

# IN Diplomacy

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## State Visit by HM King Abdullah II and Singapore's Global Collective Action Initiative for Peace and Harmony



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**Mongolian FM**  
**Damdin**  
**Tsogtbaatar**

**Featuring**  
**Ambassador**  
**HE Ong Keng Yong**



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**5th International Yoga Day**

**Russia and Philippines  
Independence Day Receptions**





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## DCCS Says Hello...



The Diplomatic and Consular Corps (DCC) in Singapore gave a moving tribute, on 7th June 2019 at the Fullerton Hotel, Singapore, to its members and their spouses who are leaving their diplomatic missions in Singapore. These luminaries hail from Panama, Britain, the United States and Israel. The goodbye hugs and tears were also accompanied with warm welcomes and introductions for the new heads of mission to Singapore from Colombia, Maldives, New Zealand and Nigeria.

(From l to r): From the podium - warm welcome and introductions from HE James Sinclair, Dean and Ambassador of Chile for the new arrivals:

- HE Manuel Hernando Solano Sossa and wife, from the Embassy of Colombia
- HE Abdulla Mausoom, Ambassador of the Republic Maldives and wife
- HE Joanne Diedre Tyndall, High Commissioner of New Zealand
- Hon. Alade Akinremi Bolaji, Charge d'Affaires e.t. Nigeria High Commission

## ...and Bids Goodbye

(Photos courtesy of the Diplomatic & Consular Corps Singapore)



Presentation of mementos to outgoing diplomats by HE James Sinclair to (from l to r): HE Alfredo A. Spiegel Aponte, Ambassador and Counsel General to Singapore for Panama; HE Scott Wightman British High Commissioner; Hon. Stephanie Syptak-Ramnath, the Chargé d'Affaires, a.i., at the U.S. Embassy and HE Simona Halperin Ambassador of Israel to Singapore & East Timor at Embassy of Israel in Singapore

## LATEST

### SIIA-Clingbael Dialogue: Enhancing EU-Singapore Connectivity

The European Union in Singapore, the Singapore Institute of International Affairs (SIIA) and Clingendael - The Netherlands Institute for International Relations jointly presented the **SIIA-Clingendael Dialogue: Enhancing EU-Singapore Connectivity** on 27th June 2019, at the Mandarin Orchard Hotel.

The conference brought together industry leaders and policy makers from Singapore and Europe to focus on connectivity in key areas such as infrastructure, digital and people-to-people connectivity.

In her welcome remarks, the European

Ambassador to Singapore, HE Barbara Plinkert, said the conference is the second in a series of four this year (the first one, in January, dealt with security cooperation, and the remaining two, to be held later this year, will look at climate change and environment as well as economic relations). Connectivity, she said, is very much at the heart of the EU-Singapore relations as both countries' societies and economies are interconnected but she added, "Our challenges are increasingly global. At the same time the global rules based order and multilateralism are under threat. Singapore and the EU are natural partners in defending these fundamental principles. A powerful signal emphasising this partnership was sent when Singapore and the EU last October when, together, we signed three landmark agreements: the EU-Singapore Free Trade Agreement, the Investment Protection

Agreement and the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement. They underline the deep and multi-faceted connections that already exist between the EU and Singapore."

The keynote speech for the event was delivered by Dr Janil Puthuchear, Senior Minister of State, Ministry of Transport & Ministry of Communications and Information, Singapore. She was followed by Ms Zsuzsanna Felkai-Janssen, the Coordinator for Artificial Intelligence, Directorate General for Home Affairs and Migration, European Commission who delivered the Opening Statement. Three panels tackled the following topics and took questions on:

- Multilateralising Infrastructure
- Deepening Ties through Digital Connectivity
- People-to-People Connectivity - An Unbreakable Bond which looked at what Europe and Asia can do to reinforce and build new channels for people-to-people contact.



## King Abdullah Delivered Keynote Address at Singapore's First ICCS

Singapore convened the first International Conference on Cohesive Societies (ICCS) to drive global collective action for peace and harmony, with King Abdullah II of Jordan delivering the keynote address

**H**is Majesty King Abdullah II ibn Al-Hussein of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan delivered the Keynote Address at the ICCS, bringing his substantial experience as a global leader in promoting interfaith understanding and dialogue across religious communities. His Majesty has led a number of important international initiatives aimed at promoting tolerance and peaceful coexistence. Among these critical interventions are the Amman Message, the UN World Interfaith Harmony Week, and the Common Word Initiative. His Majesty King Abdullah was received by Singapore President Madam Halimah Yacob at the three-day conference. Both heads of state addressed the conference, which was convened at an especially urgent time for dialogue, understanding and collaboration.

Stressing the importance of interfaith efforts, His Majesty King Abdullah II had said, "A dialogue of respect is the rock-bed of all societies. Attacking and excluding others, insulting other peoples and their faiths and convictions – this is no way forward. The future lies in unity and respect, not division and stereotypes."

Under the theme "Many Communities, One Shared Future", the ICCS served as a platform for dialogue on the complex challenges that are widening divides within societies across the globe, and encourage collective action to bridge these gaps. Organised by the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS), with the support of the Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth, the ICCS was held at Singapore's Raffles City Convention Centre.

Ambassador Ong Keng Yong, Executive Deputy Chairman of RSIS said, "This is the first time we are hosting such a dialogue and exchange in Singapore. Singapore is a multi-racial, multi-religious society, and we work hard to keep our country peaceful and secure. At the same time, we are part of the global community, which faces challenges posed by increased connectivity, intensifying identity politics, and infinite technological development. The Conference is a platform for constructive dialogue, to ultimately strengthen mutual trust and understanding across communities." President Halimah, who has championed continuous efforts in building cohesive societies, as well as the sharing of ideas on how to do so, said, "The ICCS will be a platform to facilitate mutual learning among our communities internationally. The purpose of the Conference is clear – to address the challenges to social harmony and ensure that we continue to strengthen the cohesion within our societies. We live in a world increasingly fraught with conflict and danger. The social fabric of many communities is stressed by extremism, exclusivism and



(Photo: Singapore Ministry of Communications & Information / Clement)



polarisation. It is therefore important for us to grow trust across communities. This will always be a work in progress, so it is an effort we must constantly invest in. I thank His Majesty King Abdullah II ibn Al-Hussein of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan for accepting my invitation to deliver the keynote address at the ICCS."

## Jordanian King: Three Areas for Special Attention

### From King Abdullah's Keynote Address:

"...the dynamism I see here is urgently needed to tackle the world's single most important threat—the attack on interfaith harmony, mutual respect, and trust. And I say "single most" because every global challenge in this 21st century demands we resist hatred and exclusion. Economic growth, peacemaking, protecting the environment, global security, inclusive opportunity – all these critical goals require that we cooperate, and combine our strengths to our common benefit."

"We need to defend this global social cohesion with all our might. And allow me to suggest three areas of special attention. First, let us gather our forces, the billions of people on earth who seek peace and harmony. And I'm pleased that two Jordanian initiatives, *The Amman Message* and *A Common Word*, have inspired positive exchanges worldwide. Jordan also sponsored a UN initiative, the annual *World Interfaith Harmony Week*, to encourage far-reaching dialogues of mutual respect. And I congratulate Singaporeans for your sterling participation over the years, with a wonderful focus on young people."

## “QUOTES”

"A second priority must be to take advantage of the tools of the modern world. Now extremists have manipulated today's global connectivity to plot, recruit, arm, and publicise their dark atrocities. We must do better."

"In 2015, seeking a new paradigm for international cooperation in global security, Jordan initiated the Aqaba Process. At the heart of this ongoing effort is addressing the narrative of hate wherever it is found. Dialogue between governments, civil society, and the technology sector has been central. And we are seeing results. In fact, as we have seen time and again, we all do better when we speak to each other, and work collectively."

"A third priority is to commit for the long term. We face a complex and evolving threat. Meeting it demands an holistic approach addressing security and also the issues that extremists exploit. And that means investing in inclusive, sustainable development, so that all people—especially the young people—can share in opportunity, fighting the war of ideas to combat divisive ideologies, and then responding to the world's unprecedented refugee crisis."

## President Halimah: Singapore Experience

### From President Halimah Yacob's speech on the opening day of the ICCS:

"There are many paths to social harmony. Our national journeys are unique, and we see great value for lessons and experiences to be shared, and better understood in our own countries."

"For Singapore, this Conference is important because social cohesion is of existential importance to us. We are a small city-state, with no natural resources save our people. We mark Singapore's Bicentennial this year, a key turning point of our history. Forging unity and drawing strength from diversity has always been, and will continue to be, part of the Singapore story."

"Singapore, along with all countries, faces a common challenge of overcoming the forces of division. We can do better with more ideas, inspiration and partnerships. There is much we can learn from each other's beliefs, practices and experiences, in our effort to build cohesive societies from many communities, and move together towards a brighter shared future for all."

## INTERVIEW **HE Ong Keng Yong**

### Diplomacy On the Offensive

**IN Diplomacy** Publisher & Editor-in-Chief Ms Nomita Dhar's interview with Ambassador-at-Large HE Ong Keng Yong, who headed an international conference in June drawing on the teachings of major religions and their leaders to counter global challenges from terrorism (see page 4). He spoke about diplomacy here comparing past and present. The former Secretary General of ASEAN is currently Executive Deputy Chairman of the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS) and is also Director, Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies; Head of International Centre for Political Violence and Terrorism Research

**T**hank you Ambassador for starting off our Stalwarts series of insight interviews of leading Singapore diplomats. You have been enjoying such an illustrious career and are also well-known for your wry wit. What made you choose to become a diplomat?

I was in law school and there were 146 others in my class. I realised I would still have to compete with them after graduation. Fortunately, there was a career talk on joining the Singapore foreign service in 1978. The team from the ministry was very good and convinced me to give it a shot.

I also thought that with Singapore being a small country that focusses on international trade and global business, it would make sense to me to have a career in international affairs and diplomacy. So I joined the Singapore Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1979. At that time, there were only a few law graduates recruited by the Ministry (he smiles); most were from history, political science, arts and humanities backgrounds. It has been an enriching career, which both my wife and I have enjoyed very much ... and so here we are!

#### Where have you been posted overseas?

The first was four years in Saudi Arabia (two of them in Jeddah and two in Riyadh). It was a good place to work for men but women have to rely a lot on their husband, father or brother to get around then. It was a relatively pleasant posting as that time there was little or no terrorist or security issues. Next was Malaysia (from 1989 to 1991). While Singapore and Malaysia enjoyed close relations, operationally it was not an easy posting as there were many demands from the governments on both sides. But there are many other dimensions in the relationship. We are close because many of us have relatives on both sides of the borders and we have a significant amount of trade and investment in each other's countries. Also, at that time Singapore had only about 30 diplomatic missions throughout the world and a Singaporean abroad in a country without our embassy could, and often, go to the Malaysian embassy if they needed consular help. This is another reason why we are so close! When we have problems in countries in Africa, for example, where we do not have an office, our consular department reaches out to its Malaysian counterpart. This is really very extraordinary! This is one thing I believe quite sincerely: despite all the political to-ing and fro-ing, Singapore and Malaysia are working together in a practical way across a very wide spectrum, whether it is in diplomacy, business or culture and so on.

Another example, we often share common interests and our diplomats discuss with each other to adopt common stands when we go to international conferences such as WTO, WHO or UN meetings. Generally, I have found Singaporean and Malaysian civil servants approach the issues of the day and policy matters from a relatively common and principled foundation. Why? I guess we used to be one country and both



experienced the same British colonial heritage. We operate in the English language and the jargon, nomenclature and processes are more or less similar.

After Malaysia, we went to the USA which was a very different kind of operational environment. It was an open and transparent society and you have to be on your feet all the time responding to questions from the media or any interested party. You have to do a lot of PA (public affairs).

In countries such as Malaysia and Saudi Arabia you might be quite reticent about whatever you were doing or about sharing your opinions. In the capital of the United States in Washington DC you cannot be reticent. If you are, nobody will come and talk to you. If you can spin a yarn and always have a line ready in your head for any question, you will do well there. In other words, become a talking head and that's when you get exposure and recognised.

After the US, I returned to Singapore before going off to become the High Commissioner in India for two years starting in 1996. I was asked by the Prime Minister of Singapore at that time, Mr Goh Chok Tong, to be of service to him and I cut short my posting in India to come back to join the PM's office as his press secretary in 1998. I really enjoyed my posting there as India had been a multi-sensory experience. If you go there with a negative attitude asking yourself "Why must I be here?" you will not enjoy it. If you go there to see the different facets of life and do different things in life you will find you have no time to cover everything!

**For the full transcript visit**  
[www.indiplomacy.com](http://www.indiplomacy.com)

#### Career Highlights

Mr Ong continues to hold the position of Ambassador-at-Large at the Singapore Ministry of Foreign Affairs. He is also Singapore's non-resident High Commissioner to Pakistan and non-resident Ambassador to Iran. Mr Ong has been the Chairman of the Singapore International Foundation (SIF) since 2015.

Mr Ong was High Commissioner of Singapore to Malaysia from 2011 to 2014. He served as High Commissioner of Singapore to India and concurrently Singapore's Ambassador to Nepal from 1996 to 1998.

Mr Ong served as 11th Secretary-General of ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations), based in Jakarta, Indonesia from January 2003 to January 2008.

Mr Ong started his diplomatic career in 1979 and was posted to the Singapore Embassies in Saudi Arabia, Malaysia and the United States of America between 1984 and 1994. From September 1998 to December 2002, he was Press Secretary to the then Prime Minister of Singapore, Mr Goh Chok Tong, while holding senior appointments in the Ministry of Information, Communications and the Arts, and the People's Association in Singapore. From 2008 to 2011, he served as Director of the Institute of Policy Studies (IPS) in the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy at the National University of Singapore.

Mr Ong graduated from the then University of Singapore with a LLB (Hons). He studied at Georgetown University in Washington D.C., USA, and graduated with a MA in Arab Studies.



## Sultan Johor Hari Raya Open House



(Above, from l to r): Johor's Crown Prince, Tunku Ismail Ibni Sultan Ibrahim, Minister Dr V. Balakrishnan, and DPM Heng Swee Keat having a joint audience with the Sultan of Johor, DYMM Sultan Ibrahim Ibni Almarhum Sultan Iskandar. (Below) with their spouses and Permaisuri Johor DYMM Raja Zarith Sofiah. (Photos: Singapore Ministry of Foreign Affairs)

The annual tradition of Singapore leaders visiting Johor royalty for Hari Raya celebrations continued this year when Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Finance Heng Swee Keat, Minister for Foreign Affairs Dr Vivian Balakrishnan, along with their spouses attended the Hari Raya Open House hosted by the Sultan of Johor, DYMM Sultan Ibrahim Ibni Almarhum Sultan Iskandar, at the Istana Bukit Serene on 5th June 2019. The annual visits reflect the warm relations between Singapore and Johor.



## Hari Raya Wishes for Brunei



(Above, 2nd from l): MP Henry Kwek, the Sultan of Brunei, Dr Maliki Osman and MP Joan Pereira. (Photos: Singapore Ministry of Foreign Affairs)

Senior Minister of State (SMS), Ministry of Defence & Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Dr Mohamad Maliki Osman visited Brunei from 6th to 10th June 2019 for Hari Raya Aidilfitri. He was accompanied by his spouse Madam Sadiyah Shahal, MP Joan Pereira and her spouse, Mr Eric Lum, as well as MP Henry Kwek and his spouse. The annual Hari Raya visit reflects the close and longstanding special relationship between Singapore and Brunei.

SMS Maliki and the delegation visited the Istana Nurul Iman to personally convey the Hari Raya wishes of Singapore's leaders to the Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan of Negara Brunei Darussalam, His Majesty Sultan Haji Hassanall Bolkiah Mu'izzaddin Waddaulah (pictured right), the Raja Isteri, Her Majesty Pengiran Anak Hajah Saleha, and other members of the Royal Family. The Sultan reaffirmed the special bilateral ties and excellent cooperation between Singapore and Brunei.



## Official Visit: FM Damdin Tsogtbaatar in Singapore

The Minister for Foreign Affairs of Mongolia visited Singapore from 5th to 8th June 2019 and gave the RSIS Distinguished Public Lecture on Mongolia's foreign policy towards Asia



(Photo: Singapore Ministry of Foreign Affairs)

Minister Tsogtbaatar called on Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Finance Heng Swee Keat, and met Minister for Foreign Affairs Dr Vivian Balakrishnan. During his visit, Minister Tsogtbaatar also delivered the keynote speech at the Singapore-Mongolia Business Dialogue co-organised by the Singapore Business Federation and the Embassy of Mongolia.

In his meeting with his Singapore counterpart, Dr Vivian Balakrishnan, they reaffirmed the warm and friendly bilateral relations and also looked forward to the entry into force of the EU-Singapore Free Trade Agreement (EUSFTA).

Minister Tsogtbaatar also gave a S Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS) Distinguished Public Lecture on the country's foreign policy towards Asia. An abstract from his RSIS lecture on 7th June 2019 stated: "Over the past 20 years, Mongolia has transformed into a vibrant multiparty democracy with a booming economy. It has advanced from an aid recipient to an active player in the international arena due to its progressive cooperation with the international community and the role of the UN and other multilateral architectures. Mongolia aims to promote a balanced relationship with both immediate and the Third Neighbours, to extend the scope of relations bearing in mind not to become economically and politically overly reliant on any country. Beyond our immediate neighbours, expanding relations with the Third Neighbours as a means to diversifying its foreign relations is imperative for a landlocked small country. Mongolia is at the threshold of a major transformation driven by the exploitation of its vast mineral resources, including mining which makes up 20 percent of the GDP today; twice that of a decade ago. Today, Mongolia is a transit hub for 1.5bn people in China and Russia. Using the geographical advantage, Mongolia is planning to become the shortest transit link that connects Asia and Europe."



## COMMUNIQUÉ

# 5th International Day of Yoga: Bringing Yoga to the Community



It is ironic that in this age of self-driving cars and smart handphone watches, more than two billion people in the world today (source: *UN News*) rely on a 5,000-year old system for wellness and fitness! And that number is growing every year as the world celebrated the 5th International Day of Yoga which was held from 15th to 25th June 2019 in Singapore. The inaugural event was held at an iconic Singapore landmark the Gardens by the Bay and officiated by HE Jawed Ashraf the Indian High Commissioner in Singapore. The High Commissioner joined about 100 enthusiasts, who were led in the yoga exercises by volunteers from Vyasa Yoga Singapore. In a brief welcome speech, the High Commissioner expressed his satisfaction with the fact that this year's event is even

bigger than last year as "this year we have grown to 130 centres and 200 sessions over last year's 100 centres and 130 sessions. This is a record for the world as I do not think there is any other city where the International Day of Yoga is being celebrated on this scale. While there will be very large scale events against iconic backgrounds such as the Eiffel Tower in Paris and Trafalgar Square or Hyde Park in London, or Times Square in New York... I think our objective is to take yoga to the community. We are very pleased that in Singapore we are celebrating yoga not just at iconic places but also in community centres, in schools, in colleges, universities, in health care centres, and even in mental health facilities."



## OPIC Chief of Staff Visit Singapore

Eric Jones, Chief of Staff of the Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC), the U.S. Government's development finance institution, traveled to Singapore on 21st June 2019, where he reaffirmed OPIC's commitment to partnering with the country to support development and investment in priority sectors including digital and energy infrastructure across the Indo-Pacific region.

"The United States and Singapore share a strong and longstanding relationship based on goals of stability and prosperity," Jones said. "Through this visit, I'm proud to reaffirm OPIC's commitment to partnering with Singapore to support economic growth across the region and advance prosperity in the Indo-Pacific."

While in Singapore, Jones met with high-level government officials from the Ministry of Finance and Infrastructure Asia, and also discussed high-impact investment opportunities

in the region with local business leaders.

Singapore is the second stop on a four-country Indo-Pacific tour that began in Malaysia and will continue to Indonesia and Laos. Jones is visiting the region to promote U.S. investment, strengthen relationships, and explore opportunities to cooperate with strategic partners to drive economic growth and counter predatory lending practices.

OPIC currently has more than \$3 billion invested across 75 projects in the Indo-Pacific and a long history of collaborating with key partners in the region. Earlier this year, OPIC signed a memorandum of understanding with the Government of Singapore to strengthen coordination in advancing development throughout the region.

The visit comes at a time when OPIC prepares to transform into a new, modernized agency called the U.S. International Development Finance Corporation (DFC) in October 2019. Equipped with a more than doubled investment cap of \$60 billion and new tools

like equity authority, DFC will have more resources to invest in priority regions such as the Indo-Pacific.

### About OPIC

OPIC is a self-sustaining U.S. Government agency that helps American businesses invest in emerging markets. Established in 1971, OPIC provides businesses with the tools to manage the risks associated with foreign direct investment, fosters economic development in emerging market countries, and advances U.S. foreign policy and national security priorities. OPIC helps American businesses gain footholds in new markets, catalyzes new revenues and contributes to jobs and growth opportunities both at home and abroad. **OPIC fulfills its mission by providing businesses with financing, political risk insurance, advocacy and by partnering with private equity fund managers.**

OPIC services are available to new and expanding businesses planning to invest in more than 160 countries worldwide. Because OPIC charges market-based fees for its products, it operates on a self-sustaining basis at no net cost to taxpayers. All OPIC projects must adhere to best international practices and cannot cause job loss in the United States.



## Russia National Day 2019

10th June 2019

Shangri-la Hotel Island Ballroom

Russian Ambassador HE Andrey Tatarinov welcomed the Singapore government's representative for the event, HE Ms Indraneel T. Rajah Minister in the Prime Minister's Office, Second Minister for Finance and Second Minister for Education along with her parliamentary colleagues, Mr Patrick Tay and Mr Vikram Nair as well as guests to the Russian reception celebrating its day of independence when it broke away from the Soviet Union on 12th June 1990. Ambassador Tatarinov highlighted the many milestones achieved during the past year's golden jubilee of Russia-Singapore diplomatic ties. The leading milestone was the State Visit by President Putin to the 33rd ASEAN Summit last November when 16 agreements and memoranda were signed by various agencies and companies covering various sectors that reflected the diversified and multi-faceted ties between both countries. The sectors included trade and investments, oil and gas, petrochemical, intellectual property, higher education and others. The countries' economic relations he said, "have greatly been improving over the years and demonstrate significant potential for further growth."



## Philippine's 121st Anniversary of Independence and 50th Anniversary of Philippine-Singapore Diplomatic Relations

14th June 2019

St Regis Singapore John Jacob Ballroom



(1st row): Ambassador Joseph Del Mar Yap welcome address. (2nd row from left): Guest of Honour, Mr Lawrence Wong, Minister for National Development, in a toast with Ambassador Yap; Singapore MPs (standing far left & right resp) Mr Teo Ser Luck and Mr Darryl David; Vocalblends acapella group and guests some in beautiful Filipino traditional barot saya dresses

It was a double celebration as the Philippines commemorated its 121st Anniversary Proclamation of Independence and this year's golden jubilee of Philippine-Singapore diplomatic ties. In his welcome speech, Philippine Ambassador Joseph Del Mar Yap said this year's national day celebration theme *Kalayaan 2019: Tapang ng Bayan, Malasakit sa Mamamayan* (Freedom 2019: Courage for our nation will serve our people) finds the Philippines as a sovereign nation is stable, peaceful and prosperous with a clear vision of the future, "We want our

people to enjoy a stable and secure society with a comfortable life and it is to this mission that President Rodrigo Duterte has committed himself." Some of the measures to achieve this includes commitment to a massive infrastructure programme to make the economy more competitive, creating more jobs and opening up more business opportunities.

The Ambassador also reported that the Philippine economy is continuing to do well, growth fueled mainly by domestic consumption, government spending and robust services sector.

Since 2010 the annual GDP has grown by an average 6.2%. He also paid tribute to the collective contributions worldwide by Filipinos working overseas who send home millions in remittances - the result of their hard work and sacrifices. He ended by saying since the day that the Philippines established formal diplomatic relations with Singapore on 16th May 1969 bilateral and economic ties have remained strong and vibrant. He also revealed that, "We are eagerly anticipating the State Visit by the President of Singapore Mdm Halimah Yacob to the Philippines later this year."