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SINGAPORE

VIETNAM-SINGAPORE MILESTONES

PM WONG'S VISIT TO VIETNAM
VIET GEN SEC TO LAM'S VISIT
TO SINGAPORE

SPECIAL REPORT

SAUDI ARABIA AND SINGAPORE
SIGN MOU ESTABLISHING STRATEGIC
PARTNERSHIP COUNCIL

SPECIAL SUPPLEMENTS

WOMEN
IN DIPLOMACY

SAUDI
FOUNDING DAY





A Legacy of Diplomacy and The Singapore Story



02
Honouring Lee Kuan Yew's Diplomatic Achievements and Lasting Impact on Singapore



03
Prime Minister Lawrence Wong Makes Introductory Visit to Hanoi

Vietnamese Sec-Gen To Lam's Visit: Significant Milestone in Bilateral Relationship

04
Vietnam-Singapore Ties on a High Growth Trajectory says Vietnamese Ambassador Tran Phuoc Anh

05
100 Days of Leadership: Ambassador Pratomo on Indonesia's Vision

06
Denmark and Singapore Mark 60 Years of Diplomatic Relations

08
Saudi Arabia and Singapore Sign MOU on Strategic Partnership Council

09
4th Saudi Arabia - Singapore Joint Committee Ministerial Meeting

10
Honouring Heritage: Saudi Founding Day Celebrated in Singapore

12
Saudi Arabia: Embracing Heritage, Shaping the Future: A Vision 2030

Interview with Charge d'Affaires, Mrs Mashael Suliman AlShamari

14 - 15
Ramadan in Saudi Arabia: A Spiritual Tapestry of Faith, Community, and Generosity

17-28

WOMEN IN DIPLOMACY INTERVIEWS



20
Hungary

21
New Zealand

24
Thailand



18
Chile

19
Cuba



22
Pakistan

23
South Africa



24
Thailand



25
Ukraine

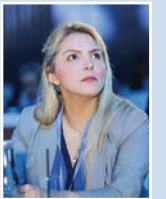
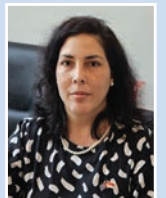
26
Venezuela



AMBASSADORS OF CHANGE

27
AWARE

28
NTUC



Contents

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10



16
A Gift of Dates from Saudi Arabia to Singapore Iftar Celebrations by the Embassy of Saudi Arabia

29
President's Diplomatic Reception

31



30
Farewells and Welcomes

32

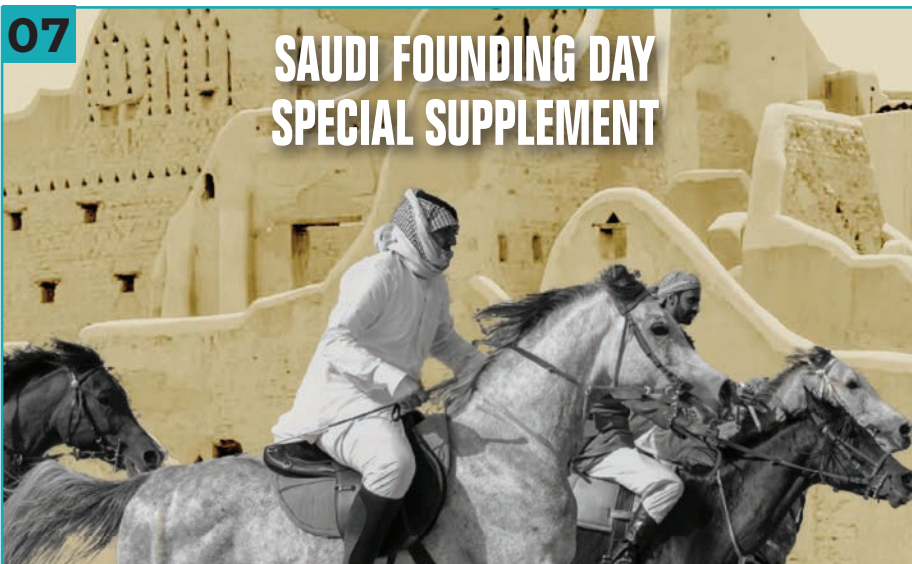


31
National Day Celebrations

32
Cultural Events

07

**SAUDI FOUNDING DAY
SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT**



March

A Month of Celebrations



Welcome to this edition of IN Diplomacy, we bring the round-up of visits, welcomes-farewells and national days.

We begin with Singapore's strengthening ties with Vietnam, marked by Prime Minister Lawrence Wong's visit to Vietnam, following General Secretary To Lam's recent visit to Singapore. We're honored to feature an exclusive interview with the new Vietnamese Ambassador H.E. Tran Phuoc Anh.

In ASEAN news, Indonesia's new government completed its first 100 days and we bring you an interview with Ambassador H.E. Suryo Pratomo who shared valuable insights into Indonesia's vision for the future.

This year, Denmark celebrates 60 years of bilateral ties with Singapore. We're pleased to feature an interview with the Danish Ambassador H.E. Jakob Brix Tange highlighting the enduring friendship between the two nations.

Saudi Arabia and Singapore have elevated their relations to a strategic partnership, following a meeting between the two foreign ministers. We bring you a special report on Saudi Founding Day, featuring an interview with the first female Charge d'Affaires heading the Saudi mission in Singapore.

In honour of International Women's Day, we run a month-long series on our website www.indiplomacy.com "Women in Diplomacy," and we bring you excerpts featuring inspiring interviews with women in diplomacy from around the world featuring H.E. Tamara Lisi Villanueva Fernández (Chile), H.E. Ms. Lisbet Quesada Luna (Cuba), H.E. Judit Pach (Hungary), H.E. Gabrielle Anne Rush (New Zealand), H.E. Rabia Shafiq (Pakistan), H.E. Madipetsane Charlotte Lobe (South Africa), H.E. Ureerat Chareontoh (Thailand), H.E. Kateryna Zelenko (Ukraine) and H.E. Mrs Jessica Maria Lopez Pina (Venezuela). We also feature 'Ambassadors of Change' Corinna Lim (Executive Director of AWARE, the Association of Women for Action and Research) and Yeo Wan Ling (NTUC Assistant Secretary-General and Director for U Women and Family (WAF) & U SME).

Natioinal Days are important events for diplomatic missions. We bring you reports from various diplomatic missions, highlighting their unique traditions and celebrations.

It has been a pleasure putting together this issue, packed with exclusive interviews and celebrations of diplomatic milestones.

We hope you enjoy reading it!



A Legacy of Diplomacy and The Singapore Story



Honouring Lee Kuan Yew's diplomatic achievements and lasting impact on Singapore.

Lee Kuan Yew's foreign policy legacy continues to shape Singapore's global standing. As we mark the 10th anniversary of his passing, we honor his vision and diplomatic acumen. Today, Singapore remains a key player in regional and global affairs, a testament to Lee Kuan Yew's enduring impact on the world stage. His legacy continues to inspire future generations of leaders.

As PM Lawrence Wong said, "The Singapore story is still being written. Together, let's forge a brighter future worthy of the foundation he laid." Let's honor his legacy in action, as we mark SG60 and chart our next chapter."

Prime Minister Lawrence Wong Makes Introductory Visit to Hanoi

Prime Minister and Minister for Finance Lawrence Wong was on an introductory visit to Hanoi, Vietnam from 25 to 26 March, 2025, this was his first visit as a Prime Minister

Prime Minister Wong was received by Vietnam Prime Minister Pham Minh Chinh and was accorded a ceremonial welcome, the two Leaders had a bilateral meeting. Prime Minister Chinh also hosted an Official Dinner in honour of Prime Minister Wong. During their discussions, both Leaders affirmed the excellent bilateral relations, as demonstrated by the recent upgrade of relations to a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership (CSP) earlier this month. This was Singapore's first CSP with an ASEAN Member State. The upgrade underscored Singapore and Vietnam's shared commitment to deepening cooperation in emerging areas, including the digital economy,

renewable energy, and carbon credits. The two leaders agreed on the importance of these bilateral efforts, which would also contribute to regional initiatives such as the ASEAN Power Grid and ASEAN Digital Economy Framework Agreement. They witnessed the exchange of the Letter of Intent on the Plan of Action to implement the Singapore-Vietnam Comprehensive Strategic Partnership. They also witnessed the exchange of MoU in the areas of cross-border electricity trade, cross-border QR code payments, and digital development and information.

Prime Minister Wong met Communist Party of Vietnam General Secretary To



Prime Minister and Minister for Finance Lawrence Wong (left) and Vietnam Prime Minister Pham Minh Chinh

Lam and exchanged views on global and regional issues of mutual concern. The two Leaders welcomed the steady tempo of high-level visits between Singapore and Vietnam, with General Secretary Lam's visit to Singapore and Prime Minister Wong's visit to Vietnam taking place in the same month. Prime Minister Wong and General Secretary Lam also agreed to deepen party-to-party relations.

Vietnamese Sec-Gen To Lam's Visit: Significant Milestone in Bilateral Relationship



conomic and diplomatic relations between the two nations. They also agreed that the CSP would serve as a foundation for future collaboration in key sectors, including digital transformation and carbon credit trading.

During a call with President Tharman Shanmugaratnam, General Secretary Lam discussed strengthening green

Vietnam's General Secretary To Lam visited Singapore from March 11-13, 2025, marking a significant milestone in bilateral relations. The visit saw the elevation of ties between Vietnam and Singapore to a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership (CSP), reinforcing cooperation in areas such as the digital economy, renewable energy, and security.

General Secretary To Lam received a ceremonial welcome at Parliament House and met with Prime Minister and Minister for Finance Lawrence Wong. Both leaders reaffirmed the strong eco-

and digital economy partnerships. Senior Minister Lee Hsien Loong also engaged in discussions with General Secretary Lam on global and regional issues, further enhancing Singapore-Vietnam cooperation.

Several agreements were signed during the visit, covering areas such as combating transnational crime, digital transformation, and offshore wind power trade. The leaders also emphasized their commitment to the ASEAN Digital Economy Framework Agreement and the ASEAN Power Grid.

One notable outcome was the expansion of the Vietnam-Singapore Industrial Parks (VSIPs), which have played a crucial role in fostering economic cooperation. Additionally, a new orchid hybrid, Papilionanda To Lam Linh Ly, was named in honor of General Secretary Lam and his family.

The two nations pledged to enhance mutual cooperation in defense, cybersecurity, and law enforcement. They also discussed regional security, particularly in the South China Sea, emphasizing respect for international law and peaceful dispute resolution.

Singapore remains Vietnam's top foreign investor, reflecting strong economic confidence. Prime Minister Wong, in his toast at the official lunch, highlighted the historical depth of Singapore-Vietnam relations and expressed optimism about future collaborations.

As part of the CSP, both countries will focus on infrastructure development, financial sector collaboration, and initiatives in smart and sustainable cities. Prime Minister Wong accepted an invitation to visit Vietnam, further strengthening ties between the two nations.

Vietnam-Singapore Ties on a High Growth Trajectory says Vietnamese Ambassador Tran Phuoc Anh

Ambassador Tran Phuoc Anh speaks to IN Diplomacy on the latest visits and accelerated pace of Singapore-Vietnam ties



Your Excellency, Prime Minister Lawrence Wong's recent introductory visit to Vietnam marked a significant milestone in the strengthened ties between our two nations. What were the key takeaways from the visit, particularly in the context of the upgraded Comprehensive Strategic Partnership?

The month of March has been unprecedented in Singapore - Vietnam ties as Prime Minister Lawrence Wong was on an introductory visit, following General Secretary To Lam's official visit to Singapore just about 10 days before.

The key takeaways from Prime Minister Wong's visit to Vietnam were the deepened political trust and cooperation in emerging areas like the digital economy, renewable energy, and carbon credits. Both sides agreed to enhance legislative frameworks just as the Plan of Action to implement the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership framework, foster investment especially the upgrade of VSIPs in Vietnam, and create new growth opportunities in areas like semiconductor manufacturing, clean energy, and green logistics. This visit following the upgrade of the

Comprehensive Strategic Partnership marks a significant milestone in our bilateral relationship, driving growth and development in both nations.

Congratulations on General Secretary To Lam's recent official visit to Singapore. Could you share the key outcomes of the visit and any agreements that were signed?

The official visit of H.E. To Lam, General Secretary of the Communist Party of Vietnam, to Singapore was a great success. During the visit on March 12th, Vietnam and Singapore announced the upgrade of bilateral relations to a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership (CSP)—the highest level of diplomatic relations for Vietnam. Vietnam is the first ASEAN member to become a CSP of Singapore, while Singapore has become the third ASEAN country to establish a CSP with Vietnam, after Malaysia and Indonesia. This reflects a high level of political trust between the two countries' leaders, a strong commitment to further deepening cooperation across all sectors, and the strategic significance of Vietnam-Singapore cooperation to the region and the world at large.

During the visit, General Secretary To Lam also delivered a speech at the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, where he conveyed Vietnam's strong determination to achieve breakthrough developments in the new era, focusing on science, technology, and innovation. This presents vast opportunities for Singaporean and international companies to invest and expand their businesses in Vietnam.

Seven MOUs and agreements were signed and exchanged among state agencies to enhance collaboration in key areas:

The MOUs included, Digital

transformation, Combating transnational crime, Offshore wind power trade cooperation and Vietnam-Singapore Industrial Parks (VSIPs): In-principle approvals were granted for two additional VSIPs, bringing the total to 20 across 14 provinces in Vietnam.

The Monetary Authority of Singapore and the State Bank of Vietnam upgraded an MOU to enhance payment connectivity and support FinTech operations in both markets.

What are your key priorities to implement these MOUs and strengthening bilateral cooperation?

I firmly believe that these areas will continue to evolve, and the Embassy will work tirelessly to make this happen over the next three years. Here's how I see these areas developing and my key priorities:

Singapore is currently the second-largest foreign investor in Vietnam, with cumulative investment capital of US\$84 billion across 3,950 projects. With the new strategic areas of cooperation identified under the CSP—such as renewable energy, semiconductor manufacturing, AI-driven industries, cross-border data flows, and FinTech collaboration—combined with the expanding Vietnam-Singapore Industrial Parks (VSIPs), I am confident that even more investment from Singapore will flow into Vietnam.



Scan and read full interview
www.indiplomacy.com

100 Days of Leadership: Ambassador Pratomo on Indonesia's Vision

H.E. Suryo Pratomo, Ambassador of the Republic of Indonesia to Singapore, shares insights on Indonesia's latest developments, investment opportunities, and bilateral relations with Singapore



H.E. Suryo Pratomo, Ambassador of the Republic of Indonesia to Singapore, talks to IN Diplomacy about the first 100 days of the new Indonesian government, strong diplomatic ties, investment opportunities, and the upcoming Leaders' Retreat to be hosted by Singapore and the investment remains crucial for Indonesia and the government has set a target for Indonesia's economic growth to reach 8% in the next two years

With the new government in place, how is the progress in Indonesia?

The new government has already passed the first 100 days. After this period, the President has a clearer understanding of what Indonesia needs and he is now focused on deeper implementation.

The first priority is improving the health and well-being of Indonesian children, which is why the government has introduced programmes like free healthcare for children. The second priority is strengthening food security. The government has started opening 1 million hectares of land in Papua for rice farming. The third priority is industrialization. We aim to better utilize our natural resources for economic growth. The fourth priority is education, as the government seeks to improve the quality of learning. Lastly, the President is committed to strengthening Indonesia's sovereignty and territorial protection, ensuring a peaceful and secure environment for the people.

These plans seem beneficial for the people of Indonesia, but they also require significant expenditure. Do you see new opportunities for international investors?

Yes, investment is crucial. The President has set a target for Indonesia's economic growth to reach 8% in the next two to three years. Over the last decade, our economic growth has been around 5%. To achieve this, both domestic and foreign investments are essential. The government is creating a more business-friendly environment and has introduced incentives to attract foreign investors. Among our international investors, Singapore has been the most significant over the last 10 years. In 2023, Singapore's Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in Indonesia

exceeded USD 20 billion across more than 30,000 projects.

Because of this strong partnership, Indonesia is looking to further strengthen collaboration with Singapore. This year, we also have the Leaders' Retreat, where Singapore will be the host. The Singaporean government has proposed a date for the meeting, and we are awaiting confirmation from the Indonesian President.

Singapore is celebrating its 60th year of independence. How would you describe the relationship between Indonesia and Singapore over the past six decades?

Indonesia and Singapore established diplomatic relations 58 years ago, and our partnership remains very strong. As Prime Minister Lawrence Wong mentioned, our new generation of leaders has inherited a solid foundation from previous administrations. The challenge now is to strengthen our collaboration further. This year is crucial for setting the direction of our future partnership. I believe the next 60 years will bring even closer ties between Indonesia and Singapore.

Indonesia is also preparing for its 80th year of independence. We still have a long journey ahead to achieve our goal of becoming a high-income country. Hopefully, when we celebrate 100 years of independence, we will have achieved our vision of becoming a fully developed nation.



Scan and read full interview
www.indiplomacy.com

Denmark and Singapore Mark 60 Years of Diplomatic Relations

Ambassador H.E. Jakob Brix Tange reflects on Denmark-Singapore relations, his diplomatic journey, and future collaborations in an exclusive interview with IN Diplomacy Editor-in-Chief, Ms. Nomita Dhar.

Celebrating 60 years of diplomatic ties, the Ambassador of Denmark, H.E. Jakob Brix Tange spoke to IN Diplomacy and shares his insights into his experiences in Singapore, his diplomatic career, and Denmark's evolving relationship with Singapore. He highlighted the strong business, educational, and sustainability collaborations between the two nations. The discussion also touched upon Denmark's leadership in green technologies, the significance of international diplomacy, and future partnership opportunities. We bring you the excerpts, the full interview can be read on www.indiplomacy.com or by scanning the QR code at the end of the interview



This year marks 60 years of Denmark-Singapore diplomatic relations. What does this milestone mean?

Denmark was one of the first countries to establish diplomatic ties with Singapore in 1965. Over the years, our relationship has strengthened through economic partnerships, knowledge exchange, and diplomatic cooperation. Maintaining and deepening these ties remains crucial, particularly given Singapore's limited diplomatic representation in Europe.

What are the key areas of Denmark-Singapore cooperation?

There were two primary areas, which include Business relations, where Singapore is a regional hub for over 440 Danish companies, which we support in their operations across Southeast Asia, and Intellectual collaboration, where Singapore is a centre for think tanks and research, providing valuable insights into regional developments.

Looking ahead, how should Denmark and Singapore collaborate over the next 60 years?

Sustainability will be at the forefront. Denmark is a leader in green shipping, renewable energy, and environmental solutions—areas that align with Singapore's priorities. We can work together to advance the green transition, applying Danish expertise in clean energy and maritime sustainability while learning from Singapore's efficiency-driven governance.

Denmark is recognised for excellence in education, gender equality, and sustainability. How can we foster stronger collaboration?

Partnerships should span multiple levels—government-to-government,



industry alliances, and academic exchanges. Encouraging student and professional exchanges can facilitate deeper engagement, ensuring our nations remain at the forefront of global innovation and sustainability.

How do you think Danish culture can be showcased in Singapore?

We have several film festivals. We have a Nordic film festival. We have an EU film festival. I think Danish films have been gaining some international interest for several years now. We hope that will continue. That's one thing, that it is part of the cultural exchange. We also have programs in Denmark that support cultural collaboration across Denmark and Singapore that are available for artists. I think we are working, and we are very interested in promoting cultural exchange between two countries.



Scan and read full interview
www.indiplomacy.com

SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT

SAUDI ARABIA

FOUNDING DAY SPECIAL

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE LEADERSHIP!



FEATURING



SAUDI ARABIA AND SINGAPORE SIGN MOU
ON STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP COUNCIL



INTERVIEW WITH THE FIRST WOMAN
CHARGÉ D'AFFAIRES MRS MASHAEL SULIMAN
ALSHAMARI, EMBASSY OF SAUDI ARABIA IN
SINGAPORE



SAUDI FOUNDING DAY
CELEBRATION IN SINGAPORE



Saudi Arabia and Singapore Sign MOU on Strategic Partnership Council

Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) H.H. Prince Faisal Bin Farhan Al Saud was on a working visit to Singapore from 14 to 15 January 2025. During his visit, the two countries signed the Saudi-Singapore Strategic Partnership Council aims to strengthen cooperation across politics, economics, defence, and people-to-people ties, marking a historic milestone in bilateral relations



During his visit, HH Prince Faisal called on Prime Minister Wong at the Istana. Prime Minister Wong reiterated the outstanding invitation for Crown Prince Mohammed to visit Singapore and looked forward to the convening of the inaugural Strategic Partnership (SP) Council. The Strategic Partnership (SP) was Singapore's first with a Middle Eastern country. Prime Minister Wong also expressed appreciation for Saudi Arabia's efforts in organising the Hajj and conveyed Singapore's request for an increase in the Hajj quota to help clear the backlog of Singaporean Muslims seeking to perform the Hajj.

Foreign Affairs of Saudi Arabia, signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Singapore, to establish the Saudi-Singapore Strategic Partnership Council.

This landmark partnership, announced during Singapore's then-Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong's visit to Saudi Arabia in October 2023, is Singapore's first strategic partnership with a Middle Eastern nation. Cochaired by Prime Minister Lawrence Wong and Saudi Arabian Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman, the council seeks to foster

collaboration across politics, economics, defence, security, and cultural exchanges.

Dr Balakrishnan highlighted the timely nature of the partnership, citing robust ties and the shared commitment to growth. He noted that in 2023, bilateral trade in goods reached S\$10.6 billion, while foreign direct investment from Saudi Arabia totalled S\$4.1 billion in 2022. Saudi Arabian companies such as Aramco and the Saudi Basic Industries Corporation have made significant investments in Singapore, further enhancing economic ties.

Beyond economics, the partnership also underscores cultural and religious collaboration, with Saudi Arabia playing a key role in facilitating pilgrimages for Singapore's Muslim community. Dr Balakrishnan expressed gratitude for Saudi Arabia's long-standing support and appealed for an increase in Singapore's Hajj quota.

Prince Faisal affirmed Saudi Arabia's commitment to fostering deeper relations, emphasising alignment with Saudi Vision 2030, which presents new avenues for trade and investment. He praised Singapore's global financial hub status and welcomed opportunities for mutual growth.

The leaders also touched upon pressing global issues, including the Middle East conflict, advocating for a two-state solution and enhanced international humanitarian efforts. The signing of the MOU reflects the shared vision and aspirations of both nations' leaderships to unlock the full potential of this vibrant partnership.

4th Saudi Arabia - Singapore Joint Committee Ministerial Meeting



Singapore and KSA reaffirm robust partnership with new agreements on logistics, innovation, and vocational education

Second Minister for Trade and Industry Dr Tan See Leng co-chaired the 4th Saudi Arabia-Singapore Joint Committee (SSJC) Ministerial Meeting with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's (KSA) Minister of Transport and Logistic Services Eng. Saleh bin Nasser Al Jasser.

During the meeting, the co-chairs affirmed the robust partnership between the two countries and discussed potential areas of collaboration. Minister Tan said, "The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is one of Singapore's key trading partners in the Middle East. Our economic partnership has strengthened since we started the SSJC in 2021. Since then, both countries have elevated bilateral relations to a Strategic Partnership. Looking ahead, there is strong potential for both countries to continue collaborations in areas such as connectivity, digital economy, and innovation and energy."

Singapore and KSA have enjoyed growing economic relations. In 2024, KSA was Singapore's second-largest trading partner in the Middle East and 22nd-largest trading partner in the world. The bilateral trade in goods between our countries was about S\$10.8 billion, a 1.8% increase year-

on-year. In 2023, the bilateral trade in services between our countries was about S\$2.8 billion, a 19.3% increase year-on-year. As of 2023, Singapore's stock of direct investment abroad in KSA was about S\$600 million, a 276.3% increase year on year. Both have also begun negotiations to update the Bilateral Investment Treaty that entered into force in October 2007 to modernise the agreement.

Three Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) were signed or exchanged during the meeting. These included an MoU on Cooperation in Logistics, which aims to facilitate the exchange of best practices and deepen collaboration in logistics. Another MoU focused on port automation and sustainable supply chains, signed between PSA Ventures and Saudi Arabia's National Industrial Development and Logistics Program (NIDLP), seeks to drive innovation by supporting start-ups and developing Minimum Viable Products (MVPs). Additionally, the Implementation Programme for technical and vocational training between Singapore's Institute of Technical Education (ITE) and Saudi Arabia's Technical and Vocational Training Corporation (TVTC) aims to enhance cooperation in education and training.

Honouring Heritage: Saudi Founding Day Celebrations in Singapore



The Saudi Embassy in Singapore hosted a celebration and exhibition, bringing together diplomats, business leaders, and the Saudi community to commemorate the nation's Founding Day.

The Embassy of Saudi Arabia in Singapore hosted a vibrant celebration and exhibition in honour of Saudi Founding Day, highlighting the Kingdom's rich heritage and historical journey. The event, held at Suntec Singapore, welcomed Chargé d'Affaires Mrs. Mashael Suliman AlShamari, who received ambassadors, members of the diplomatic corps, Saudi citizens, and representatives from various sectors and businesses in Singapore.

The exhibition showcased key milestones in Saudi Arabia's history, cultural artefacts, and visual displays narrating the nation's progress since its founding. Guests had the opportunity to engage with interactive exhibits,






explore traditional Saudi crafts, and enjoy authentic Arabian hospitality. A key highlight of the event was the inclusion of cultural elements through dedicated stalls from major Saudi entities such as Aramco, SABIC, and others, offering insights into the Kingdom's advancements in industry, innovation, and sustainability.

The event also served as a platform for strengthening diplomatic and business ties between Saudi Arabia and Singapore, underscoring opportunities

for collaboration in trade, investment, and cultural exchange.


The evening was marked by a speech reflecting on Saudi Arabia's transformation and aspirations for the future. The celebration concluded with a networking session, fostering deeper connections between the Saudi and Singaporean communities.








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the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia on its Founding Day!**

HAPPY FOUNDING DAY

Saudi Arabia

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INTERVIEW



Saudi Arabia: Embracing Heritage, Shaping the Future: A Vision 2030

Interview with the first woman Chargé d’Affaires Mrs Mashael Suliman AlShamari, Embassy of Saudi Arabia in Singapore

Saudi Arabia
Global Leadership in Women’s Empowerment

The Kingdom continues to support women’s empowerment at all local, regional, and international levels, as the Kingdom currently chairs the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) at the United Nations in New York for the year 2025

Saudi Arabia’s Key International Efforts in Women’s

- Launched the “EMPOWER” coalition to advance women’s leadership in the private sector during its G20 presidency
- Declared Riyadh as the Capital of Arab Women (2020) to support Arab efforts in this regard
- Hosted the “Women in Islam Conference” and issued the “Jeddah Document” that reinforces women’s rights rooted in Islam
- Won the United Nations Award (2020) for women’s empowerment in the information technology sector

Women’s Empowerment in Saudi Arabia:

54.5 % Women’s employment rate in the education sector	40.6 % Women-owned enterprises in the private sector	35.4 % Women’s participation in the public and private sectors exceeded the goals of Vision 2030
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Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
08 March 2025 | 08 Ramadan 1446

CSW 69
Commission on the Status of Women

UNDER THE PRESIDENCY OF THE KINGDOM OF SAUDI ARABIA

The 69th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women Commences

March 10-21, 2025 | United Nations, New York

SAUDI ARABIA

The Significance of the Founding Day

King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, issued a Royal Decree to commemorate the founding day annually on February 22nd, which represents the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia’s deep historical, civilisational, and cultural roots when Imam Muhammad bin Saud established the first Saudi state in 1139 AH / 1727 CE. The Founding Day commemorates the three centuries of the existence of the Saudi State, highlighting its historical and civilizational depth, celebrating its diverse cultural heritage, and expressing devotion to the imams, kings, and citizens who serve the nation.

The difference between the Founding Day, February 22, 1727 CE, and the National Day is that the former celebrates the first Saudi State (the founder, Imam Muhammad bin Saud). However, the National Day, September 23, 1932 CE, is the day for the declaration of Saudi Arabia’s unification at the hands of the unifier King Abdulaziz bin Abdul Rahman Al-Faisal Al Saud, may Allah rest his soul.

Strengthening the national identity in Saudi Arabia

The Founding Day is celebrated to honour the solid roots of the Saudi State, the strong bond between citizens and their leadership, and the accomplishments of the Saudi State in terms of unity, stability, and security. It is also celebrated to honour the First Saudi State’s resilience and defence against enemies. In fact, it is celebrated to commemorate the continuity of the Saudi State and the restoration of its roots and leadership. All these feelings of gratitude and pride in the great legacy which our ancestors left us deepen our sense of identity and enhance our patriotism.

The Planning Process of the Founding Day Event in Singapore

The focus of the Founding Day event held here in Singapore was to present the core values, the prominent traditions, and the unique cultural identity of Saudi Arabia. It also aimed at cherishing the solid roots of the Saudi State and the close bonds between us, the citizens and our leaders.

The event aimed at cherishing the national unity of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia as well by highlighting its beautiful identity in terms of culture and values.

Key displays and highlights at the event

As I mentioned earlier, the focus of the event was to cherish the unique Saudi culture, so there were displays of the traditional Saudi clothing for both males and females, traditional food stalls where the guests enjoyed Saudi coffee and dates from all regions of the vast kingdom, highlighting the subtle differences among each. So all aspects of the Saudi culture were highlighted in the event, including food, clothing, music and cultural artifacts and core values such as hospitality and generosity.

Saudi-Singaporean relations development

Having celebrated the Saudi Founding Day here in Singapore with many Singaporean diplomats, officials, businessmen and citizens gracefully accepting the invitation and attending the event is living proof of the close cultural and economic relations which the two countries enjoy.

Current investment opportunities in Saudi Arabia

The business-friendly reforms under Vision 2030 are welcoming foreign investors from all around the world. Saudi Arabia has liberalised its rules and regulations relating to the formation of companies in the country by foreigners and locals. Another major reform contributing to more excellent foreign investment was to allow 100% foreign ownership of the companies without needing a local partner, permitting greater control of the company by the foreign investor. These initiatives are instrumental in establishing many businesses in the country.

Specific sectors or industries in Saudi with strong potential for Singaporean investors

The efforts put forward by the initiatives of the Vision has opened the door to foreign investors in many sectors that might attract Singaporean investors as well such as urban development and logistics, and transportation making the Saudi market a key draw for Singaporean firms in these sectors.

There are also the manufacturing industry, defense technology, automotive industry, fintech companies and information technology sector.

Events and initiatives for deeper collaboration between the two countries

The two countries Saudi Arabia and Singapore already enjoy a deep collaborative relationship evident by the recent visit (last January) of the Saudi Foreign Minister his Highness Prince Faisal Bin Farhan Al Saud to meet with the Singaporean Minister for Foreign Affairs Dr. Vivian Balakrishnan to further the newly established Saudi-Singapore Strategic Partnership. Between the two countries, there are many common grounds where deep collaboration is encouraged such as supporting Singaporean Muslims to perform the pilgrimage, fostering deeper people-to-people ties and enhancing economic, educational and religious collaboration.

Singaporean Companies engage with 2030

As I mentioned earlier, the business-friendly reforms under Vision 2030 are welcoming foreign investors from all around the world. Saudi Arabia has liberalized its rules and regulations relating to the formation of companies in the country by foreigners and locals.

Another major reform contributing to more excellent foreign investment was to allow 100% foreign ownership of the companies without needing a local partner, permitting greater control of the company by the foreign investor. These initiatives are instrumental in establishing many businesses in the country.

There is a multitude of ways in which companies and entrepreneurs can engage considering the wide-range of business sectors which are thriving under the efforts put forward by the Vision; such as manufacturing, renewable energy, transport and logistics, tourism, digital infrastructure, healthcare, technology and innovation, such as FinTech and Information and Communication Technology, Leisure and Hospitality sectors, education, business setups, infrastructure, entertainment with reforms specially implemented to suit foreign investment.

Message to Singapore about Saudi transformation

Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 is living proof of the huge transformation which is the kingdom is going through in terms of the kingdom's aspirations to unlock the potential of its people and create a diversified, innovative, and world-leading nation. The desired transformation come with a multitude of potential and opportunities manifested by the kingdom's rich cultural heritage and strategic advantages and solid economy. This enormous potential is steering the nation towards a more diversified, innovative and thriving economy, vibrant society and a prosperous future.

The opportunities are also evident in the reforms have been made to enhance the business climate, create jobs, and invite investment. The opportunities are also evident in the efforts put forward to by the Kingdom to prepare its people for tomorrow's world, a world that is connected, technology-forward, and facing climate change head-on. The opportunities are also manifested by the fact that Saudi Arabia's doors are now open even wider to the world, with investments pouring into sectors like renewable energy, tourism, entertainment, and other key industries. With all that's happening in the country today and with the growing momentum of Vision 2030, Saudi Arabia truly is the land of now.

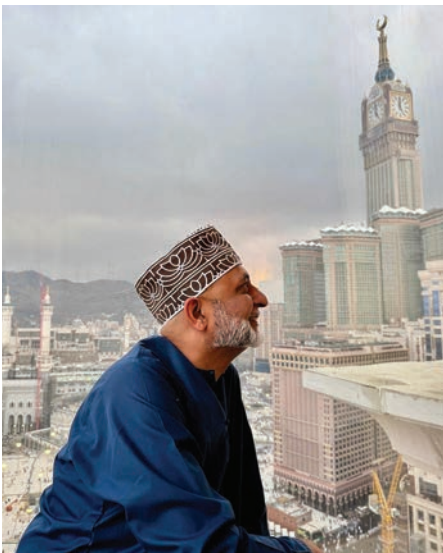
As we celebrate international women's day and as a first female Chargé d'Affaires at the Saudi Embassy in Singapore, what would you say about the state of a women in Saudi Arabia?

Saudi women are making strides in the workforce, education, and entrepreneurship, driven by the government's Vision 2030 plan. Key reforms and initiatives include: Increased labor force participation (20% to 35% since 2018), Anti-discrimination laws and Women's empowerment programs

You can see more women in the labour force and they are in all kinds of sectors, the growth and opportunities currently for my country are unprecedented. I feel very privileged to be in Singapore representing Saudi Arabia.

Ramadan in Saudi Arabia: A Spiritual Tapestry of Faith, Community, and Generosity

Feroz Siddiqui, a Singaporean living in Riyadh shares his unique experience of observing the blessed month of Ramadan in Saudi Arabia



Having lived across the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries for over two decades, I have witnessed the unique ways each nation honours the blessed month of Ramadan. Yet, no place resonates with the essence of this sacred month quite like Saudi Arabia. Here,

Ramadan is not merely a month of fasting; it is a profound cultural and spiritual experience, woven into the very fabric of daily life - a symphony of devotion, serenity, and nocturnal vitality that lingers long after the crescent moon fades.

Ramadan: A Month of Piety and Global Reverence

Ramadan, the ninth month of the Islamic lunar calendar, is revered by over 2 billion Muslims worldwide as a time of fasting, prayer, reflection, and community bonding. It commemorates the revelation of the Quran to Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and is marked by sawm (fasting from dawn to sunset), one of Islam's Five Pillars. Abstaining from food, drink, and worldly desires fosters self-discipline, empathy for the less fortunate, and spiritual renewal. To the novice observer, Ramadan

in Saudi Arabia might appear as a mere inversion of daily rhythms - a postponement of hustle to the night. But this is only the surface. To truly know Ramadan, one must breathe it in. Take, for example, my non-Muslim friends who, captivated by the month's spirit, fasted for a day or two to grasp its essence. They discovered not just the physical challenge of abstaining from food and water under the scorching sun but the mental discipline required to curb the tongue - eschewing gossip, resisting curses, and responding to provocations (like a driver cutting their lane) with patience. Ramadan is not merely about hunger; it is a masterclass in empathy, urging us to share our meals with strangers and part with wealth for those in need, solely for God's pleasure.

Some might ask: "What of the rest of the year? Does virtue vanish

once Ramadan ends?" To this, I say Ramadan is our annual reset - a vivid blueprint for how life ought to be lived. It is a training ground, sharpening self-restraint, kindness, and gratitude, reminding Muslims that these ideals are not seasonal obligations but lifelong commitments.

Without Ramadan's spiritual "gutter guards" - those divine reminders that nudge us back to the straight path - we might lose our way in the distractions of daily life. The month's lessons linger like the scent of bakhoor in a mosque: subtle, persistent, and transformative.

Ramadan in Saudi Arabia: A Spiritual Epicenter

Saudi Arabia's significance during Ramadan is unparalleled, rooted in its role as the cradle of Islam. For residents and pilgrims, the opportunity to perform Umrah (the lesser pilgrimage) during Ramadan is transformative. The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) stated, "Umrah during Ramadan is equivalent to Hajj" (Bukhari). Living in Saudi Arabia grants unparalleled access to Makkah and Madinah, where the spiritual energy is electric.

The Grand Mosque in Makkah and the Prophet's Mosque in Madinah become epicenters of Ramadan's spiritual fervor. During Maghrib, volunteers distribute free iftar packs at the Harams - simple yet hearty meals of dates, water, laban, and Saudi staples like jareesh - to ensure no worshipper breaks their fast empty-handed. Meanwhile, the tradition of I'tikaf (spiritual retreat) thrives in Masjid Nabawi, where thousands sequester themselves in the mosque's vast courtyards and prayer halls during Ramadan's final ten nights, immersed in Quranic recitation and reflection.

This month also sees a surge in Umrah numbers, with millions flocking to Makkah and Madinah. Saudi authorities report a 30-40% increase in pilgrims during Ramadan, drawn by the Prophet's (PBUH) promise of Hajj-equivalent rewards.

The Haramain's marble floors are carpeted with a mosaic of humanity - Indonesians in batik skullcaps, Nigerians in embroidered kaftans, Emiratis in crisp white kanduras - a testament to Ramadan's unifying power.

The Sacred Nights: Tranquility, Taraweeh, and Qiyam al-Layl

The month's pinnacle is Laylat al-Qadr (Night of Decree), when worship carries more blessings than a thousand months (Quran 97:1-5). Beyond individual devotion, Ramadan unites Muslims globally in shared rituals - from iftar (breaking the fast) gatherings to nightly Taraweeh prayers. This universal observance underscores Islam's emphasis on compassion, gratitude, and collective upliftment.

Ramadan's nights in Saudi Arabia are a realm of transcendent peace. The Taraweeh prayers, performed after Isha, transform mosques into sanctuaries of collective rhythm. Rows of worshippers move in unison, their whispers of "Ameen" echoing like a gentle tide. But it is the last ten nights - the pursuit of Laylat al-Qadr - that elevate the atmosphere to something ethereal.

Past midnight, the mosques grow quieter, yet fuller. The lights dim to a warm amber glow, casting soft shadows that ripple across marble floors like whispers. The scent of bakhoor - oud incense - hangs heavy in the air, its smoky sweetness entwined with the musk of devotion. In these sacred hours, the imam's recitation takes on a haunting beauty, each note resonating deeper than the last. One night in Alkhobar, I noticed quiet whimpers beside me and noticed him crying as a child, as the sheikh's voice cascaded through Surah Ar-Rahman. Each verse unfurled like an invocation, a reminder of divine mercy - so palpable you could almost touch it.

For families, these nights become a cherished ritual. My children, though young, insisted on joining Qiyam al-Layl (late-night prayers). They'd fidget through the first few rak'ahs but sit spellbound during the melodious dua.

Afterward, we'd drive through the hushed streets to grab suhoor at their favourite Tim Hortons or Burger Fuel. My daughter once giggled, "It's like a secret adventure - praying, then eating pancakes and burgers while the world sleeps!"

Scenes of Charity: A Nation's Generosity Unleashed

Saudi Arabia's culture of sadaqah (charity) shines brightest in Ramadan. Benevolence is everywhere: mosques host lavish iftar for all, while people distribute dates, water, or food packets to strangers. One unforgettable sight is the "Ramadan tents" lining streets, where volunteers serve meals to laborers, drivers, and anyone hungry.

Anecdotes abound. In Riyadh, I once saw a young man distribute dates and water bottles to delivery riders minutes before Maghrib. "This is my family's tradition," he smiled. "No one should break their fast alone." In Jeddah, a local bakery owner converts his shop into a charity hub, offering free bread and sweets. Such gestures, large and small, embody the Quranic ethos: "Whoever saves a life, it is as though they saved all of humanity".

Ramadan A Month Like No Other

To experience Ramadan in Saudi Arabia is to witness faith in motion - a harmony of worship, generosity, and unity. The privilege of Umrah, the culture of charity, and the relentless efforts to ensure no one is excluded from Ramadan's blessings create an atmosphere unlike any other. The tranquility of dimly lit mosques at midnight, the resonance of Quranic verses that stir the soul, and the joy of sharing suhoor in a fast-food booth with loved ones - these moments crystallize the essence of Ramadan.

For Muslims, it is a reminder of their spiritual roots; for non-Muslims, a lesson in humanity's capacity for goodwill. As the crescent moon heralds Eid al-Fitr, one leaves this month not just nourished by faith, but inspired by a society that turns devotion into action, and night into a canvas for connection.

A Gift of Dates from Saudi Arabia to Singapore



The King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Center (KSrelief) delivered 25 tons of dates as a gift from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to the Republic of Singapore

Representing KSrelief, Chargé d’Affaires at the Saudi Embassy in Singapore, Mashael Al-Shamari, officially handed over the aid to the Chief Executive Officer of the Islamic Religious Council of Singapore (MUIS), Kadir Maideen. The handover ceremony took place at the MUIS headquarters in Singapore, attended by a KSrelief delegation and key representatives from both sides.

This initiative is part of Saudi Arabia’s ongoing humanitarian efforts to support friendly and brotherly nations, ensuring that essential aid reaches those most in need. The donation underscores the strong diplomatic and humanitarian ties

between Saudi Arabia and Singapore, reflecting a shared commitment to global relief efforts.

KSrelief continues to play a vital role in international aid, delivering food supplies, medical assistance, and emergency relief to countries worldwide. This latest contribution of dates aligns with its mission to enhance food security and support communities during key religious and cultural occasions.



Iftar Celebrations by the Embassy of Saudi Arabia

The Embassy of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia hosted an exclusive women-only Iftar celebration, led by Chargé d’Affaires Mrs. Mashael Suliman AlShamari. Held at the scenic Marina Bay, the event brought together ambassadors, Saudi citizens, and representatives from various sectors in Singapore.

The Iftar gathering underscored Saudi Arabia’s commitment to fostering cultural exchange and strengthening diplomatic relations with Singapore and the wider international community. Attendees enjoyed a traditional Arabian feast, featuring an array of authentic Saudi dishes, reflecting the Kingdom’s rich culinary heritage. The event also provided a



platform for networking and discussions on ongoing collaborations between Saudi Arabia and Singapore in areas such as trade, investment, and cultural diplomacy.

Mrs. AlShamari expressed gratitude for the presence of distinguished guests, emphasising the values of unity, tolerance, and interfaith dialogue that Ramadan embodies. She highlighted Saudi Arabia’s dedication to fostering

international partnerships and commended Singapore for its role as a global hub for business and diplomacy.

The evening concluded with prayers and reflections, reinforcing the significance of Ramadan as a time for spiritual renewal, generosity, and community bonding. Guests lauded the initiative as a meaningful occasion to deepen cultural understanding and enhance bilateral ties.

SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT

WOMEN IN DIPLOMACY

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY FEATURING



H.E. Tamara Lisi
Villanueva Fernández
(Chile)



H.E. Lisbet Quesada Luna
(Cuba)



H.E. Judit Pach
(Hungary)



H.E. Gabrielle Anne
Rush (New Zealand)



H.E. Rabia Shafiq
(Pakistan)



H.E. Madiepetsane
Charlotte Lobe
(South Africa)



H.E. Ureerat Chareontoh
(Thailand)



H.E. Kateryna Zelenko
(Ukraine)



H.E. Jessica Maria Lopez
Pina (Venezuela)

AMBASSADORS OF CHANGE



Corinna Lim
(AWARE)



Yeo Wan Ling
(NTUC)

CHILE

As a woman in diplomacy, I strive to challenge the notion that leadership is inherently masculine and to promote a more inclusive approach. Says

H.E. TAMARA LISI VILLANUEVA FERNÁNDEZ

AMBASSADOR OF CHILE TO SINGAPORE

How do you think women's participation in diplomacy has evolved over the years, and what more needs to be done?

Diplomacy has long been a male-dominated field, and while women's participation has evolved significantly, progress remains slow and uneven. Historically, female diplomats were excluded from decision-making roles and relegated to support functions. However, advocacy by women in diplomacy and global gender equality movements has increasingly highlighted the importance of their participation in shaping policy and international relations. Female diplomats have been instrumental in advancing issues such as climate justice, gender equality, and the rights of marginalised communities.

Today, there is greater recognition of the value of women's perspectives in peacebuilding, human rights, and global governance, yet structural barriers persist. Limited access to leadership roles, institutional biases, and restrictive cultural norms continue

to hinder progress. Addressing these challenges requires intentional efforts to create spaces for women in decision-making and support their leadership development.

What do you hope your legacy will be, both as a diplomat and as a woman leader?

As a diplomat, my foremost duty is to represent Chile, contributing to its development, improving the quality of life for our people, and advancing our national interests. As a woman in diplomacy, I strive to challenge the notion that leadership is inherently masculine and to promote a more inclusive approach. I am committed to leading through active listening, valuing diversity, and recognising the contributions of the entire team. My goal is to help shape a leadership model that is collaborative, equitable, and reflective of a broader vision.

What advice would you give to young girls and women who are interested in pursuing careers in diplomacy or international relations?

Diplomacy thrives on diverse voices, cultural understanding, and empathy—qualities that women bring in abundance. Their unique insights are vital for shaping a more inclusive world. Stay curious and informed, and develop strong communication and negotiation skills. Take risks, pursue knowledge, and embrace perseverance and confidence. Progress may be gradual, but every step forward strengthens women's representation and respect in diplomacy. Believe in your ability to make a difference, and never let gender define your potential!



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CUBA

The international community must prioritise gender equality in every conversation and forum, making it a central pillar of global development agendas. Says

**H.E. LISBET
QUESADA LUNA**

AMBASSADOR OF CUBA TO SINGAPORE



Can you share a moment when you felt like you were breaking new ground for women in diplomacy?

As Cuban diplomats, breaking patterns is inherent in our process as we challenge global norms and prioritise women's empowerment nationally and internationally. With 30% of ambassadors being women and over 120 missions reflecting our achievements, we continuously push boundaries through our diplomatic work. Most importantly, we strive to guide new generations to surpass our accomplishments and continue this progress.

Who are some of the women who have inspired you throughout your career, and what qualities do you admire about them?

A: Vilma Espín. A revolutionary leader and prominent figure in Cuba's fight for independence and social justice, Vilma Espín played a crucial role in the Cuban Revolution. As an advocate for women's rights, she founded the Cuban Federation of Women (FMC), which worked to promote gender equality in the country. I deeply admire her

resilience, dedication to social transformation, and her ability to balance her activism with her role as a mother and wife.

How do you think the international community can work together to address issues like gender-based violence, equal pay, and women's representation in leadership?

Globally, one in 10 women lives in extreme poverty; five women and girls are killed every hour by a member of their own family; and women, on average, earn 20% less than men for work of equal value. The international community must prioritize gender equality in every conversation and forum, making it a central pillar of global development agendas. This means stronger legislation, better enforcement of existing laws, and the promotion of women's rights through education, employment, and leadership opportunities. Countries must also be held accountable for their progress or lack thereof in achieving gender equality. Collaboration between

governments, international organizations, and grassroots movements is critical for change.

What advice would you give to women who are just starting in their careers and are looking for inspiration and guidance?

Be bold, patient, and don't be afraid to take risks. Most importantly, stay true to your values. The world needs women who are confident in their abilities and who are willing to push boundaries and innovate.



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HUNGARY

It starts with acknowledging that these are not just “women’s issues” but global priorities that affect economies and societies as a whole. Says

H.E. JUDIT PACH

HUNGARY’S AMBASSADOR TO SINGAPORE

What initiatives has Hungary taken to promote women’s rights and empowerment, both domestically and internationally?

Hungary has initiatives supporting female entrepreneurship, STEM education for girls, and workplace policies that promote gender equality. Internationally, Hungary supports UN programs aimed at women’s empowerment and is active in fostering cooperation on gender equality within the EU and other diplomatic frameworks.

How do you think the international community can work together to address issues like gender-based violence, equal pay, and women’s representation in leadership?

It starts with acknowledging that these are not just “women’s issues” but global priorities that affect economies and societies as a whole. Countries need to enforce policies on equal pay, increase women’s presence in decision-making roles, and take a zero-tolerance approach to gender-based violence. More collaboration between governments, businesses, and civil society is crucial.

Who are some of the women who have inspired you throughout your career, and what qualities do you admire about them?

There are many, but Pinky Lilani stands out for her work in uplifting women and celebrating kindness as a leadership strength. I also admire female diplomats who have paved the way in tough environments—those who have shown resilience, intellect, and the ability to lead with authenticity.

What do you hope your legacy will be, both as a diplomat and as a woman leader?

I hope to be remembered as someone who built meaningful connections, broke barriers, and empowered others to do the same. If I’ve contributed to making diplomacy more inclusive and impactful, that’s a legacy worth leaving.

What advice would you give to women who are just starting out in their careers and are looking for inspiration and guidance?

Don’t wait for permission to take up space. Find mentors, but also trust your instincts. Challenges will come, but how you respond to them defines your path. And most importantly, never lose sight of your own values—authenticity is your greatest strength.



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NEW ZEALAND

Education is critical. Without a track record of academic excellence, the doors to diplomacy are not open. Says

H.E. GABRIELLE ANNE RUSH

NEW ZEALAND'S HIGH COMMISSIONER TO SINGAPORE



As a woman in a traditionally male-dominated field, what challenges did you face in your early career, and how did you overcome them?

I practised law before joining the New Zealand foreign service. While there were women in both professions, I did feel back then that I was held to a different standard than my male colleagues. If my male colleagues made mistakes or behaved badly at after-work drinks, it was laughed off. If I did, it was because I was bad or a woman. Being super-prepared, and willing to do whatever was asked while being neither too modest nor too "pushy" was a constant line to be walked. And I walked that line as we all did back then. Things are much better now but these things can still arise – there is no room for complacency.

Can you share a moment when you felt like you were breaking new ground for women in diplomacy?

I remember being asked to Chair a session at a Global Oceans conference while I was a junior diplomat on my first posting. It was terrifying but I knew that by stepping into the opportunity, I would help make the inclusion of women, including younger women as chairs and panellists more familiar and accept-

ed as normal and important.

As a woman in a high-pressure role, how do you balance your personal and professional life?

It is not easy, but I try to set aside some-time each day for my partner and catch up with my adult children, my sisters, and my friends. I survived a serious illness 15 years ago so I see exercise as a not-negotiable rather than nice-to-have. I try to swim several mornings a week plus walking and Pilates.

What support systems do you have in place to help you manage the demands of your job?

I have an incredibly supportive partner who understands the demands of my job and goes out of his way to help me; an amazing EA; fantastic team and a network of close friends, many of whom have been in my life for decades.

How did your education prepare you for a career in diplomacy, and what role

do you think education plays in empowering women?

Education is critical. Without a track record of academic excellence, the doors to diplomacy are not open so looking at measures that support and encourage more women in higher education is a necessary prerequisite. Lawyer without having studied it. While many subjects are relevant in diplomacy, an understanding of history, psychology, and law, however learned, is essential. It is true that those who fail to learn from history are doomed to repeat it.



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PAKISTAN

The international community should promote laws and frameworks that ensure women's rights are protected and that they are given equal opportunities in all spheres. Says,

H.E. RABIA SHAFIQ

PAKISTAN'S HIGH COMMISSIONER
TO SINGAPORE



How do you think the international community can work together to address issues like gender-based violence, equal pay, and women's representation in leadership?

We must be vigilant in tackling issues such as gender-based violence, unequal pay, and the underrepresentation of women in leadership. The international community should promote laws and frameworks that ensure women's rights are protected and that they are given equal opportunities in all spheres. It's encouraging to see the recognition of women's leadership roles, especially during March, as it serves as a reminder to all that we still have lots of work to do in fostering equality and creating a society free from violence.

As a woman in a high-pressure role, how do you balance your personal and professional life?

Diplomacy is a challenging profession, and at times, balancing personal and professional life takes a toll. My family is based in Pakistan, and there are

periods when I am unable to visit for several months. When we do have the chance to be together, we prioritise quality time. My husband, who is also a senior bureaucrat, often faces challenges with postings in different locations. Moreover, having strong social connections and doing some meditation also helps.

What advice would you give to young girls and women who are interested in pursuing careers in diplomacy or international relations?

Foreign Service is a demanding career that requires a balance between professional and personal life. Women in this field must be resilient and forward-thinking but also adaptable to the pressures that come with the job. In addition to building professional competence, women must also look after their mental and emotional health to manage multiple demands. I would also urge families to offer their support, as diplomats often face long hours, time away from family, and unique challenges due to their roles. A supportive home environment is

key to managing the demands of this profession.

What do you hope your legacy will be, both as a diplomat and as a woman leader?

I hope my legacy will reflect the idea that women, when given a level playing field, can excel in any field. I strive to set an example that reinforces the importance of foresight, hard work, and service. I would like to be remembered as someone who not only contributed to diplomacy but also helped pave the way for other women to follow, ensuring that merit and dedication always outweigh gender.



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SOUTH AFRICA

Today, about 44% of South Africa's 93 Heads of Missions are women. Despite this, systemic barriers rooted in historical power structures continues, says,

**H.E. MADIEPETSANE
CHARLOTTE LOBE**

**SOUTH AFRICA HIGH
COMMISSIONER TO SINGAPORE**



How do you think women's participation in diplomacy has evolved over the years, and what more needs to be done?

In 2021, the Global Multi-Stakeholder Steering Committee on the Generation Equality Forum (GEF), of which I was a part, adopted the Global Acceleration Plan for Gender Equality. The GEF was established in 2018 following UN Women's launch of the multi-generational advocacy campaign, Generation Equality: Realizing Women's Rights for an Equal Future. This initiative aimed to unite emerging women's rights activists with the gender equality advocates who played a key role in shaping the Beijing Platform for Action. The Steering Committee provided strategic guidance on the conceptualisation and implementation of the GEF, ensuring an intersectional and intergenerational approach. It included civil society, UN Member States (Mexico, France, Canada, Costa Rica, South Africa, Sweden, and Tunisia), the private sector, academia, philanthropic organisations, and international bodies.

The Generation Equality Action Coalitions mobilised governments, women's and youth-led organisations, international bodies, and the private sector to drive collective action, foster intergenerational dialogue, increase public and private investment, and advance gender equality globally. These coalitions focused on six key themes: (i) Gender-Based Violence; (ii) Economic Justice and Rights; (iii) Bodily Autonomy and Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR); (iv) Feminist Action for Climate Justice; (v) Technology and Innovation for Gender Equality; and (vi) Feminist Movements and Leadership. Through these efforts, the GEF sought to create tangible progress for women and girls across generations.

How do you think women's participation in diplomacy has evolved over the years, and what more needs to be done?

The 1994 democratic breakthrough in South Africa marked a turning point in the struggle for women's

emancipation, leading to significant progress in various sectors, including diplomacy. Today, about 44% of South Africa's 93 Heads of Missions are women—a remarkable achievement considering that in 1994, there were only two female Heads of Missions. However, despite this progress, systemic barriers rooted in historical power structures, gender stereotypes, and cultural norms continue to marginalize women. The matrices of power that shaped the triple oppression of women remain intact, making the fight for true gender equality an ongoing struggle.



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THAILAND

Global challenges require global cooperation. The international community must strengthen legal protections, invest in education, and create economic opportunities for women. Says,

H.E. UREERAT CHAREONTOH

THAILAND'S AMBASSADOR TO SINGAPORE



What do you hope your legacy will be, both as a diplomat and as a woman leader?

I hope my legacy is one of opportunity and impact, where merit—not gender—defines success. I want to inspire more women to lead with confidence in diplomacy and beyond. Most importantly, I want to be remembered for creating pathways for others, proving that leadership is about making a difference, not just holding a title. As I step away from my official role, I hope my journey inspires young women to pursue leadership fearlessly. If I leave behind a legacy of empowering women in diplomacy, then I will consider my career truly rewarding.

Who are some of the women who have inspired you throughout your career, and what qualities do you admire about them?

My greatest inspiration is my mother, Chantana Chareontoh, who is also a civil servant. She is Thailand's first female Director of the Central

Women's Correctional Institution and a former Deputy Director-General of the Department of Corrections. She represents Thai women with resilience, vision, and passion. At a time when women were rarely in senior positions, and with a strong support of my father, she has proven that a woman can excel in both career and family life. She taught me that leadership is not about power but about making a difference.

How do you think the international community can work together to address issues like gender-based violence, equal pay, and women's representation in leadership?

Global challenges require global cooperation. The international community must strengthen legal protections, invest in education, and create economic opportunities for women. Equal pay and leadership representation should not just be aspirational goals, they should be realities.

What support systems do you have in place to help you manage the demands of your job?

Diplomacy is not a solo effort. Throughout my career, I have relied on strong teams, trusted colleagues, and family support. Balancing a high-pressure career and personal life requires understanding, flexibility, and time management. Thailand's Ministry of Foreign Affairs has also developed more inclusive policies to ensure that both men and women have the resources they need to thrive.



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UKRAINE

Happy women-diplomats are the best at being resilient to challenges and making the world a better place for everyone. Says, H.E. KATERYNA ZELENSKO

UKRAINE AMBASSADOR TO SINGAPORE



How do you think women's participation in diplomacy has evolved over the years, and what more needs to be done?

Ukrainian society has traditionally been tolerant of gender and respectful towards women. However, in the 1990s and early 2000s, diplomacy was male-dominated, reflecting Soviet-era beliefs about balancing career and household duties. Over the past 10-15 years, this has changed significantly. By 2019, women made up over a third of MFA employees, with more in decision-making roles. In 2021, they comprised 45.3% of MFA headquarters staff and 34.3% of those posted abroad. By March 2025, as the war entered its fourth year, women made up 49% of MFA HQ, with near-equal numbers of men and women. While embassy representation remains steady, leadership is committed to further progress. Ensuring equal opportunities strengthens Ukraine's diplomacy and global presence.

What advice would you give to women who are just starting in their careers and are looking for inspiration and guidance?

There are plenty of role models, but be yourself; don't compare yourself to others because it's not a competition. Set your goals and leverage your balances between your career and family. Happy women-diplomats are the best at being resilient to challenges and making the world a better place for everyone. It might not be easy. And it will not be quick. But make no mistake about it: you can do this. Success is about 5% talent, 5% luck, and 90% never giving up.

What do you hope your legacy will be, both as a diplomat and as a woman leader?

I am a team player and believe in the joint legacy of nations, communities, and active groups of people who stand up for our common humanity. On the global level, it is a fight for the peaceful co-existence of nations and a rules-based order. On a personal level, it is the success of every person whom I could at some point be helpful with a piece of advice, could support their ideas or make them stronger and happier.

How do you think the international community can work together to address issues like gender-based violence, equal pay, and women's representation in leadership?

Internationally, gender equality is addressed by the UN Commission on the Status of Women (UN Women) and its various fora, including its 69th Session in New York (10-21 March 2025), where Ukraine is represented by the Governmental Commissioner for Gender Equality Policy, Ms Kateryna Levchenko. In 2023, she visited Singapore for discussions with women leaders across government, business, civil society, and diplomacy. Soft power also plays a key role in advancing gender equality and other social issues.



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VENEZUELA

Diplomacy requires not only knowledge and preparation but also empathy, resilience, and a genuine commitment to building bridges through mutual understanding and the promotion of culture and heritage. Says,

**H.E. JESSICA
MARIA LOPEZ PINA**

**AMBASSADOR OF THE
BOLIVARIAN REPUBLIC OF
VENEZUELA TO SINGAPORE**



As a woman in a traditionally male-dominated field, what challenges did you face in your early career, and how did you overcome them?

Certainly, diplomacy has historically been a male-dominated field, but we are now in an era where gender parity is of great relevance. This progress is largely due to the efforts of pioneering women who have set high standards in leadership and efficiency, as well as countless others who continue to fight for equal rights in even the most remote parts of the world, often at great personal cost. One of the main challenges I have faced from a young age has been overcoming preconceived notions about women's leadership and their representation in high-level decision-making spaces. However, I have not encountered significant resistance, as I belong to a generation in the country I represent that has made remarkable progress in this area. This advancement is not only from a human perspective—acknowledging and valuing our ancestral roots—but also in the development of a political and state

structure that actively promotes and encourages women's participation in national life, paving the way for a more inclusive future in diplomacy.

How did your education prepare you for a career in diplomacy, and what role do you think education plays in empowering women?

My education in Political Science in Venezuela provided a strong foundation in international relations, political theory, and diplomacy, equipping me to navigate the complexities of global politics and advocate for our nation's interests on the world stage. Education is a transformative force for real inclusion, particularly for women, as it breaks barriers, ensures access to opportunities, and promotes equality.

What advice would you give to young girls and women who are interested in pursuing careers in diplomacy or international relations?

First and foremost, to young women and those aspiring to pursue a career

in diplomacy, international relations, or any other field, my message is to believe in themselves, the endless possibilities, and the positive impact that vision, creation, and promotion from a female perspective can have on the world. Secondly, never underestimate the importance of interpersonal skills such as active listening, negotiation, and emotional intelligence—essential qualities for fostering dialogue and cooperation in international settings. Diplomacy requires not only knowledge and preparation but also empathy, resilience, and a genuine commitment to building bridges through mutual understanding and the promotion of culture and heritage.



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AWARE

AWARE has played a key role in advocating for women's rights. Through research, policy recommendations, and public education, the organisation has worked towards dismantling systemic barriers to gender equality in Singapore.

CORINNA LIM

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF
AWARE (ASSOCIATION OF
WOMEN FOR ACTION AND
RESEARCH)



Do you believe every woman is an ambassador of change, and how can we empower them to become agents of positive transformation?

Absolutely. Change isn't just about big moments—it's in the everyday choices we make. Maybe you've seen it in a woman who speaks up about an unfair policy at work, who teaches her son to respect his girlfriends, or who refuses to stay silent about harassment. That's what being an ambassador of change looks like.

But real empowerment goes beyond individual actions. It's about breaking down the barriers that still hold women back—like unfair caregiving expectations, workplace biases, and outdated ideas about leadership. If we want true equality, we need policies and cultures that support it.

What are the most significant challenges faced by women in Singapore today, and how can women's advocacy organisations address them?

While Singapore has made progress, gender norms still limit women in leadership, the workplace, and at home. Women remain under-represented in decision-making, bear a heavier caregiving load, and face workplace biases that slow their advancement.

The motherhood penalty, pay gaps, and workplace harassment persist, while survivors of violence still struggle with stigma and systemic hurdles. Advocacy organisations like ours address these through research, policy recommendations, support services, and public education to shift societal norms.

How can Singapore progress further in promoting gender equality, and what role can global collaborations play in achieving this goal?

Singapore has made significant strides in gender equality, but there is still work to be done, particularly in strengthening legal protections against workplace discrimination, improving caregiving policies, and

addressing biases that limit leadership opportunities. Global collaborations, especially Singapore's engagement with CEDAW (the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women), play an important role in this progress. As a signatory, Singapore reports regularly on its advancements and receives recommendations for improvement, with groups like AWARE highlighting gaps and advocating for stronger policies. Past CEDAW recommendations have contributed to better workplace protections, improved paternity leave, and enhanced support for survivors of gender-based violence. By aligning local policies with international best practices, Singapore can continue to drive meaningful progress toward gender equality.



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NTUC

Empowering Women in the Workplace: NTUC U Women & Family's Vision for a More Inclusive Future

YEO WAN LING

NTUC ASSISTANT SECRETARY-GENERAL AND DIRECTOR FOR U WOMEN AND FAMILY (WAF) & U SME



What is the mission and vision of NTUC U Women & Family, and how does it aim to support women and families in Singapore?

NTUC U Women & Family (WAF), an initiative of the Singapore National Trades Union Congress (NTUC), serves as the voice for working women and families. It champions women's career aspirations by advocating for a positive and inclusive work environment that is both flexible and fair while leveraging the Labour Movement network and partnerships to support their career, family, and caregiving needs.

Can you share some of the key initiatives and programs that NTUC U Women & Family has launched to support women's empowerment and family well-being?

WAF has launched several key initiatives to support women's empowerment and family well-being. Project Liquid Gold, introduced in 2013, advocated for better support for breastfeeding mothers at work

and has since evolved into the Better Workplace Campaign, promoting flexible work arrangements and workplace harmony. The Women Supporting Women Mentorship Programme, launched in 2020, provides one-on-one mentorship with women leaders, while the SHE Supports Friendship Circles, introduced in 2024, offers a broader network-based mentorship model, engaging 30,000 women.

To support working caregivers, the C U Back @ Work (CUB) Programme, launched in 2023, helps women re-enter the workforce with flexible work and training options, benefitting nearly 1,000 participants. Additionally, the To-Gather: Power of Women initiative strengthens employer-MDW relationships through regular events, fostering a supportive caregiving ecosystem for families in Singapore.

How does NTUC U Women & Family collaborate with other organizations and stakeholders to advance its mission?

WAF collaborates with the People's Action Party Women's Wing research group to address key workplace challenges affecting women, such as flexible work arrangements, financial burdens, caregiving resources, and concerns about retirement and re-employment. Through research and pilot initiatives, WAF helps develop solutions that support women in balancing their careers and personal responsibilities.

Additionally, WAF works closely with Tripartite Partners - comprising the Government, Unions, and Businesses - to influence policies and implement concrete action plans, such as the 2024 Tripartite Guidelines on Flexible Work Arrangement Requests (TG-FWAR).



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PRESIDENT'S DIPLOMATIC RECEPTION

Commemorating 60 Years of Independence, Singapore's President Hosts Annual Diplomatic Reception



President Tharman Shanmugaratnam hosted the President's Annual Diplomatic Reception (PADR) at the Singapore National Gallery, bringing together heads of diplomatic and consular missions, as well as representatives from international organisations to honour their contributions in fostering diplomatic relations with Singapore. Held annually since 1985, PADR serves as a platform to reaffirm Singapore's commitment to international cooperation and global engagement.

This year's event held special significance as Singapore celebrates 60 years of diplomatic relations with countries across the world. The evening featured a photographic exhibition highlighting key milestones in Singapore's diplomatic history, showcasing how the country has cultivated and expanded its global partnerships over the past six decades. Guests were also treated to musical performances of internationally renowned compositions, reflecting Singapore's role in bridging cultures and fostering people-to-people connections.



In a Facebook post, Senior Minister Lee Hsien Loong shared his thoughts on the occasion, "Happy to meet many friends of Singapore at the President's Annual Diplomatic Reception (PADR). Singapore is a small nation, but we want to play our part in the international community. Our diplomats work hard to foster strong friendships, build mutual understanding, and work for win-win cooperation between countries while upholding our national interests."



FAREWELLS AND WELCOMES

Diplomatic Corps Bids Farewell to Esteemed Ambassadors and Welcomes New Envoys



H.E. Agustin Garcia-Lopez Loaeza, Dean of the Diplomatic Corps and Ambassador of Mexico to Singapore, hosted a reception at Pan Pacific Orchard to bid farewell to outgoing ambassadors and welcome new envoys. The event marked the departure of H.E. Peter Guschelbauer, Ambassador of Austria, H.E. Mehmet Burçin Gonenli, Ambassador of the Republic of Türkiye, and H.E. Sengkeo Pouangpadith, Ambassador of the Lao People's Democratic Republic. At the same time, it extended a warm welcome to H.E. Tran Phuoc Anh, Ambassador of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, and H.E. Stephen Marchisio, Ambassador of France.



In recognition of the Holy Month of Ramadan, the organisers arranged a designated prayer room for attendees who wished to observe their religious obligations before the start of the event.

In his remarks, H.E. Garcia-Lopez Loaeza underscored the continuity of diplomatic service, stating, "Farewells and welcomes are part of our profession, a reminder that we are on the right path, always at the edge of that pendulum that swings us from one end of the world to the other."

As Singapore celebrates its 60th anniversary this year, the Diplomatic Corps continues to foster international cooperation, ensuring that each envoy's tenure leaves a lasting impact on Singapore's global engagements.



NATIONAL DAY CELEBRATIONS

Sri Lanka Celebrates 77 Years of Independence and 55 Years of Diplomatic Relations with Singapore

The High Commissioner of Sri Lanka to Singapore, H.E. Senarath Dissanayake, and Mrs. Dissanayake hosted a reception at Shangri-La Singapore to commemorate Sri Lanka's 77th Independence Day and 55 years of diplomatic relations between Sri Lanka and Singapore. The event, attended by dignitaries, government officials, and business leaders, featured a cultural performance celebrating the rich traditions of Sri Lanka.

The Sri Lankan Food Fest 2025 was officially inaugurated at Shangri-La Line Restaurant, marking the start of a four-day celebration of Sri Lanka's rich culinary traditions. Organised by the High Commission of Sri Lanka in collaboration with Shangri-La Hotel Singapore, the festival ran from 27 February to 2 March 2025, offering a curated selection of authentic Sri Lankan dishes as part of its lunch and dinner buffet.



High Commission of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka in Singapore



Embassy of the State of Kuwait in Singapore



Kuwait Marks 64th National Day and 34th Liberation Day in Celebration

In a momentous celebration, Kuwait marked its 64th National Day and 34th Liberation Day with a distinguished gathering in The Ritz-Carlton Millenia Singapore, underscoring the nation's resilience, progress, and unwavering unity. The event also highlighted a significant diplomatic milestone—2025 marks the 40th anniversary of Kuwait-Singapore diplomatic relations, a testament to the enduring partnership between the two nations. Held in the presence of esteemed dignitaries, the celebration was graced by Her Excellency Dr Amy Khor, Senior Minister of State, Ministry of Sustainability and the Environment, and Ministry of Transport, as the Guest of Honour.

Brunei Darussalam Marks 41st National Day with Strong Diplomatic Ties to Singapore

The High Commission of Brunei Darussalam in Singapore hosted a reception to celebrate the nation's 41st National Day, highlighting its achievements under the leadership of His Majesty Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah. The event, attended by business leaders, dignitaries, and officials from both nations, reinforced the enduring bilateral relationship and outlined areas for future collaboration. H.E. Hajah Noor Qamar Haji Sulaiman, High Commissioner of Brunei Darussalam, welcomed esteemed guests, including Minister Grace Fu, Singapore's Minister for Sustainability and the Environment as the Guest of Honour, and Members of Parliament Mr Henry Kwek and Mr Christopher de Souza.

High Commission of Brunei Darussalam in Singapore



Honouring Tradition and Friendship: Emperor's Birthday Reception in Singapore

The Embassy of Japan in Singapore, under the leadership of H.E. Mr. Ishikawa Hiroshi, Ambassador of Japan, hosted a grand Emperor's Birthday Reception at The Ritz-Carlton to celebrate the 65th birthday of His Majesty Emperor Naruhito. This prestigious event brought together local dignitaries, government officials, business leaders, and members of the diplomatic community, reaffirming the strong bilateral relations between Japan and Singapore, with Josephine Teo, Minister for Digital Development and Information at the Ministry.



Embassy of Japan in Singapore



CULTURAL EVENTS

Thailand and Singapore Mark 60 Years of Diplomatic Relations with Commemorative Reception

H.E. Mrs. Ureerat Chareontoh, Ambassador of Thailand to Singapore, hosted a reception titled “Celebrating 60 Years of Shared Journey between Thailand and Singapore” at the Royal Thai Embassy in Singapore. The event marked the beginning of a series of activities commemorating the 60th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Thailand and Singapore throughout 2025.

Royal Thai Embassy in Singapore



High Commission of Malaysia in Singapore



Malaysia Rings in Chinese New Year 2025 with Festive Celebration in Singapore

The High Commission of Malaysia in Singapore, led by His Excellency H.E. Dato’ Azfar Bin Mohamad Mustafar and his spouse, Mdm Che Norhayati Binti Soib, hosted the annual Chinese New Year Celebration at Rumah Malaysia. This cherished tradition brings together diplomats, business leaders, Malaysians, and media representatives each year to celebrate the Lunar New Year in the spirit of unity and prosperity.

Embassy of the People's Republic of China in Singapore



Chinese Embassy in Singapore Hosts Qipao Exhibition to Celebrate Women’s Achievements and Cultural Heritage

In celebration of International Women’s Day, Madam Yang Qing, Wife of the Chinese Ambassador to Singapore, hosted a distinguished reception alongside the opening ceremony of the Shanghai-Style Qipao (Cheongsam) Singapore Special Exhibition at the China Cultural Centre. Co-hosted by the Chinese Embassy in Singapore, China Cultural Centre in Singapore, and Shanghai Haipai Qipao Cultural Promotion Association. The event brought together esteemed guests, including female ambassadors, diplomats’ spouses, and prominent figures, to honour women’s achievements and cultural heritage.

Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia in Singapore



“Wonderful Indonesia” culinary experience brings the beauty of Indonesian culture to Singapore

The “Wonderful Indonesia” culinary experience, organized by the Indonesian Embassy in Singapore in collaboration with Parkroyal Collection Marina Bay, continues to captivate guests with its stunning showcase of traditional Indonesian dances. Visitors dining at Peppermint restaurant not only indulged in the rich flavors of Indonesian cuisine but were also treated to a cultural spectacle that highlighted the country’s diverse traditions. As part of the event, guests witnessed captivating performances from Balinese, Javanese, and Sumatran dance traditions, each portraying unique aspects of Indonesia’s cultural heritage.

Indonesian Culture Night 2025: Senjakala – A Musical Brings Indonesian Heritage to Life

The Singapore community witnessed a spellbinding performance at the Indonesian Culture Night (ICN) 2025 Senjakala – A Musical, held at the SOTA Drama Theatre. Organised by the Indonesian Students of NTU (PINTU), this annual musical theatre production showcased the richness of Indonesian folklore and history through a contemporary lens. Since its inception in 2007, ICN has evolved into a professional student-led production, attracting thousands of audience members. This year’s performance, Senjakala, brought to life the struggles of Arya Rahma Aditya, a Yogyakarta-born theatre enthusiast determined to defy societal expectations and pursue his passion.



Strengthening Ties Through Green Initiatives: India and Singapore Unite for Tree-Planting Ceremony

A tree-planting ceremony took place at the Singapore Botanic Gardens, where H.E. Dr. Shilpak Ambule, High Commissioner of India to Singapore, and Ms Hwang Yu-Ning, CEO of N Parks Singapore, planted a sapling together. This initiative was part of the #Plant4Mother campaign, an environmental movement encouraging individuals to plant trees in honour of loved ones, fostering a deeper sense of care and responsibility towards nature. The ceremony symbolised the strong environmental collaboration between India and Singapore, aligning with Singapore’s OneMillionTrees movement and India’s wider conservation efforts.

Empowering Women in Manufacturing: SMF Hosts Inspiring Event Ahead of International Women’s Day

In anticipation of International Women’s Day on 8 March, the Singapore Manufacturing Federation (SMF) hosted an engaging event to highlight the role of women in leadership within the manufacturing sector. The event featured the Women in Manufacturing Committee, including Phyllis Ong, Shih Yin Poh, Katherine Ueltschi, Pearl Yu, and Ellen Teo, who shared their experiences and perspectives. The event opened with a keynote address by H.E. Ureerat Chareontoh, Thai Ambassador to Singapore, who provided insights into advancing gender equality in leadership.



Great in the Gardens: A Musical Celebration of UK-Singapore Ties

The British High Commission, in collaboration with the Tanglin Symphony Orchestra, hosted an enchanting evening of music at the Singapore Botanic Gardens, commemorating 60 years of diplomatic relations between the United Kingdom and Singapore. The event, titled Great in the Gardens, featured a diverse selection of British musical pieces, including classical masterpieces and iconic stage and screen compositions. A highlight of the evening was a captivating performance by world-renowned Welsh mezzo-soprano Katherine Jenkins OBE, whose presence elevated the celebration with her extraordinary vocal artistry.



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