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## President Halimah Yacob's First State Visit to Indonesia Highlighted Cohesion and Co-Dependency in Ties



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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*  
25th February 2020



*Ambassador to Singapore Federative Republic Of Brazil  
H.E. Eugênia Barthelmess*

Ambassador Barthelmess has worked for the Brazilian diplomatic service for the past 31 years.

Prior to being nominated as her country's Ambassador to Singapore, she was the Director for South America at the Ministry of External Relations.

Ambassador Barthelmess has Bachelor's and Master's degrees in Literature. She is married and has one daughter.



*Ambassador to Singapore Republic of Panama  
H.E. Luis Alberto Melo Moran*

Mr Luis Alberto Melo was Partner and Director of Business Development at Consensus Consultores, a consulting firm specialized in strategic acquisitions, energy and telecommunications.

Prior to Consensus Consultores, Mr Melo served as Plenipotentiary Ambassador in the Panama Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and as Executive Assistant to the President of Panama, Martin Torrijos.

Mr Melo graduated from the Latin American University of Science and Technology in Panama with a Bachelor's degree in Business Administration, and has a Master's degree in Government.

## 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.**





## VISITS

## State

# Singapore and Indonesia: Old Friends and Neighbours

Digital economy, education and security issues ranked high in the agenda of President Halimah's first State visit to Indonesia



**B**ilateral ties between Singapore and Indonesia have been strong for decades now, owing to an excellent relationship of trust and communication between the two members of the ASEAN economies. The deep, multi-faceted and forward-looking relationship was further enhanced by Singapore President Halimah Yacob's recent visit to Indonesia, from the 3rd to 6th of February 2020. Not only was this her first visit to the country, it was also the first official visit by a Singapore head of state to the archipelago in eight years. The President was accompanied by Singapore's Minister for Culture, Community and Youth, Ms Grace Fu, and Mr Sam Tan, Minister of State, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Social and Family Development.

President Halimah began her visit in Jakarta, where she met President Joko Widodo. In their meeting, President Widodo said, "Ibu Halimah and I agreed to increase cooperation in mutually beneficial areas. Not only in education, but also investments, people-to-people relations and human resource development." This



At Istana Bogor (top): Bilateral meeting between Singapore and Indonesia senior officials. (Above): President Joko Widodo and Mdm Iriana with President Halimah Yacob and Mr Mohammed Abdullah Alhabshee (Source: MCI)

was followed by a sojourn in Yogyakarta. Following were some of the main highlights during the President's visit.

On the economic front, Singapore has been Indonesia's largest investor since 2014. The two share close trade and investment ties with bilateral trade amounting to \$65 billion in 2018, and this figure seems to be on a steadily growing trend. Given the increasing relevance of cloud computing and artificial intelligence in operations across diverse sectors, both presidents affirmed the robust economic cooperation and agreed on the tremendous potential for

collaboration in upcoming, growing areas such as the digital economy and Industry 4.0 as a means to stay relevant and updated in a period of extensive globalisation. The concept of upgrading skills to meet the requirements of a booming fourth industrial revolution was accentuated as the President witnessed a training programme conducted under a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between Singapore Polytechnic and the Indonesian Ministry of Industry (MOI). This human resource development strategy will enhance the capabilities of the Indonesian polytechnic staff to meet the evolving manpower needs by upgrading their technical knowledge.

The stable and flourishing trade and investment environment was enhanced by the ratification of the updated Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Indonesia and the Government of the Republic of Singapore for the Elimination of...

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(From left): • Avoidance of Double Taxation Agreement updated by Second Minister for Finance Indranee Rajah and Indonesian Finance Minister Sri Mulyani Indrawati • Indonesian Vice President Ma'ruf Amin calls on Singapore President Halimah Yacob • Stopover at the Singapore International Foundation's Occupational Therapy for Children with Special Needs Project in Jakarta. (Sources: MCI & Istana.gov.sg)



## VISITS

## UK Foreign Secretary Raab on Working Visit to Singapore

UK First Secretary of State and Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs Dominic Raab was in Singapore met Minister for Foreign Affairs, Dr Vivian Balakrishnan, over breakfast on 10th February 2020. (pictured above right). They took stock of the excellent and multi-faceted relationship between Singapore and the UK, and acknowledged the importance of ensuring trade and business continuity between both countries as the UK works out its relationship with the European Union. They also discussed ways to enhance cooperation, including in the



(Source: Singapore MFA)

area of the digital economy. In addition, they exchanged views on regional and international developments, and reiterated the commitment of both countries to multilateralism, free trade and sustainable development.

Foreign Secretary Raab also made separate calls on Deputy Prime Minister Heng Swee Keat and Minister for Trade and Industry Chan Chun Sing during the same day. As part of his visit Foreign Secretary Raab visited Tempeh Reservoir and the Rolls Royce Corporate Lab at NTU.

## Mary Seet-Cheng: Singapore's Non-Resident HC to Fiji and the Pacific Islands Forum

Singapore has appointed Mrs Mary Seet-Cheng as country's Non-Resident High Commissioner to Fiji and the Pacific Islands Forum. She was a diplomat in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Singapore from 1973 to 1997. She served in Canberra, London and Brussels Missions. As Ambassador in Brussels, she was concurrently accredited to Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg, the European Commission, and the Holy See. Mrs Seet-Cheng had also held several senior appointments in the Ministry, covering a wide range of portfolios. In 2007, she was appointed Singapore's Non-Resident Ambassador to the Republic of Cuba and Republic of Panama.



SMS Dr Maliki with Governor Fachrori in Jambi City. (Source Dr Maliki FB)

Senior Minister of State (SMS), Ministry of Defence and Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Dr Mohamad Maliki Bin Osman visited Jambi City and Pekanbaru from 10th to 13th February 2020. The visit is part of Singapore's continued efforts to expand cooperation and deepen ties with Indonesia at the regional level.

SMS Maliki spent the first two days of his visit in Jambi City where he met Jambi's Governor Fachrori Umar, Jambi City's Mayor Syarif Fasha, Jambi Provincial Legislative Council's (DPRD) Deputy Speakers Burhanuddin and Rocky Candra as well as members of the Jambi DPRD.

According to a Singapore Ministry of Foreign Affairs media release they discussed ways to

## Regional Outreach: Jambi City and Pekanbaru in February

Visit by SMS Dr Mohamad Maliki Bin Osman to the two cities in the Jambi and Riau Provinces is part of Singapore's ongoing regional outreach programme

deepen cooperation in areas such as human resource development, tourism, and trade and investment. SMS Maliki reaffirmed Singapore's commitment to contribute to Jambi's development, and welcomed Jambi officials to continue participating in our Singapore Cooperation Programme. They also exchanged views on municipal governance, skills training, tourism promotion, and smart city development. SMS Maliki also engaged with local business leaders, faculty members and students of the Sultan Thaha Saifuddin State Islamic University, and alumni of the Singapore Cooperation Programme. At the University, he spoke about Singapore's education system, inter-faith cohesion, and opportunities for academic exchanges.

SMS Maliki wrapped up his visit to Jambi City by meeting local business leaders to discuss ways in which the business communities of both sides can work together to explore trade and investment opportunities.

### Pekanbaru Meeting

In Pekanbaru, SMS Maliki met Riau's Governor Syamsuar and Vice Mayor Ayat Cahyadi as well as Pekanbaru's Mayor Firdaus. They exchanged views on domestic developments, and reaffirmed their commitment to do more together in mutually-beneficial areas, such as tackling environmental

challenges, promoting tourism and people-to-people exchanges, and exploring trade and investment opportunities. SMS Maliki also encouraged Riau officials to continue making study visits to Singapore under our Singapore Cooperation Programme to exchange views and share best practices on issues of mutual interest. He also met leaders of local Islamic organisations and exchanged views with leaders of the local chapters of Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama on domestic developments, understanding and managing radicalism, promoting religious tolerance and cohesion, and strengthening educational cooperation between Singapore and Riau.



SMS Dr Maliki presenting a painting by Ng Siang Hoi, from Very Special Arts Singapore Ltd (VSA), to Governor Syamsuar, who was a participant of the RISING Fellowship. (Source: Dr Maliki FB)



## SR Nathan Fellowship Visit of CPV Chairman Phan Dinh Trac

Chairman of the Communist Party of Vietnam (CPV) Commission for Internal Affairs and Member of the CPV Central Committee Secretariat, Mr Phan Dinh Trac, called on Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong (pictured right) on 20th February 2020. Chairman Trac is visiting Singapore under the S R Nathan Fellowship. A Singapore Ministry of Foreign Affairs release reported PM Lee and Chairman Trac reaffirmed the excellent bilateral ties between Singapore and Vietnam, and agreed there was scope to expand cooperation as Strategic Partners. PM Lee said that Singapore will support Vietnam, which is the Chair of ASEAN this year, to deepen ASEAN integration and build a stronger ASEAN Community. The Prime Minister also emphasised the importance of regional cooperation for the long-term interests of ASEAN, and also in dealing with immediate challenges like the COVID-19 outbreak.



anti-corruption, and people-to-people relations. Chairman Trac also received a briefing by the Attorney-General's Chambers and met Attorney-General Lucien Wong.



(Source: Singapore MFA)

Chairman Trac also called on Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Finance Heng Swee Keat (pictured above right) and the two discussed ways to strengthen bilateral cooperation in areas of mutual interest such as in trade, investment,

**About S R Nathan Fellowship:** This is a high-level programme launched in November 2012 where foreign leaders, prominent personalities and opinion shapers are invited to Singapore to exchange ideas and experiences on important issues with Singapore leaders and senior government officials.

## LATEST COVID-19 Outbreak



## MFA Briefing to Diplomatic Corps

What measures are being taken to manage the outbreak.

On 9th March 2020, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Permanent Secretary, Chee Wee Kiong, issued a briefing to the diplomatic corps to reaffirm Singapore's preparedness to handle COVID-19. In the briefing, Mr Chee outlined the actions taken to manage the outbreak which include the Multi-Ministry Taskforce, stringent surveillance for the virus among predisposed patients and rigorous isolation, containment, and contact tracing measures. Mr Chee reinforced the role of Singapore as a responsible global citizen with a transparent, rational approach and addressed the need to keep both domestic and international stakeholders in the loop. He also stressed on Singapore's commitment to work closely with

the World Health Organization, international health authorities and foreign.

In the briefing it was highlighted that Singapore will share information in a timely and transparent manner with both domestic and international stakeholders. Mr Chee said, "COVID-19 is a global issue, because we live in a highly interconnected world and infectious diseases do not respect borders. Every country remains vulnerable to epidemics and emergencies, regardless of the maturity of their health systems. Singapore is committed to doing its part as a member of the global community, working in close partnership with the WHO, international health authorities and foreign counterparts."

## ASEAN-China Meeting on COVID-19

Minister for Foreign Affairs Dr Vivian Balakrishnan attended a Special Meeting of the ASEAN Coordinating Council and the Special ASEAN-China Foreign Ministers' Meeting in Vientiane, Lao People's Democratic Republic on 20 February 2020 that focused on the regional response to the outbreak of coronavirus disease (COVID-19). Following the meetings, Dr Balakrishnan was interviewed for his views by CNA Senior Correspondent May Wong. He said the meetings were very timely and that the next two to three weeks will be very critical and will depend on the progression of the COVID-19 outbreak. He also pointed out how it is a "hyper-connected world" and "It allowed us to meet and share in a very open, candid, and sincere way: the situation, our assessments of the risk, and what needs to be done. And also, where appropriate, to help to get a more coherent response across the region... not just in terms of travel restrictions, but also in terms of best practices of what needs to be done, make predictions on what may happen in other countries on the basis of experience in countries that are already dealing with this." A major concern he has was that given the diversity in Southeast Asia and differing levels of sophistication of healthcare systems: "It would be dreadful if one had an epidemic or pandemic that could catch alight in countries whose healthcare systems were much less able to cope."

## COVID-19 Aid to Myanmar



(Source: Singapore MFA)

Singapore Ambassador to Myanmar Vanessa Chan (left), handing over Singapore's contributions to Dr Htay Htay Tin (right) at the airport

A press statement from Singapore's Ministry of Foreign Affairs said in response to a request from the Myanmar Ministry of Health and Sports, the Singapore Government has contributed 3,000 diagnostic tests and two polymerase chain reaction (PCR) machines for the detection of the 2019 novel coronavirus (COVID-19). Ambassador to Myanmar, Ms Vanessa Chan, handed over the supplies to Director of Myanmar National Health Laboratory Dr Htay Htay Tin today, at Yangon International Airport on 4th March 2020.

## COMMUNIQUÉ

# Hollandse School Singapore's 100-Year Anniversary

The school is the largest Dutch International Primary Curriculum school abroad. Singapore's Foreign Minister Dr Vivian Balakrishnan gave some interesting insights into Dutch history and presence in Singapore

**A**mong the dignitaries at the Hollandse School Singapore's 100-Year Anniversary Celebrations at the National Museum of Singapore on 13th February 2020 included Professor Jan Peter Balkenende, former Prime Minister of the Netherlands, the Ambassador of the Netherlands to Singapore, HE Margriet Vonno and, of course, Principal Meino Meines.



The Hollandse School plans to carry on with more celebrations that will be spread over 100 days. At the Singapore National Museum an immersive and interactive installation that features old and new images of the Hollandse School in Singapore projected on to a life sized digital kaleidoscope will continue till 29th March 2020.



(From left): Former Dutch Prime Minister Professor Jan Peter Balkenende, Foreign Minister Dr Vivian Balakrishnan, Dutch Ambassador to Singapore Margriet Vonno, and HSL Principal Meino Meines at the National Museum exhibition honouring Hollandse School in Singapore's centenary entitled "Capturing a Century" (Source: Dr V. Balakrishnan FB)

Guest of Honour, Foreign Minister Dr Vivian Balakrishnan, in his speech at the ceremony recognised what an achievement the 100-year mark was for the school and how many well known Dutch companies such as ABN-AMRO, Heineken, Philips, Royal Dutch Shell have been in this part of the world. He also paid tribute to Dr Albert Winsemius who played a significant role in helping shaped the island's economy to what it is today: "It is worth reflecting that this is also why so many people from the Netherlands are here, and companies from the Netherlands are here. It is also why you have children here, and why your families are settled down here." He rounded off his address by saying he wanted to make a "little political point" (see accompanying box story).

*"We are small countries that face multiple challenges. We are multicultural, and believe in multilateralism and free trade. There is also almost a communitarian instinct, which is somewhat unique. I will illustrate this using the example of the windmill. While I was in the Netherlands, I realised that if all your windmills did were to pump water out of your garden to your neighbour's garden, it would not solve the existential challenge of having one third of your land below sea level. It is only because all of you work collectively as one successful community that the water is pumped from one place to the next, until you reach the sea. Very few people have faced such an existential challenge over so many centuries and have had to evolve this communitarian reflex. That is what makes the Dutch special in our eyes."*

*We are small – a tropical island facing the impact of climate change. We are also a multicultural political entity that has to trade and relate with great big superpowers all over the world. We are also facing major tectonic shifts politically and economically. That is why the Netherlands remains an inspiration and why I believe you will always be welcome here."*

## International French School Re-Launches

The International French School Singapore or IFS (formerly Lycée Français de Singapour), was officially re-launched by Foreign Minister Dr Vivian Balakrishnan and France's Ambassador in Singapore HE Mr Marc Abensour

**P**resident of IFS, Mr Pierre Chanteclair, in his welcome address at its campus in ANg Mo Kio Avenue 3, said the changing from Lycée Français de Singapour to IFS was a "natural milestone" and that: "For many years, we have been welcoming more than 40 nationalities among our students. We are not becoming an international school today; we have always been one." The growth in the student's population launched the second phase of the school's extension to enable IFS to accommodate more than 4,000 children from 2023 onwards.

President Chanteclair also thanked the Singaporean government and its related administration for its continuous support: "A special mention to the Economic Development Board teams who have been our partners for a long time and have always provided us with the best advice on our continuous journey to becoming a great international school in Singapore." He also expressed his appreciation for

Minister Dr Vivian Balakrishnan and Ambassador Marc Abensour for officiating at the event. President Chanteclair said, "Minister Balakrishnan, we sincerely appreciate your presence today. We are proud to be contributing to the international acclaimed excellence of the Singapore educational environment."

Continuing in a similar vein, he said, "Mr Ambassador Marc Abensour, thank you for your strong and continuous support. Together with you team, you are playing a key role in the development of our school."

IFS Principal Mr Christian Soulard said: "Singapore continues to be among the world leaders in education, and the relaunched IFS will support the twinned development of the French Curriculum in ASEAN."



(From left) IFS President Mr Pierre Chanteclair, Dr Vivian Balakrishnan, Minister for Foreign Affairs, H.E. Marc Abensour, Ambassador of France to Singapore and IFS Principal Mr Christian Soulard, at the official launch ceremony for The International French School Singapore



# Sri Lanka's 72nd Independence Day and 50th Anniversary of Diplomatic Ties with Singapore

6th February 2020

Shangri-La Hotel Singapore Island Ballroom

Sri Lanka also marks 50 years of diplomatic relations this year when it celebrated its 72nd Independence Day with guest of honour, the Singapore government's representative for the occasion, Dr Janil Puthuchery, Senior Minister of State Ministry of Transport and Ministry of Communications and Information. He was accompanied by his parliamentary colleagues Mr Sitoh Yih Pin and Mr Lim Biow Chuan. Amongst the distinguished guests was also Singapore's Non-Resident High Commissioner to Sri Lanka, HE Mr Chandra Das. They were all invited on stage to light the traditional oil lamp to mark the auspicious occasion.

This was followed by the unveiling of the Singapore-Sri Lanka 50th Anniversary logo; the High Commissioner also made an announcement that there will be several events held throughout the year to celebrate the warm and close friendships between both countries and peoples share. She also recalled how the relationship between both countries has been on "an upward trajectory", especially in the past few years which included the official visit of Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong to Sri Lanka in 2018 and the most recent visit by Senior Minister Tharman Shanmugam in January this year at the invitation of the President of Sri Lanka. Singapore at present is the second largest investor in Sri Lanka, investing more than US\$615 million between 2005 and 2017 with about 100 Singapore businesses operating there.



SMS Dr Puthuchery in his address paid tribute to Sri Lanka for all its achievements and noted that even though last year was a challenging one it was able to recover (from the Easter Sunday attacks) and is a testament to the resilience and resolve of the Sri Lankan people to overcome adversity and reinforce the country's sense of social unity.

The evening ended on a high note as the High Commission had flown in a Sri Lankan masterchef (who was also here for a Sri Lankan food festival) and famous dance troupe for some stunning cultural and contemporary performances that made the celebrations even more memorable.

