, both sides affirmed their strong links and discussed ways to increase the momentum of their bilateral engagement. They also exchanged views on developments in the Middle East.

President Halimah Yacob made a State Visit to Kuwait from the 3rd to 4th November 2019. She was received by the Amir of the State of Kuwait, Sheikh Sabah Al Ahmad Al Jaber at the Bayan Palace. After the ceremonial

During the visit the Singaporean President toured the Sheikh Abdullah Al Salem Cultural Centre, which celebrates the scientific and cultural achievements of Kuwaiti, Islamic, and Arab history. She was accompanied by the Kuwaiti Minister-in-Attendance, Dr Yusuf Hamad Al Ibrahim, Economic Advisor in the Amiri Diwan - the Amir of Kuwait's Royal Palace.

The President also met with Singaporean students studying in Kuwait before departing for Saudi Arabia. In her speech to the students she said, "One of the most tangible examples of this friendship (between Kuwait and Singapore) is the Singapore's student community in Kuwait. Since 1980, the Kuwait Ministry of Education has generously awarded scholarships for some Singapore students to study at Al Mahad Al Dini High School. More than 40 of your seniors have since graduated from here over the years."

PM Lee @ S Korea: Expanding Air Connectivity and Updating Agreements



Delegation Meeting between Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong and President of the Republic of Korea Moon Jae-in. (Photo: MCI)

Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong, accompanied by Mrs Lee, visited South Korea from 22nd to 24th November 2019 at the invitation of the President of the Republic of Korea (ROK) Moon Jae-in. The visit was in conjunction with the **ASEAN-ROK Commemorative Summit** in Busan from 25th to 26th November 2019.

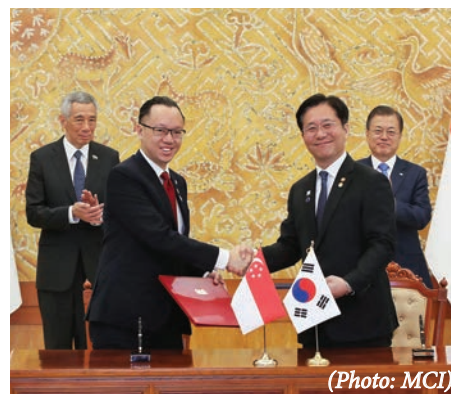
They looked forward to the 45th anniversary of diplomatic relations in 2020 and welcomed the expansion of the Singapore-ROK Air Services Agreement from 26th November 2019. The expanded Agreement will improve connectivity between Singapore and the ROK and enable more business and people-to-people exchanges. Both Leaders also discussed ways to strengthen economic ties, including

through bringing the Korea-Singapore Free Trade Agreement (signed in 2005) up to date to promote bilateral trade and investment. President Moon conveyed the ROK's recognition of the Intellectual Property Office of Singapore (IPOS) as an International Search Authority (ISA) and International Preliminary Examining Authority (IPEA) for international patent applications, which Prime Minister Lee welcomed. Both Leaders also reaffirmed their commitment to achieve a swift entry-into-force of the updated Agreement for the Avoidance of Double Taxation following its signing in May 2019.

Both Leaders looked forward to the ROK's establishment of a **Korea Start-up Centre** in Singapore in 2020. It will serve as a landing

pad for ROK Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) to connect with Singapore's start-up and innovation ecosystem, and enable Singapore SMEs to leverage the Centre to explore partnership opportunities with ROK companies. They also welcomed the further enhancement of security cooperation between both countries through the upcoming conclusion of an information exchange agreement in chemical biological defence. Following their meeting, both leaders witnessed the signing and exchange of Memorandum of Understanding on:

- Standards and conformance
- Manufacturing of pharmaceuticals
- Smart cities collaboration
- Cybersecurity cooperation



Senior Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Trade and Industry, Dr Tan Wu Meng, signed the MOU for Cooperation in the Fields of Standardisation, Metrology, Conformity Assessment and Technical Regulations with Minister of Trade, Industry and Energy Sung Yun-mo

VISIT

State

Saudi Arabia and Singapore Open New Chapter in Their Bilateral Relationship

During Singapore's first state visit to the Kingdom, the Saudi government honoured President Halimah Yacob with the King Abdulaziz Medal. Both governments also signed MOUs in environmental protection and water resources management for "deeper cooperation and to provide more opportunities for the peoples in both countries."



management, solid waste treatment and air pollution control.

President met members of the Singapore Business Federation delegation, who were visiting Riyadh and Jeddah in conjunction with the State Visit.

The delegation updated the President on its various meetings and engagements

The President also called on King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, who hosted a State Banquet in the President's honour. She was also conferred the King Abdulaziz Medal - the highest civilian honour in Saudi Arabia, by King Salman (pictured left).

President Halimah also accepted King Salman's invitation for Singapore to participate in the G20 meetings, scheduled to be held in Saudi Arabia in 2020.

Before the President left the Kingdom she also visited Makkah to see historical, cultural and religious sites and perform the *umrah* (minor pilgrimage).

Singapore's President Halimah Yacob, who was on a four-day State Visit to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia arrived in Jeddah on 8th November 2019 where she was welcomed by HRH Prince Badr Bin Sultan Bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, the Deputy Governor of Makkah Governorate.

As part of President's State Visit, the Ministry of the Environment and Water Resources and the Saudi Ministry of Environment, Water and Agriculture signed an MOU on Environmental Protection and Water Resource Management. This MOU builds on both countries' common interest to tackle water scarcity and increase environmental resilience. It paves the way for greater collaboration in areas including water quality

management in Saudi Arabia.

The President also met the Singapore community in Saudi Arabia at a reception where she said: "With Saudi Arabia being one of Singapore's largest economic partners in the Middle East, many Saudi giants, such as Saudi Aramco and SABIC have a presence in Singapore. With this State Visit, I hope Singapore can do even more with Saudi Arabia and the two countries can take bilateral relations to a new level. Yesterday, we signed an MOU on environmental protection and water resources management. This is another good catalyst for deeper cooperation, and will provide more opportunities for the peoples of both countries."



On arrival: President Halimah with HRH Prince Faisal Governor of Riyadh

For the full article visit www.indiplomacy.com

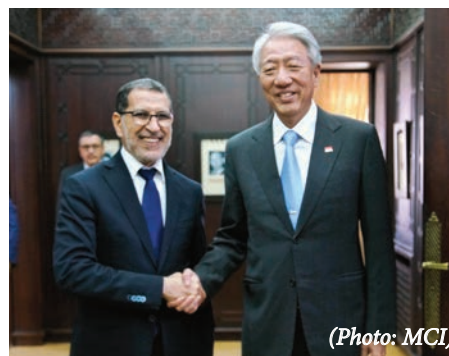
VISIT

Working

SM Teo Chee Hean @ Kingdom of Morocco

Singapore's Senior Minister (SM) and Coordinating Minister for National Security, Mr Teo Chee Hean, was on a working visit to the Kingdom of Morocco from 20th to 23rd November 2019. SM Teo called on Prime Minister Saad-Eddine El Othmani (pictured right) in Rabat where both leaders reaffirmed the warm and friendly relations between Singapore and Morocco. They had a wide-ranging discussion on developments in Morocco and security challenges, and exchanged views on ways to enhance bilateral cooperation.

In Rabat, he also met with Minister of Interior Abdelouafi Laftit; Minister of Foreign Affairs, African Cooperation and Moroccan Expatriates Nasser Bourita; Minister of Habous and Islamic Affairs Ahmed Toufiq; and senior security officials. They exchanged views on the regional



(Photo: MCI)

security situation, the fight against extremism and rehabilitation efforts. Both sides also discussed ways to work together in combatting terror and radical ideology. SM Teo was also hosted to dinner by President of the National Museums Foundation Mehdi Qotbi on 20th

October 2019, which was attended by Minister of Equipment, Transport, Logistics and Water Dr Abdelkader Amara; Minister of Tourism, Air Transport, Handicraft and Social Economy Nadia Fettah Alaoui; and Minister of Energy, Mining and Environment Aziz Rebbah. SM Teo had useful discussions with the Ministers on ways to further strengthen bilateral cooperation. SM Teo also met Minister of National Education, Vocational Training, Higher Education and Scientific Research Dr Said Amzazi to discuss developments in the education sector and ways to strengthen people-to-people exchanges. SM Teo also visited Fez and the University of Al Qarawiyyin on 22 November 2019. He also met the President of the University Dr Amal Jalal, who hosted SM Teo and the delegation to lunch.

SM Teo was accompanied by Minister for the Environment and Water Resources and Minister-in-Charge of Muslim Affairs Masagos Zulkifli, MPs Mr Christopher de Souza and Mr Sitoh Yih Pin, and officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of the Environment and Water Resources and other agencies.

VISITS Official

PM Lee's First Official Visit to Mexico Underscored Growing Bilateral Ties and Trade

Bilateral relations underpinned by the increased high-level interactions, growth in trade and investment flows

In a joint statement issued by Singapore and the United Mexican States governments, Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong and Mexico's President López Obrador noted the growing trade and investment cooperation between both countries. In 2018, bilateral trade amounted to over US\$2.8 billion, making Mexico Singapore's second largest trading partner in Latin America. Both leaders looked forward to the successful completion of the negotiations that will lead to Singapore becoming an **Associate Member of the Pacific Alliance**, a step that seeks

to further enhance trade and productive investment for both countries, and supported the intention of concluding the process this year. They also underscored the importance of the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP), a high-standard agreement already in force between Singapore and Mexico. President López Obrador also welcomed Singapore's investments in Mexico, that totalled over



Meeting between Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong and President of the United Mexican States Andrés Manuel López Obrador (Photo: MCI)

US\$871 million. A lot of Singaporean companies are active in many sectors in Mexico, including energy, manufacturing, fintech, infrastructure, and hospitality.

Full report visit www.indiplomacy.com

Inaugural RISING 50 Fellowship

Regional leaders from Indonesia came for the launch of the Fellowship



(Sixth from l to r): Ambassador Ngurah Swajaya, DPM Heng Swee Keat and Minister Dr Vivian Balakrishnan together with the regional Indonesian leaders. (Source: MFA)

Minister for Trade and Industry Chan Chun Sing and Minister for Foreign Affairs Dr Vivian Balakrishnan engaged with Indonesia's regional leaders when they graced the opening and closing ceremonies of the RISING 50 Fellowship respectively. At the closing ceremony today, Minister Balakrishnan reiterated Singapore's commitment to deepen and broaden the city-state ties with the various regions in Indonesia, which would strengthen trust between leaders of Singapore and Indonesia.

Minister Vivian Balakrishnan in his speech made the point that Singapore's relationship with Indonesia is wider and deeper than just Jakarta: "That is why we are committed to engaging Indonesia's provinces, regencies, and towns, and we hope to intensify this engagement. The RISING Fellowship demonstrates our commitment to strengthen ties with Indonesia at all levels, with all provinces, with all regencies and regions, and we look forward to welcoming

many more RISING Fellows to Singapore in the future."

Indonesian Regional Leaders Who Attended

- Riau Governor Syamsuar
- West Sumatra Governor Irwan Prayitno
- South Sulawesi Vice-Governor Andi Sudirman Sulaiman
- East Java Vice-Governor Emil Elestianto Dardak
- Bogor Mayor Bima Arya Sugiarto
- Batam Mayor Muhammad Rudi
- Jambi Mayor Syarif Fasha
- Belitung Regent H. Sahani Saleh

The regional leaders also met Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Finance Heng Swee Keat with whom they had a wide-ranging discussion on global and regional developments and reaffirmed the excellent bilateral relations. They discussed the diverse economic opportunities in various Indonesian regions; the leaders also welcomed more Singapore investments in their regions.

Fellowship Note: Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong and Indonesian President Joko Widodo announced the RISING Fellowship at the Singapore-Indonesia Leaders' Retreat last year. The Fellowship seeks to deepen ties between Singapore and Indonesia's regional leaders through the sharing of experiences and exchange of best practices.

PM Lee Hsien Loong @ 35th ASEAN Summit, Bangkok

Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong was in Bangkok, Thailand, from 2nd to 4th November 2019, to attend the 35th ASEAN Summit and Related Summits. In line with Thailand's ASEAN Chairmanship theme of "Advancing Partnership for Sustainability", the ASEAN Leaders discussed ways to incorporate sustainability in ASEAN's Community-building efforts, reinforce ASEAN Centrality and unity, and promote regional peace and stability.

In addition, the ASEAN Leaders met with their counterparts during the 22nd ASEAN Plus Three Summit, the 14th East Asia Summit, and Summits with China, India, Japan, the United Nations, and the United States.

PM Lee was accompanied by Minister for Foreign Affairs Dr Vivian Balakrishnan and Minister for Trade and Industry Chan Chun Sing.

Asean-US Summit Message

At the 7th ASEAN-United States (US) Summit Foreign Minister Balakrishnan welcomed the US efforts to deepen and sustain its engagement of ASEAN and the region.

Minister Balakrishnan underscored ASEAN's substantive and multifaceted cooperation with the US. He also highlighted the region's need for infrastructural development on a massive scale in the next few decades, and welcomed the US' newly launched **Blue Dot Network** initiative which seeks to raise standards for infrastructure projects around the world, including the mobilisation of private sector capital. He added that Singapore looked forward to the US sharing more details on the concept and implementation mechanisms.

INTERVIEW **HE Sashikala Premawardhane**

Sri Lanka's Resilience Translated Through Trade and Tourism

In the June of 2019, Singapore welcomed its newly appointed High Commissioner-designate of Sri Lanka - Ms Sashikala Premawardhane. Her Excellency is now ranked amongst the growing number of female representatives in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA). Her impressive background, pride in Sri Lanka, and passion for maintaining bilateral ties imply a successful tenure, and ensure a continued bond between Singapore and Sri Lanka

What were some of the main highlights of your previous postings, those prior to your mission in Singapore?

I joined the foreign ministry in 1998; my first posting was in Tokyo, followed by another in Canberra, Australia. I spent a lot of time in Sri Lanka handling different portfolios for the foreign ministry. Prior to my arrival here, I handled 2 directorates – I was Director-General of Policy Planning and Research, and Director-General of Ocean Affairs, Environment and Climate Change for the Foreign Ministry. The Ministry of Ocean Affairs, Environment and Climate Change was only recently established in 2017, and I am proud to say that I was its first Directory-General. In fact, during my tenure, we were able to have two international conferences that were focused on the freedom of navigation in the Indian Ocean, and establishing a working group for the Indian Ocean Rim Association Countries.

How would you describe Sri Lanka to Singaporeans looking to explore the country for the first time?

Sri Lanka cherishes its 2,500 years of written history, but our history goes far beyond that. A traveller would be able to experience the rich history of the country by visiting our UNESCO World Heritage Sites. We also have beautiful wildlife; Sri Lanka is one of the most gorgeous hotspots of biodiversity in Asia. Just to give you an idea, the country is home to both the largest mammal on land, as well as the largest mammal in the sea – the elephant and the whale! If I were to capture the essence of it, I think that apart from being a beautiful country to visit, you would have a rich experience in terms of the culture, food, and how Sri Lankans treat visitors. We believe that anyone who comes to the country should leave with having had a good experience. Our brand is “So Sri Lanka,” and I think that is the best way to describe the Sri Lankan experience in a nutshell. It can only be experienced first-hand. There are so many different countries to visit, but I hope that Sri Lanka will be one of those destinations. An added advantage to Singaporeans is that there are 31 flights a week connecting us, and it's a mere 4-hour journey!

What especially excites you about Singapore's story?

Something I find inspiring about Singapore is how very well organised and approachable it is. At any given event, there is always something to learn. The research capability in this country is tremendous, and I'm learning a lot just from being here. For example, the FinTech Festival was phenomenal. Bringing in 60,000 delegates from all over the world... I think about 130 countries were represented? It was a brilliant opportunity. Not only did the delegates make vital contacts, they also expressed to me that they gathered so much information on innovation and new technologies! I know I will be encouraging more delegations from Sri Lanka to come to Singapore and take back with them ideas on how we could collaborate, because there is a lot Sri Lanka can learn from this country. We are trying to find ways in which to grow, so we might be able to take back certain things that we have learnt from Singapore, particularly in some legal aspects, that are significant to Sri Lanka. Of course, we can't fit the exact same structure into Sri Lanka due to the difference in scale, but the core elements would still prove quite useful.

Our brand is “So Sri Lanka,” and I think that is the best way to describe the Sri Lankan experience in a nutshell.

It can only be experienced first-hand. There are so many different countries to visit, but I hope that Sri Lanka will be one of those destinations. An added advantage to Singaporeans is that there are 31 flights a week connecting us, and it's a mere four-hour journey!

For the full transcript visit www.indiplomacy.com

EVENTS

ISSUE 56

Sultanate of Oman 49th National Day

21st November 2019

Fullerton Bay Hotel Singapore's The Clifford Pier



HE Zakariya Al Saadi welcoming guest of honour representing the Singapore Government HE Dr Tan Wu Meng, Senior Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Trade and Industry

Oman's Consulate here celebrated their 49th National Day against the glittering Singapore skyline at The Clifford Pier with the Consulate General of the Sultanate of Oman to Singapore, HE Zakariya Al Saadi, presenting his message to guests sharing the economic, political and social progress that have been achieved in the Sultanate. The highlights include the establishment of the basic law of Oman and its amendments to ensure the rule of law; the ninth-term election of the Majlis Ash'shura (Shura Council) where almost 50 percent of the population voted which also saw two women being voted into the Council. The Consulate General was also proud to announce how the Sultanate has progressed over the years so that today it is recognised in several competitiveness indicators as ranking first in freedom from terrorism, reliability of police services, independence of the judiciary, road quality, efficiency of port services and open data.

He also highlighted Singapore's participation in January this year in contributing to a national conference to formulate a Future Vision Oman 2040 strategy. He said this was reflective of the growing ties between the Sultanate of Oman and Singapore that date back centuries ago. He said: "Oman and Singapore share the same aspirations of economic prosperity and social stability. Our trade has broadened in range from oil and gas and goods, to tourism aquaculture, urban planning, training and IT."



*Photos:
Consulate of
the Sultanate
of Oman*

More EVENTS
reports online at
indiplomacy.com

COMMUNIQUÉ

New Uzbekistan - New Elections in December

President Mirziyoyev has taken steps for governance reforms and the upcoming parliamentary elections is an important part of this reform process



The Oliy Majlis (Parliament of Uzbekistan) in capital Tashkent

Uzbekistan will hold its parliamentary elections on 22 December 2019, the first to be held under President Shavkat Mirziyoyev under the motto "New Uzbekistan-New Elections". Over 700 international observers from 50 countries and international organisations will observe five political parties contest the seats in the Legislative Assembly of the Uzbek Parliament. These elections will also be held under a substantially revised legal framework that may provide for a more competitive electoral climate. They are an opportunity to propel the nation forward on the path to democratic transition and begin the realisation of the nation's great potential.

The OSCE (Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe) Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) plans to send 300 observers who will be

stationed in all Uzbekistan's provinces at the majority of polling stations, and meet with representatives of the five political parties participating in the elections.

Authorities are expecting 20 million voters, including two million youths who will vote for the first time. Elections for regional, city and district councils will also be held on the same day. Afterwards, the senate (Upper House) will be formed following the elections for the lower house of parliament. The last parliamentary election held in December 2014 saw Uzbekistan Liberal Democratic Party gained 52 seats, Uzbekistan National Revival Democratic Party 36 seats, People's Democratic Party of Uzbekistan 27, Justice Social Democratic Party 20 and Ecological Movement of Uzbekistan 15 seats.