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## Intensifying Cooperation on Innovation



Congenial atmosphere - French President Hollande (right) calling on PM Lee  
(Photo credit: Ministry of Communications and Information)

While reaffirming the increasingly warm relations and bilateral ties between the Republic of Singapore and the Republic of France during the State Visit of President François Hollande to Singapore from 26 to 27 March 2017, both President Hollande and Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong also agreed to intensify cooperation on innovation between the two countries. Both countries have prioritised the strengthening of their respective innovation ecosystems, including programmes to promote research and development as well as support entrepreneurship in innovative sectors.

President Holland and Prime Minister Lee welcomed the organisation of the France-

Singapore Innovation Forum during the State Visit to advance bilateral cooperation and shared the view that the two countries have much to learn from each other's experience and approach to foster innovation. President Hollande and Prime Minister Lee agreed to declare 2018 as the France-Singapore Year of Innovation.

As reflected in the Joint Declaration on Strategic Partnership between France and Singapore issued in October 2012, both countries enjoy good cooperation in the defence, cybersecurity, economic, education and research, as well as cultural sectors, based on shared interests and a common global vision.

## Brazilian Embassy Puts in Perspective Issue of Meat Products Safety Measures

The Ambassador of Brazil in Singapore, HE Flávio S. Damico, has reacted promptly to an article 'Brazil Hit by Massive Tainted Meat Scandal', published by *The Strait Times*, on 20th March 2017.



Addressing the issues raised by the article this is what the Brazilian Embassy has to say:

- Being a leading exporter of meat and meat products to over 150 destinations Brazil has one of the best sanitary compliance systems in the world and its food safety and inspection system is in constant contact with and under supervision by the sanitary service of the importing countries
- Brazilian states are required to be open to receiving auditing missions from other countries. As a matter of fact, teams from Singapore's AVA and from the European Union are currently in Brazil on a previously scheduled inspection mission
- In order to assess Brazilian exports it is worth noting that out of 853,000 shipments of meat and meat products sent abroad in 2016, only 184 were rejected (0.2%), the majority of which were due to bureaucratic issues.

## Singapore Not At Risk

The Ambassador went on to stress that the ongoing investigations are restricted to a very small part of the meat and poultry supply chain in Brazil. Of the more than 11,000 employees in the Ministry of Agriculture only 33 individuals are being investigated and of the 4,837 Brazilian slaughterhouses and meat manufacturing plants only 21 were implicated. Corrective measures have been undertaken and the Brazilian Ambassador reassured readers that there is "no risk to consumers" in Singapore as the 21 facilities under investigation do not export to the island.

He rounded off by saying that Brazil, "As a main supplier of food and meat products is aware of its responsibilities towards consumers and will spare no efforts in providing the necessary clarifications to allay the concerns of the public."



ARKHANGELSK • RUSSIA • 2017



Sam Tan, Minister of State in the Prime Minister's Office and Ministry of Manpower, is currently in Russia for the 4th International Arctic Forum from 28 March to 1 April 2017. Minister Tan delivered remarks at the opening session of the Forum on 28th March and once again on 29th March

at the plenary session—"The Arctic: Territory of Transport Opportunities".

Organised by the Russian State Commission for Arctic Development, The International Arctic Forum brings together international organisations, governments and the scientific and business

communities to discuss developments in the Arctic. Officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and representatives from the Nanyang Technological University and the National University of Singapore, are accompanying MOS Tan on the tour.



## National Celebrations



### Bangladesh Independence and National Day

Bangladesh celebrated its 46th birthday in style at the Shangri La Hotel in Singapore with special guest Dr. Lam Pin Min, Minister of State, Ministry of Health, joining in the festivities at the invitation of the Bangladeshi High Commissioner to Singapore, His Excellency Mustafizur Rahman.



### Pakistan Republic Day

Pakistan celebrated its Republic Day on 23 March 2017 at the Orchard Hotel in Singapore with Guest-of-Honour Mr Chee Hong Tat, Minister of State, Ministry of Communications and Information & Ministry of Health, in attendance. Pakistani High Commissioner, His Excellency Nasrullah Khan, and Minister Chee both re-affirmed the two nations' strong bilateral ties with emphasis on increased trade and investment between the two nations.

## COMMUNIQUÉ



### Thai Garden in the Garden City

It was clearly a runaway success—judging from the happy, smiling faces of the who's who in Singapore that congregated on the evening of 25 March 2017 at the spanking new garden in the Thai Embassy grounds.

The Music in the Garden Concert, performed by the Royal Thai Naval Academy Band, was a befitting event celebrating the launch of the new Embassy Garden on Orchard Road. Guest-of-Honour Mr. Peter Tan,

Deputy Secretary, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Singapore, was seen in animated conversation with other distinguished guests—amongst them Mr. Panote Sirivadhanabhakdi, Board of Directors, Thai Beverage PCL, who sponsored the event, and RADM Bundith Chandarodvong, Deputy Commandant, Royal Thai Naval Academy.

Over 450 guests attended the prestigious event where His Excellency

*Continued next page...*

## Aust FM Bishop Delivers Fullerton Lecture and Launches Landing Pad



A warm welcome by PM Lee Hsien Loong for Australia's Minister for Foreign Affairs, Julie Bishop. (Photo credit: Ministry of Communications and Information)

During Australia's Minister for Foreign Affairs Julie Bishop's 2-day visit (13th - 14th March 2017) to Singapore she had reaffirmed the "excellent relations" between Singapore and Australia, and was especially pleased to note the progress made by the implementation of the Singapore-Australia Comprehensive Strategic Partnership (CSP).

One outcome of the CSP was the launching of the Landing Pad for Australian start-ups at **BASH (Building Amazing Startups Here)** in the morning of 13th March 2017; she co-launched it with Singapore's Minister for Trade and Industry S Iswaran. In the evening she delivered the 28th International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) Fullerton Lecture on "Change and uncertainty in the Indo-Pacific – strategic challenges and opportunities for Australia."

She had also met Singapore's Foreign Minister Dr Vivian Balakrishnan for lunch where both Ministers exchanged views on recent regional and international developments. Minister Bishop called on Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong at the Istana in the afternoon, where they had a discussion on geo-political developments and where she also briefed PM Lee on developments in Australia.

Julie Bishop is also the Deputy Leader of the Liberal Party and has served as the Member for Curtin, Western Australia in the House of Representatives since 1998.

### Landing at BASH

At the BASH launch, the Australian Minister said in her speech that the establishment of the CSP (in May 2016) focused on greater security and defence collaboration, deeper economic and trade and investment ties, a focus on scientific and research and innovation collaboration, and strong people-to-people links, whether it be in education or tourism or culture or beyond. She said, "At about the same time the Australian Government also established a National Innovation and Science Agenda. As part of that agenda we decided to set up these landing pads around the world to give a focus to the enterprising entrepreneurial spirit of so many creative and innovative young Australians. These landing pads have been

*As part of (the Australian) National Innovation and Science Agenda we decided to set up these landing pads around the world to give a focus to the enterprising entrepreneurial spirit of so many creative and innovative young Australians. These landing pads have been established in San Francisco, Shanghai, Tel Aviv, in Berlin and now here in Singapore. Singapore was an obvious choice for us."*

- Aust Foreign Minister Julie Bishop on BASH (Building Amazing Startups Here)

established in San Francisco, Shanghai, Tel Aviv, in Berlin and now here in Singapore. Singapore was an obvious choice for us." She explained that apart from close ties, the island republic is also a gateway into Asia. She also said, "Australians are very creative people. The Martin Prosperity Institute (Canada) puts out an annual Creativity Index and Australia was judged against a range of criteria the most creative nation on earth. So our people are risk takers, they are innovative, they are creative, and they need an outlet beyond Australia for their ideas. Here in Singapore we will see many Australians meet up with other like-minded people and who knows what can come from this collaboration. It's all about competition, all about cooperation, collaboration and creativity."

### Fullerton Message

The Minister's Fullerton Lecture discussed a number of 'disruptive' factors reshaping strategic and economic behaviour in the region. She considered the characteristics of a liberal rules-based order and why it is in the interest of Australia and the Indo-Pacific region to support and strengthen such an order in this time of uncertainty.

Australia is in the midst of formulating its Foreign Policy White Paper, the country's first since 2003 by mid-2017. The White Paper will present a framework to guide Australia's foreign policy over the next decade at a time of immense strategic and economic change throughout the Indo-Pacific.



To view the video of her talk at the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) web page click [here](#). The IISS is the organiser of the Fullerton Lecture and is a world-leading authority on global security, political risk and military conflict. To view the video directly on Youtube click [here](#).

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Thongchai Chasawath, Ambassador of Thailand to Singapore, delivered his welcome address and presented tokens of appreciation to the Guest-of-Honour, and RADM Chandarodvong.

The Thai Embassy in Singapore reveals that in the first quarter of 2017 (January-March), the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) projects that Thailand will welcome 9.2 million international visitors and generate 490 billion Baht (US\$14 billion), representing a year-on-year increase of 2 per cent and 7 per cent,

respectively. Meanwhile, domestic tourism is expected to yield 32.5 million trips and 240 billion Baht (US\$6.8 billion), a year-on-year growth of 8 per cent and 12 per cent, respectively.



## New Ambassadors

### HE Mohamed Abulkheir Ambassador of the Arab Republic of Egypt



It has been about five months since the 50-year old career diplomat has settled down in Singapore. It has been a smooth transition for HE Mohamed Abulkheir who has more than a passing resemblance to Daniel Craig, the actor who is the current star of the James Bond films fame. Indeed, we found the Egyptian diplomat's demeanour to be just as suave and he was as dapper, in an immaculate suit, as the screen British spy, along with a playful hint of humour in his eyes.

#### Start in diplomacy

"My father is a retired ambassador and together with my late mother they had been trying to convince me to join the Foreign Service since high school. Right up till my first year in university (where I majored in economics) I was against it. Partly it is a reaction to the lifestyle I underwent travelling with them round the world. But apparently something resonated very deep inside me about diplomacy when my Cairo University colleagues who studied economics with me convinced me to go into Foreign Service. They had graduated and experienced first hand working in the Foreign Service themselves."

"When I joined, as they say, I landed running. Everything I had absorbed from my family life, from my father, was called into play as my first posting was in Tunisia from 1992 to 1996. It was a very, very interesting time to be there as the Oslo Accords were being worked out, I witnessed the whole negotiations from Tunisia where the Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO) was based until the Palestinians moved from there to the Occupied Territories in Palestine. After that I went back to Cairo, to the European Sector for two years."

His work then included overseeing the whole relationship with Europe and the security organisations there such as NATO. Following that he was posted to Washington DC from 1998 to 2003. "Washington was another very rich experience as I came when President Bill Clinton was being impeached, then the 2000 presidential election controversy between Al Gore and George W Bush, then there was 9/11..."

So they were interesting times especially since I was handling congressional affairs on the House side - basically lobbying US Congress promoting and defending Egypt's interests. After that I went back to Cairo for three years serving in the Foreign Minister's Office handling US-Egyptian affairs during rather challenging times as we had issues with the US administration at that time."

Then he went to Geneva for four years (2006 -2010) practicing "multi-lateral diplomacy" taking part in the World Trade Organisation (WTO) Doha Round negotiations. He smiled recalling that period and explained, "You might say multi-lateral diplomacy such as this has its own charms and adrenalin rush. But you work so hard for so many years and sometimes the advancement is (he opens a one-inch space between his thumb and index finger) that big."

On the whole though looking back, he considers himself very fortunate to have served in the Foreign Ministry's top bi-lateral and multi-lateral posts. Richer (in experience) and more interesting postings were in store ahead in his career as his next foreign posting was as Deputy Ambassador of the Egyptian embassy in Rabat, Morocco for three years. "The embassy was very active with a high level of bilateral relations and there were many delegations coming and going." The stint contributed greatly to his career. He returned to Cairo spending two years there before coming to Singapore.

"The first year in 2014 as Deputy Assistant Foreign Minister in charge of Arab Mashreq Affairs basically overseeing four countries: Syria, Iraq, Lebanon and Jordan. That was quite intense. The second year I was Deputy Assistant Foreign Minister for UN Specialised Agencies (such as UNESCO, ILO, WHO etc). It was back to multi-lateral diplomacy. I was at first a bit hesitant but I was persuaded by the Assistant Minister of Multi-lateral Affairs and it proved to be quite a rich experience."

**ND: You bring a wealth of experience and with you in charge. How is the status of Singapore - Egypt relations as of now and where you would like to bring it to in the next few years?**

**MA:** The relations are very warm especially between people-to-people and government-to-government fronts. There is a great potential to translate these warm relationships to something more concrete on the ground. Things are happening but there is potential for so much more.

In 2015, President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi was on a very successful visit to Singapore that brought relations to a new level. There was greater cooperation in different fields and the momentum was further energised by the visit of President Tony Tan to Egypt in 2016. Both our respective ambassadors have been working very hard to capitalise on those visits.

The potential is there in the private sector for investments and economic cooperation especially opportunities in the Suez Canal Economic Zone. We have passed new investment laws giving it more independence and fast tracking of projects and incentives for investments. The Zone benefits from its unique geographic location and businesses can benefit from Egypt's free trade agreements such as COMESA (the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa), AGADIR and the EU.

**ND: Let's talk about investments...**

**MA:** Yes, there's a lot of interest from here in Egypt... not for activities in Egypt alone but also the region from an Egypt based presence. The Egyptian market is a big potential... Egyptians are great consumers of everything... So the private sector relationship is definitely going to be based on mutual gains. It's always going to be a win-win situation.

The potential that Egypt has as an Egyptian market and in the Suez Canal Zone is immense for Singaporean companies... especially now, at a time when there is some kind of uncertainty vis-a-vis the world economy. While bearing in mind that Singaporean companies always prefer their own region because they know the culture... the people... the laws... they know everything about it, Egypt for Singapore is not a risk... but a new market with new laws... a new culture... new people with a great potential. It's not easy, but now since Singaporean companies are looking more and more at Egypt it is a great achievement, especially in light of the success stories achieved thus far by companies like OLAM in Agriculture and PIL in logistics and others... and here we are working hard to connect them to companies there, whether it is for trade or investment or even co-operation in something like education.

**ND: What is happening on the education front?**

**MA:** There is the Government-to-Government



**“You might say multi-lateral diplomacy such as this has its own charms and adrenalin rush. But you work so hard for so many years and sometimes the advancement is that big.”**

aspect that we are working on to enhance the co-operation by which Egypt can benefit from Singapore's extraordinary experience in education, and there is also the private-to-private sector aspect. There's a Singaporean company who is looking at setting up an academy there for vocational training. I believe it would be highly beneficial to both sides. In this case, the academy's administration would be handled by Singaporean officials and the rest of the team would be made up of Egyptians and that would be good for the transfer of know-how as well. The other thing is that in Egypt we do need institutes like this in order to train our people to address the needs of the labour market in different fields.

We have many programmes and projects in Egypt that are implemented by the UN and other specialised agencies and these do have a training component. My vision is that if there's an academy such as this in Egypt it's going to be very successful because it has the Singapore brand name. We can also benefit from this academy by training those who are going to be trained through projects implemented by the UN and specialized agencies. So instead of having to keep a certain amount in dollars aside for the money allocated for the training component in the UN projects, this we can do this right here in Egypt... at a lower cost.

We also have an interest from Egyptian private sector educators and investors to visit Singapore to study the possibility establishing a school in Egypt adopting the Singaporean system, and also establishing a vocational training institute in accordance with Singaporean Standards. The Embassy is working on both those aspects.

#### **ND: What is trade like between Egypt and Singapore?**

**MA:** We are working hard to encourage more trade between the two countries. It's not very much right now but there is enormous potential. The Singapore embassy in Egypt is working very hard and I am trying to compete with it here! (He smiles broadly). We are working hard because of our conviction and dedication to take our ties forward. This is very important because both will benefit from this. These warm feelings between Egypt and Singapore are bringing bilateral relations closer.

One of the very important things taken up during President El Sisi's visit here was the matter of water de-salinization. And, Singapore has very advanced technology in this.

I have visited the (Hyflux) plant, it's very impressive. But what's important too, is that this technology is not only critical in providing potable water for the people; it also provides security and peace amongst nations. Almost two decades ago there was an analysis that predicted conflict in the

Middle East would be over water. And now you have this technology for water... that scenario is now completely out of the equation.

We are also looking into port management and operation in Egypt. On the Suez Canal Zone we have many ports so we are looking for cooperation in creating a master vision for Egyptian ports and how they can complement each other with the assistance of Singapore. There is also the area of training Egyptian port officials in Singapore that we are looking on enhancing, within our efforts to expand the cooperation in the field of vocational training.

#### **ND: Egypt has been considered an excellent tourism product. How do you want to enhance the numbers of visitors from Singapore.**

**MA:** There are two primary potential areas in Egypt's tourism portfolio:

1. Its Pharonic history... the Valley of Kings... the Pharonic temples... the pyramids and museum in Cairo, the relevant cruises between Luxor and Aswan.

2. Beaches, resorts and diving by the Red Sea. The beaches are not such a huge attraction for Singaporeans, because there are already many in this region, making the distance and air fares costs very high by comparison. What does interest Singapore travelers is the Pharonic heritage of Egypt.

There's a third potential as we see it - and this is specifically between Egypt and Singapore - is in a special field for cooperation: the Al - Azhar University which disseminates the tenets of the Islamic faith. It is leading the world in countering the destructive ideology of extremists, which is a huge challenge for many countries. This university is playing a very important role and we already have around 250 Singapore students studying there. Singapore itself is a good model for tolerance as it has 10 major different religions existing harmoniously here side by side. So we would like to look at tourism for Islamic sites because some Singaporean students have also shown an interest in this area.

#### **ND: Are you planning any promotional activities, events etc here in Singapore?**

**MA:** We are looking at an exhibition here of Egyptian products in 2017, while promoting Tourism on the margins. Singapore doesn't necessarily import for itself of course, but does so for countries in this region. This is something which we want to tap. I want to also diversify the product range, for example, Egyptian cotton in textiles, bedsheets etc. Some Singaporean companies are interested in importing these to distribute in countries in this region.

#### **ND: For Singaporeans looking to do business with Egypt what should they be mindful of?**



**MA:** There has to be some sort of a bridge between the mentalities of our two peoples and how things are done. Singapore after its Independence has built itself up from a Third to First World country and that is a completely different experience, historically and culturally. Egyptians on the other hand are historically and culturally tied to the Nile. Egyptians always felt the Nile would bring the water and the water was going to bring the agriculture... and there was always this deep sense of security for tomorrow that was brought to them by this. So, while doing business together, we just have to take into consideration the specifics of each one's culture and history.

#### **ND: Egypt has faced a lot of uncertainties...**

**MA:** Egypt, since the days of the Pharos, has always had the fundamentals of the state: the land/borders, the people and the government. Egyptians, since that time, have always had their own distinctive identity, and they have worked hard to preserve this identity, which is what has saved them from very grave circumstances in the recent years. The Egyptians have been conquered throughout their history but have always managed to preserve their identity until today. After one year of Moslem Brotherhood rule, Egyptians came out in millions and spoke out against them, after feeling that their identity and their country is being taken away from them, among those were Egyptians who actually voted for the Moslem brotherhood.

And now, we are a developing country trying to put the economy back on track after two revolutions. The recent devaluation of the Egyptian currency (past regimes were reluctant to do this) was a bold move. While the floating of the new currency did hit us hard initially, we are seeing things settling down. We are in the process of developing our new investment policy, which will take into consideration our reformed economic agenda, that comes in line with the US\$13 billion loan agreement with the IMF. Recent articles published in *The Economist* and the *Financial Times* indicated that the Egyptian Economic reform programme is going in the right direction, it's a matter of time that the economy will pick up.

#### **ND: How have you and the family settled in?**

**MA:** The people have been very warm and welcoming here I feel very comfortable, secure and at home. The ease with which things are done here is wonderful. So it didn't take me much time to adapt to Singapore and the life in Singapore. And for my first time in Asia, I consider myself very lucky to be here as ambassador as my first posting here. My wife is very active in the diplomatic community and my son (16) and daughter (12) too feel comfortable and secure in school here.

**He spent two years in Cairo before coming to Singapore. “The first year in 2014 as Deputy Assistant Foreign Minister in charge of Arab Mashreq Affairs basically overseeing four countries: Syria, Iraq, Lebanon and Jordan. That was quite intense.”**



# IN Diplomacy PHOTO ALBUM



**MARCH 17** HE Rogelio Granguillhome, Ambassador of Mexico called on Dean Jairo Hernandez Milian, Ambassador of Costa Rica as he departs Singapore for a new post. The traditional memento was handed over during the private meeting as time constraints did not allow for the usual farewell luncheon. HE Hernandez expressed to the Mexican ambassador the diplomatic corps' deepest appreciation of his successful tenure here.

**MARCH 16** Call on Senior Minister of State, Prime Minister's Office, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Transport Mrs Josephine Teo by the Dean of the Diplomatic Corps, Ambassador of Costa Rica Jairo Hernandez Milian (*first on extreme left*) and the Vice Dean of the Diplomatic Corps, Ambassador of Switzerland Thomas Kupfer. HE Hernandez said, "It was a very fruitful and productive meeting to exchange discuss issues of mutual interest regarding the Diplomatic Corp in Singapore."



*Photo courtesy of Singapore's Ministry of Foreign Affairs*

**MARCH 15** Mrs Anne Margaret Wightman (*seated third from right*), wife to High Commissioner Wightman of the UK and Ms Christine James, PA to the Ambassador, invited the PAs of all the Embassies for Tea and Cake at Eaton House. A special occasion that brings a sense of community between all levels of the diplomatic corps.





## COLLABORATIONS



(Photo source: United States Embassy in Singapore)

## US-Singapore Summer Exchange Scholarships Open for Applications

On 15th March 2017, Singapore's Ministry of Foreign Affairs announced the US-Singapore Summer Exchange Scholarships are open for applications. The programme is jointly funded by the Government of Singapore and US companies and organisations, namely, Applied Materials, Becton Dickinson, Mastercard and Micron Foundation. Over the course of five years, a total of 50 Singapore and 50 US recipients will receive the scholarship, which will provide funding support for recipients to attend a university summer exchange programme in each other's countries. Each scholarship recipient will receive funding support capped at S\$10,000, which covers tuition/programme fees, accommodation, airfare and a subsistence allowance. Applicants must be Singapore citizens from Singapore universities (National University of Singapore, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore Management University, and Singapore University of Technology and Design) Singapore citizens. For more details click [here](#).

The US-Singapore Summer Exchange Scholarship Programme was announced during Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong's Official Visit to the US from 31 July to 3 August 2016. It commemorates the 50th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Singapore and the US in 1966. The scholarship programme seeks to strengthen relations between the two countries by deepening people-to-people ties, promoting greater interaction and mutual understanding between the next generation of Singaporeans and Americans.

## From the Embassies....

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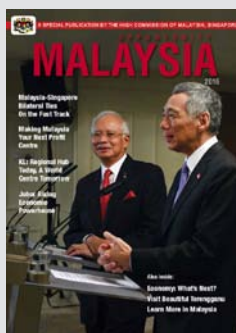
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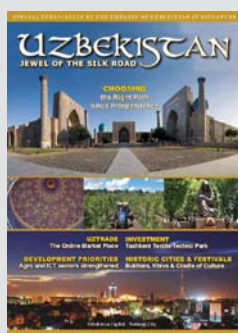
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Diplomacy needs publicity

# IN Diplomacy

MISSION TO COMMUNICATE

Sun Media heard the call from leaders in the diplomatic community who have expressed the need to have “a consolidated source of information to reach more institutions and Singaporeans to highlight the many initiatives undertaken by the embassies and high commissions in Singapore. They need to be given publicity to the many

events... that are currently not in the press.” IN Diplomacy is the first step towards fulfilling such an information gap. To be on our mailing list and to find out how it helps reach the people who matter to you, drop us a line at [edit@sumediaonline.com](mailto:edit@sumediaonline.com)

  
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