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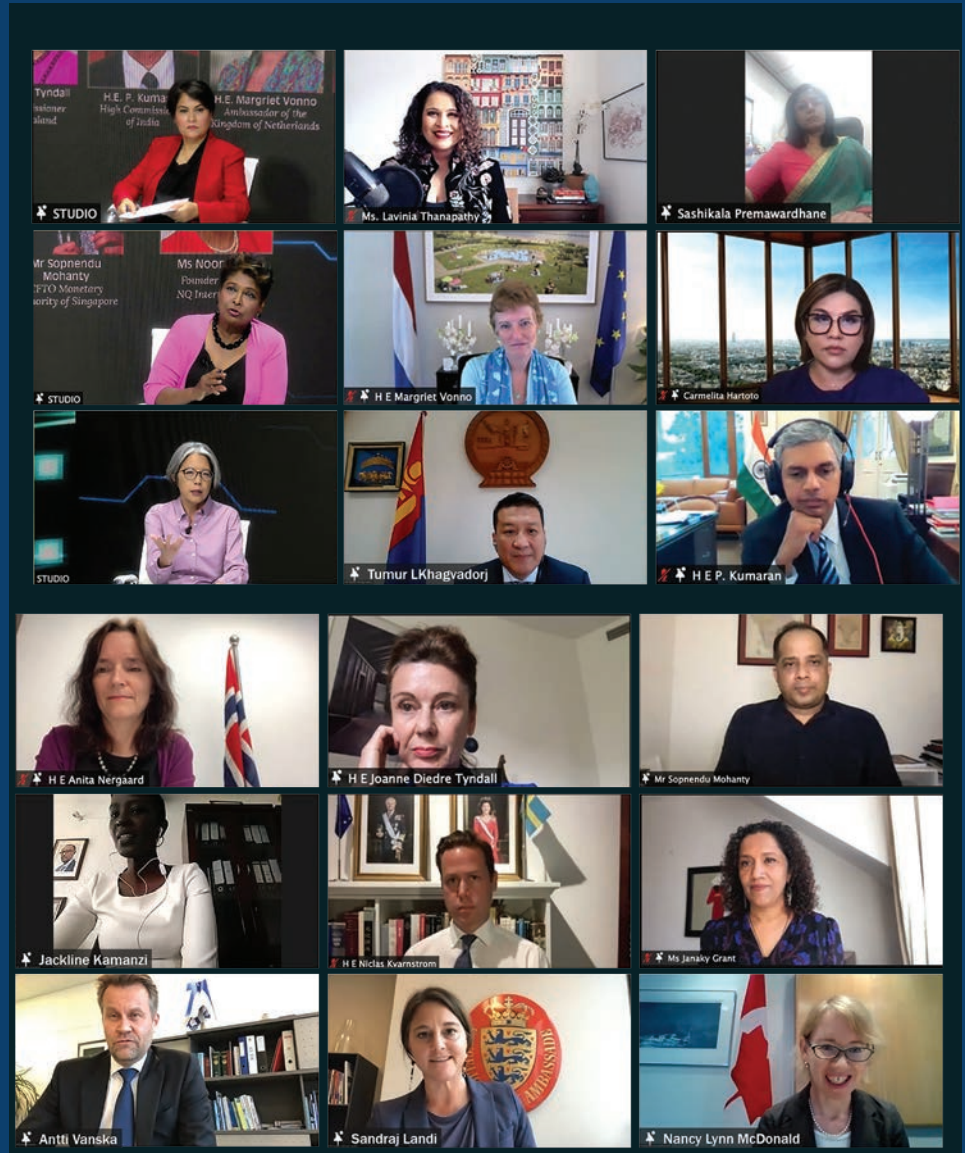
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International Perspectives on Gender Equality

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Presentation of
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Maldives,
and Ukraine

Singapore
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Appointments
for Belgium,
Luxembourg,
the Netherlands,
Portugal and
Rwanda



AMBASSADOR INTERVIEW

H.E. Suryo Pratomo:
Time to Look at
Indonesia in a New
Light for Closer Ties





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Presentation of Credentials

President Halimah Yacob received the credentials of the High Commissioner of Maldives H.E. Ibrahim Shaheeb and Ambassador of Ukraine H.E. Kateryna Zelenko on 19th January 2021 at the Istana. The President received the credentials of H.E. William Hodgman the High Commissioner of Australia on 9th February 2021.

H.E. Ibrahim Shahbeeb High Commissioner of the Republic of Maldives to Singapore



served in various capacities within the Ministry, including as Additional Secretary and Director of Corporate Services.

High Commissioner Shaheeb also previously served as Permanent Secretary of the Maldivian Ministry of Home Affairs from 2013 to 2015. His overseas postings were in Colombo as Third Secretary, New York as Second Secretary, New Delhi as Deputy Chief of Mission, and as Acting High Commissioner in Singapore.

High Commissioner Shaheeb has a Masters in Public Administration from the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, and a Bachelor of Arts (Political Science and Development Studies) from the Australian National University. He has served as a Member of the National AIDS Council and as a Member of the Governing Board of SAARC Coastal Zone Management Centre.

High Commissioner Shaheeb is married and has three sons.

PRIOR to his accreditation to Singapore, High Commissioner Ibrahim Shaheeb was the Chief of Protocol at the Maldivian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, appointed in December 2018. High Commissioner Shaheeb is a career diplomat and started his career in the Maldivian Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1991. He

H.E. Kateryna Zelenko Ambassador of Ukraine to Singapore



Ambassador Zelenko joined the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine in 2002.

Her postings abroad include the Embassy of Ukraine in the Republic of Austria and Permanent Mission of Ukraine to the International Organisations in Vienna, and subsequently, from 2007 to 2011, and 2014 to 2018, Embassy of Ukraine in the Federal Republic of Germany, where she was covering culture, press and public diplomacy issues.

In 2018, she returned to Kyiv to work in the Political Department of the Ukrainian Foreign Ministry. Her appointment as Ukraine's MFA Chief Spokesperson followed shortly thereafter. Kateryna Zelenko obtained her Master in International Relations and Foreign Policy at the Institute of International Relations of Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv, Ukraine.

Ambassador Zelenko is married and has a daughter.

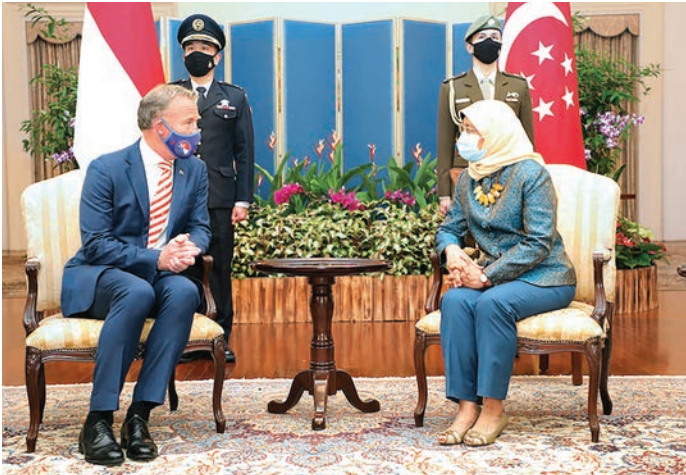
PRIOR to her accreditation to Singapore, Ambassador Kateryna Zelenko served as the Spokesperson of the Ukrainian Foreign Ministry and Deputy Director of the Communications and Public Diplomacy Department.



Why Diplomacy Matters

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

H.E. William Hodgman High Commissioner of Australia to Singapore



Indo-Pacific and Europe to promote economic, cultural and social links with Tasmania. High Commissioner Hodgman has also held various Ministerial positions in the Tasmania Parliament, including Attorney-General, Justice, Tourism, Hospitality and Events, Trade, Prevention of Family Violence, Advanced Manufacturing and Defence Industries, Parks, Heritage, Sport and Recreation, the Arts and Aboriginal Affairs.

High Commissioner Hodgman holds a Bachelor of Arts and a Bachelor of Laws from the University of Tasmania. He was admitted as a Barrister and Solicitor and became a Practitioner of the High Court of Australia in 1994. He has practised law in various roles prior to entering the Tasmania Parliament.

He's married to Nicola Hodgman and they have three children.

PRIOR to his accreditation to Singapore, High Commissioner William Hodgman was most recently the Inaugural Chair of the Australian Business Growth Fund. He was the Premier of the Australian state of Tasmania from 2014 to 2020. As Premier of Tasmania, Mr Hodgman initiated trade missions to the

Appointment of Singapore's Ambassadors to Belgium, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Rwanda

THE Government has appointed Mr Lim Hong Huai (pictured right) as Singapore's Ambassador to the Kingdom of Belgium, concurrently accredited to the European Union, Grand Duchy of Luxembourg and Kingdom of the Netherlands, and Mr Jaspal Singh (pictured below right) as Singapore's Non-Resident High Commissioner to the Republic of Rwanda.



Mr Lim Hong Huai was Singapore's High Commissioner to Brunei Darussalam from March 2016 to November 2020. Prior to this, he was Director-General of the Southeast Asia I Directorate.

Mr Lim joined the Singapore Foreign Service in 1994. He has served in various capacities in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs covering the Middle East, Americas, International Organisations and Southeast Asia. He has also served at the Singapore Consulate-General in Johor Bahru, the Singapore Embassy in Jakarta, and the Singapore Embassy in Washington DC. Mr Lim graduated with a Bachelor of Laws (Honours) from the National University of Singapore in 1994. He obtained a Master of Laws from Harvard University, United States of America in 2005. He is married to Mrs Lim Lay Keng May and they have a son.

Rwanda

Mr Jaspal Singh is a former Colombo Plan scholar who served in the Singapore Government Administrative Service from 1978 to 2004. During his time in Public



Service, he held several senior appointments, including Deputy Secretary in the Ministries of Finance and Transport. He is currently Adjunct Senior Research Fellow at the Institute of Policy Studies.

From 2004 to 2018, Mr Singh was based in London where he served as CEO ComfortDelGro (UK & Ireland). Mr Singh holds a Bachelor of Arts (Economics) and a Bachelor of Engineering (Industrial Engineering) (Honours) from the University of Newcastle, Australia. He is also an alumnus of Harvard, where he attended the Advanced Management Program at

Harvard Business School and obtained a Master's in public administration from the Kennedy School of Government. Mr Singh was awarded the Public Administration Medal (Silver) in 1998.

Singapore's New Honorary Consul in Portugal

THE Government of the Republic of Singapore, with the agreement of the Government of the Portuguese Republic, has appointed Mr Pedro Pereira Gonçalves as Singapore's Honorary Consul in Lisbon, Portugal, with jurisdiction throughout Portugal.



The Honorary Consul will support the work of Singapore's Non-Resident Ambassador to Portugal, Mr Zainal Arif Mantha. The appointment will further enhance Singapore's ties with Portugal. Mr Gonçalves, 47, is the Chief Executive Officer of Movendo Capital, B.V. As Honorary Consul, Mr Gonçalves will perform representational duties as well as extend consular assistance to Singaporeans. In view of the prevailing COVID-19 restrictions in Portugal, visitors to the Honorary Consulate are reminded to abide by local public health regulations.

Ambassador Interview

H.E. Suryo Pratomo: Time to Look at Indonesia in a New Light for Closer Ties

A former journalist, Indonesia's new Ambassador to Singapore believes the strengthening of trust and confidence between the people of the two nations will be pivotal for a better understanding of each other and a catalyst for developing more avenues of growth and opportunity



HIS journey as a media person, as the former president director of private television station Metro TV, brings with it an interesting take on his duties as Indonesia's new Ambassador to Singapore for HE Suryo Pratomo, for whom life's course has taken a completely new turn with his surprise choice as ambassador by President Joko Widodo, replacing outgoing ambassador, HE Gede Ngurah Swajaya, who has served here since 2015.

Despite having worked in the private sector for most of his working life, Ambassador Pratomo appears to have been well grounded to take on the challenges of a diplomatic career with a matured world-view and positive outlook. This seems to have been largely shaped by what he learned at Kompas, where he worked as a journalist for 21 years and served as its editorial chief, inculcating its outlook for offering its readers a balanced view of things, so that they had the right perspective of a situation before forming an opinion about it.

Settling in Singapore during the COVID pandemic, has brought its own lessons for the new resident ambassador at Chatsworth Road. He shares how in the past he found it difficult to control and monitor travelling Indonesians and

"Until now the relations between the two countries have been very good, but I think, we can still further build on the trust and confidence in each other; that's why the role of media is to also put everything in context so that people have a better understanding and greater depth of knowledge about a situation"

asking them to follow the rules. But Singapore revealed to him how people residing in the island nation, regardless of what country they were from, abided by the strict regulations established by the government for their own protection and to contain the contagion. "You know Indonesians have become more paranoid about meeting people because of the situation, but here I feel more confident about stepping out and meeting people because of the strict rules," he says.

Having moved out of media, which has



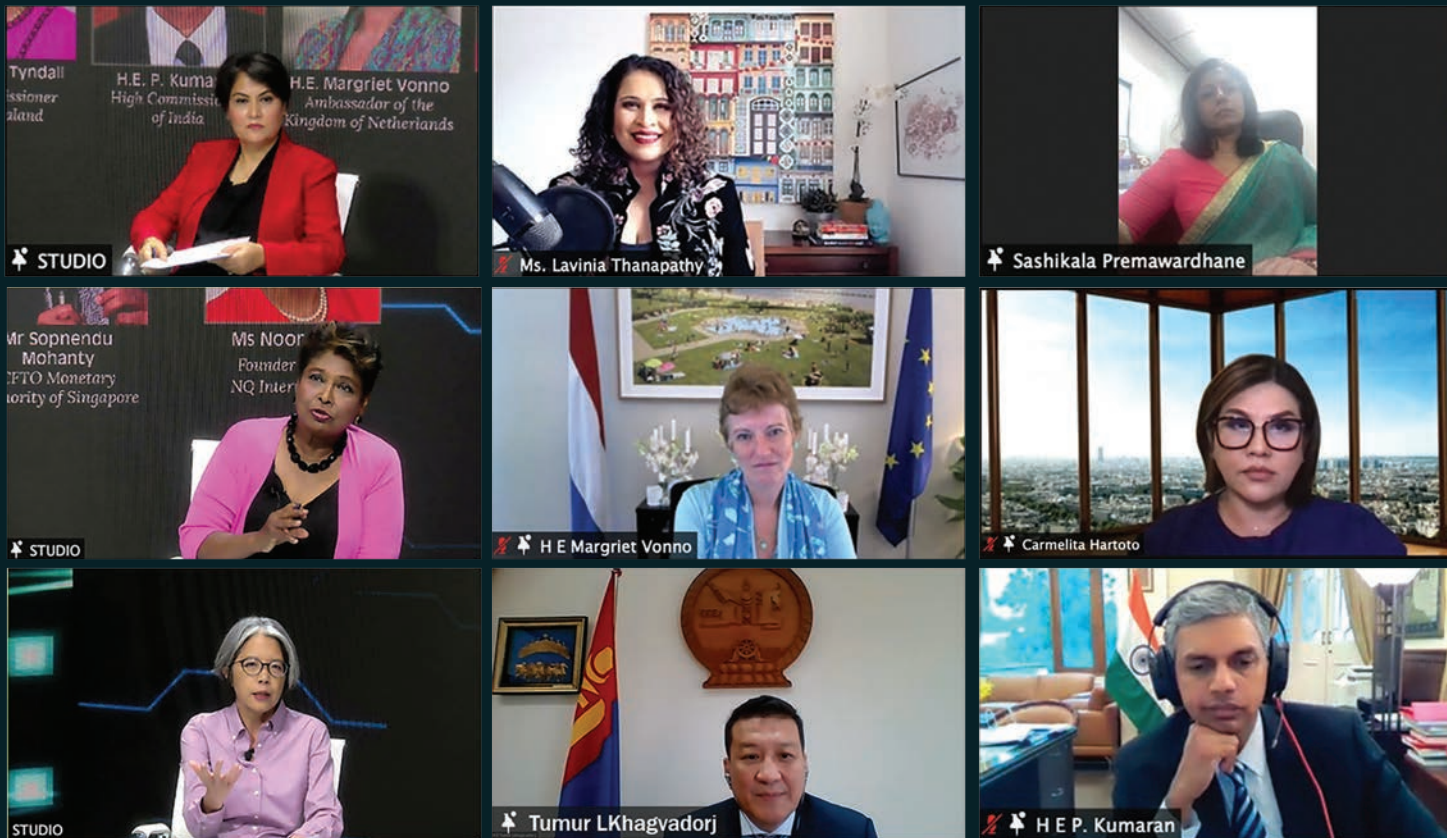
(Left): Amb. Pratomo presented his credentials to President Halimah Yacob on 24th Nov. 2020. (Above): Strengthening ties and cooperation a constant theme he reiterated in his interview

been his comfort zone for so long, he says that it's not going to be easy going the diplomacy route. However, he has been training for it and now feels more secure about conducting diplomatic related matters. He said this also comes from having the support of the embassy staff here who kept him updated on things and apprised him fully about the situation in Singapore before he actually arrived to take up the position.

Regarding being chosen by the President for the post, he shares it had come as a huge surprise when he learnt about this from the deputy foreign minister back February. "I aim to try my best and indeed it is an honour, to do justice to his trust in me to serve my country to the best of my ability," says His Excellency.

Responding to how he sees his role impacted by his previous experiences as a media man, the ambassador shares that earlier the media could criticize the government, but one could not cross a line, it was only when the country was led by a democratic government that the press had full freedom to express and freedom of speech on anything. "But my years at Kompas remind me that the media is not only a tool to criticize. It is also a communicator of hopes, so that's why the role of media is not just to talk about anything lacking on the part of the government or in society. It is also to..."

For the full interview visit
www.indiplomacy.com



Women's Issues Global Perspective: Passionate Call for a Level Playing Field for Women

WIGP featured an impressive line-up of 18 speakers and moderators from Canada, Denmark, Finland, India, Indonesia, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Rwanda, Sri Lanka, Sweden and the UK, who shared the experiences of gender parity in their countries

THE hybrid video conference on Women's Issues Global Perspectives (WIGP) was held on Sun Media' EEXPO. SG portal on 1 March 2021. It turned out to be a lively affair and a great learning experience.

The other event collaborators were the Association of Women for Action and Research (AWARE), the Diplomatic Corps and official sponsor, Olam International.

The date and timing could not be more appropriate for such an event, given the fact that the Government of Singapore has declared 2021 as a year of celebrating SG Women.



To add more power to this significant development, the Singapore government has also scheduled, for later this year, a Gender Equality Review aimed at addressing a host of women's issues to effect a societal mindset change.

The World Economic Forum (WEF) has said in its Global Gender Gap Report 2020, Gender Equality will take 100 years. For the 18 speakers and their support audience at the conference, 100 years is just too long, as was revealed by their deliberations over three sessions at the conference !

The Women's Issues Global Perspectives conference turned out to be a rousing platform for sharing views and deliberating on how women can achieve Gender Parity within this lifetime!

The first session focused on 'Gender Parity and Best Practices'; the second



session was themed 'Women and Leadership' and the third session deliberated on 'Gender Parity and Businesses'.

Speakers during the three sessions touched upon several important issues associated with the under-representation of women in many areas of society... be it in business, administration or politics, the sciences et al, and most particularly in leadership positions, as well as specialized (and better paid) areas.

It was also pointed out that it has been a great disservice to not recognize the personal and professional costs to many women because of this skewed male-dominated culture. Another highlight of the deliberations was the view that the absence or exclusion of women from many of these areas represented a cost to society of intellectual capital. It was also recognized that inclusive leadership was imperative for effecting organisational change. Speakers also shared how important such a platform was to learn from policies that are in practice, related to these issues, in countries all over the world.

The event was kicked off with the opening address of the Ambassador of Mongolia, **H.E. Tumor Lkhagvadorj**, who is also the Dean of the Diplomatic and Consular Corps (Singapore). HE spoke of how even though Gender Equality is a fundamental human right, we as a world have spent a long time providing equal rights and opportunities for men and women.

He pointed out that gender inequality, discrimination, violence and lack of women empowerment are important but sensitive issues to many countries around the world. Although 143 out of 195 countries guarantee in their constitutions, equal rights for men and women, but discriminations still persists, directly or indirectly in many areas, he shared. Mongolia, Ambassador Tumor said, is no exception, but attempts are being made to eliminate discriminations. The government has implemented key policies and national programmes with this aim in mind. He said as a result of the general elections 2020, 13 women were elected as members of parliament - a very first in the history of Mongolia.

Session I - Gender Parity and Best Practices

This session was moderated by **Ms Corinna Lim** Executive Director AWARE, Association of Women for Action and Research. She shared that though Singaporean women appear empowered everywhere, at work places, at social gatherings and in the public space, there are clearly issues that still need to be tackled if it is not one of the countries amongst the top ten reputed for gender equality, even though their journey over the past 60 years has been an impressive one.

Ms Lim pointed out that one of the priority areas, during the nation-building era of PM Lee Kuan Yu was education for both boys and girls to ensure the use of the full potential of the nation's human resources. The foundation building blocks of equal education, smaller families and shared family responsibility liberated women in the 60s and since they have taken flight and never looked back, she said. But the revolution she feels is unfinished for Singaporean women as the country



does not have an ideology of gender equality. She said: "We gave equal education and encouraged them to participate in the labour force, because we needed them for our nation building project." She believed that there was still much work to be done at all levels to ensure gender equality for all people, regardless of class, race or religion.

The first speaker, **H.E. Nancy Lynn McDonald**, High Commissioner of Canada, opined that though Canada has a longstanding commitment to women's rights it still has a lot of work to do. The country has a full-fledged ministry known as Women and

Gender Equality-Canada, and has witnessed huge support in the advancement of women's right from Prime Minister Trudeau, a vocal feminist; he has appointed a gender balanced cabinet, amongst other initiatives for gender equality where tracking is done in a transparent manner, across the board in the relevant ministries about the developments on this front.

H.E. Sandra Jensen Landi, Ambassador of Denmark shared how her country started the process of gender equality 200 years ago, with educational rights for school going boys and girls. Political rights were given to women in 1915. The 1900s journey was an amazing one

as it saw women gain many milestones with economic rights, sexual rights, richest for divorce and children out of wedlock etc, access to abortion, and contraceptives, which was very important because it allowed women to plan the family. In the 60s and 70s they entered the labour market, which kicked off a movement for access to affordable childcare.... Joint responsibility (both parents) on the home front was welcomed but there is always reason to improve things further, she said.

H.E. Antti Vanska, Ambassador of Finland hails from a country that is recognized globally for the emancipation of its women and the high positions they have achieved in government and society. He felt that generally

things are good on gender equality in Finland, but there are some problems still and there is no room for complacency in matters such as domestic violence and the wage gap in the labour market.

Ms Jackline Kamanzi, the Executive Secretary of National Women's Council of Rwanda, who joined the session from Kigali, spoke of how the tables turned in the favour of women after the genocide of 1994. Gender equality she shared is a constitutional principle on which Rwanda builds every policy, every programme. It has worked, she pointed out, because there is an accountability mechanism to see this works. Gender participation is everyone's business she shared.





WIGP 2021 was organised by IN Diplomacy Magazine and women's advocacy group AWARE.
(Above from l to r): Editor in Chief Ms Nomita Dhar and AWARE's Executive Director, Ms Corinna Lim

Session 2 - Women in Leadership

The Moderator for the second session was **Ms Lavinia Thanapathy**, Founding Chair of Inspiring Girls SG. Named as LinkedIn's Top Voices 2020 for her thought leadership on change during the Corona Pandemic, Lavinia's "Embrace the Crazy" Keynote and TEDx is helping people in organisations around the world to develop habits to turn resistance to resilience.

The first speaker **H.E. Anita Nergaard**, Ambassador of Norway pointed out that closing the gender gap is in your interest whether you are a country or a company. She opined that to move the needle on gender equality in leadership it has to come from the top. And to sustain change you need a holistic change. She pointed out that 50% of the cabinet is female and 40% of Norway's ambassadors are women. She shared that in 2003 Norway became the first country in the world to raise the proportion of women on their boards to 40%. Investors too, she said, were happy to have women on boards.

H.E. Joanne Diedre Tyndall, High Commissioner of New Zealand said that her country was one of the earliest countries in the world to give women the right to vote (this was all the way back in 1893). Gender parity, she shared, has come a long way since then. New Zealand also has its own Ministry of Women to advise the government on policies related to women. Almost 50% of its parliament currently is made up of women MPs, making it the highest number since women were first allowed to stand for Parliament in 1919. An area which needs working on is the gender wage gap which

is stuck at 9.5%; also there are less than 30% women on boards.

H.E. High Commissioner Periasamy Kumaran shared that the story of gender parity in India is good, and bad. So there is still a lot of work that been done. India lives in many centuries simultaneously so there are many cultural issues attached to gender equality. He spoke of the matriarchal society of the Nair community in the south and the Khasi and Garo communities in the North East as living examples of societal mores that direct gender equality issues. He also mentioned the programmes initiated on save the girl child and educate the girl child. He pointed out the jury is still out on the 33 seats reserved for women in parliament, though in village panchyats it has been raised to 50%.

Ambassador Margriet Vonno of Netherlands shared that Dutch women are the happiest in the world, but there is always work to do to improve things. "We learn a lot from examples from Asian countries, as it's not easy being a CEO of the company 24/7, while still handling the burden of running a home," she said. Regarding boards she pointed out they always find an excuse to get out of bringing in more women because there is a lot of unconscious bias. "So now we are getting the government to help them find female board members!" she said

The next speaker, **H.E. Sumadhurika Sashikala Premawardhane** High Commissioner of Sri Lanka, said that challenging stereotypes in a patriarchal society is something which really needs to be addressed. Historically, she shared, Sri Lanka has demonstrated a political will and commitment to promote gender equality

Session 3 - Gender Parity and Businesses

The Moderator for the third session **Ms Noor Quek**, Founder & CEO NQ International has 40 years in a broad range of banking and financial advisory services, and as the champion of gender equality. She introduced the first speaker of the session **Ms Janaky Grant**, Group CLO and CHRO, Olam International. Ms Grant, who hails from Kerala's matriarchal Nair community, shared how it impacted on her upbringing and outlook to work in man's world. She shared how Olam has worked with its farming community, both men and women and enabled women have access to agricultural technology and skills and a voice in the decision making. And also, unless they are given a choice and are able to participate in the income generation for their families they will not be able to take the whole agricultural agenda forward.

H.E. Niclas Kvarnström, Ambassador of Sweden shared that his country was the most gender-equal country in the world. He said that they have a feminist policy which attempts to reclaim the feminist term from what is considered 'extremist' and focuses on rights, representation and resources for things to be equal between men and women. In 10 years they aim to have equal board members, but the really big one to be addressed is the pay gap.

Mr Sopnendu Mohanty, Chief Fintech Officer, Monetary Authority of Singapore, said that there was a huge untapped business of 700 billion plus in women financial services, which could mean a lot of money being made by just being smart in dealing just with the women's financial market. When it comes to women as a contributor to the revenue structure almost 1.7 to 1.8 trillion dollars is still unmet credit which is still out there which can be served. Women today control close to 200 trillion dollars of global wealth, which Fintech can capitalize on, he said.

Ms Carmelita Hartoo, President Director Andhika Lines and Vice Chairperson of KADIN Indonesia shared that the role of women in Indonesia's maritime sector is minimal. That said, there are 25,000 female seafarers in the country, a few of whom have risen to become skippers of ships, which shows women do have the ability to be on par at men.

Dr V Balakrishnan's Working Visits to Brunei, Malaysia and Indonesia

Singapore Foreign Minister Dr Vivian Balakrishnan undertook a whirlwind tour through the region visiting Brunei, Malaysia and Indonesia. The visits were aimed at reaffirming the strong relations and strengthening the close partnership Singapore has with its closest neighbours to recover from the pandemic

BRUNEI

MINISTER Balakrishnan's first stop was Brunei on 22nd March 2021 where he had an audience with H.M. Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah Mu'izzaddin Waddaulah, Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan of Brunei Darussalam. Minister Balakrishnan reaffirmed the special and unique relationship between Singapore and Brunei, including their strong defence ties, the Currency Interchangeability Agreement established since 1967, and long-standing healthcare cooperation. Minister Balakrishnan conveyed an invitation from Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong to His Majesty to visit Singapore soon. Minister Balakrishnan was hosted to lunch by his counterpart Brunei Minister of Foreign Affairs II Dato Erywan Pehin Yusof. They discussed ASEAN's role in regional cooperation under Brunei's Chairmanship.



Dr Vivian Balakrishnan in audience with H.M. Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah Mu'izzaddin Waddaulah, Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan of Brunei Darussalam

vaccination rollout and vaccine certification. Moving forward, how COVID-19 affects the global situation, regional issues, interests." At night he had a dinner meeting with Senior Minister and Minister of Defence Sato' Sri Ismail Sabri Yaakob.

The next day Minister Balakrishnan had an audience with H.M. Yang Di-Pertuan Agong XVI Sultan Abdullah Ibni Sultan Ahmad Shah and he also called on Malaysia's Senior Minister and Minister of International Trade and Industry Dato' Seri Mohamed Azmin Ali.

MALAYSIA

On 23rd March 2021, Minister Balakrishnan met Malaysian Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin and Foreign Minister Hishammuddin Hussein. He conveyed in person the invitation by Singapore's Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong to visit Singapore for the 10th Malaysia-Singapore Leaders' Retreat. In a joint press conference Minister Hishammuddin Hussein said: "We discussed this exchange of visits of our leadership, both Prime Ministers. Secondly, on travel lanes and arrangements, the post-COVID-19



Meeting with President Joko Widodo at Istana Merdeka (Photo: Biro Pers Sekretariat Presiden)

INDONESIA

During his 2-day visit to Indonesia which started on 25th March 2021 Minister Balakrishnan met President Joko Widodo to lay the groundwork for the next



Singapore's Foreign Minister Dr V. Balakrishnan meeting H.M. Yang Di-Pertuan Agong XVI Sultan Abdullah Ibni Sultan Ahmad Shah of Malaysia

Singapore-Indonesia Leaders' Retreat with Singapore's Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong. He also met his counterpart HE Retno Marsudi and in separate meetings: Coordinating Minister for Maritime Affairs and Investments Luhut Pandjaitan, Coordinating Minister for Economic Affairs Airlangga Hartarto, Minister of Finance Sri Mulyani Indrawati, Minister of State-Owned Enterprises Erick Thohir and Minister of Tourism and Creative Economy Sandiaga Uno. Minister Balakrishnan also met other prominent Indonesian personalities and held discussions with Jakarta Governor Anies Baswedan in a breakfast meeting.

New US Secretary of State Blinken

MINISTER for Foreign Affairs Dr Vivian Balakrishnan had a telephone call with Secretary of State Antony Blinken on 10 February 2021. Minister Balakrishnan congratulated Secretary Blinken on his appointment. They reaffirmed the excellent and longstanding relations between Singapore and the United States, and the strong and growing cooperation in defence and security, as well as in trade and investment. They also agreed to collaborate closely on the global response to COVID-19 and climate change. Minister Balakrishnan welcomed the Biden Admin-



File photo of Minister Balakrishnan with Antony Blinken in Washington DC in 2016

istration's efforts to deepen engagement of the region and strengthen cooperation with ASEAN and other regional partners. Minister Balakrishnan and Secretary Blinken also exchanged views on regional developments, including the situation in Myanmar.

Singapore Welcomes Canada's Minister of Foreign Affairs Strengthening Engagement with ASEAN

DR Vivian Balakrishnan had an introductory video call with Canadian Minister of Foreign Affairs Marc Garneau (pictured right) on 9 February 2021. Foreign Minister Balakrishnan and Minister Garneau reaffirmed the warm and friendly relations between Singapore and Canada and a shared outlook on key issues such as the importance of multilateralism and free trade. They welcomed the growing bilateral trade and economic ties following the entry into force of the **Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific**



Partnership (CPTPP), Singapore's first FTA with Canada. They also exchanged views on regional and international developments. Minister Balakrishnan welcomed Canada's efforts in strengthening its engagement of ASEAN and the region.

New US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan

DR Vivian Balakrishnan had a telephone call with National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan on 16 February 2021 to congratulate him on his appointment. Both reaffirmed the wide-ranging cooperation spanning defence and security, trade and investment, and cybersecurity. Minister Balakrishnan expressed support for the United States' leadership role in tackling important global issues such as the COVID-19 pandemic and climate change and expressed Singapore's readiness to cooperate with the United States on these fronts. Minister Balakrishnan and Mr Sullivan exchanged views on international and regional developments; they also agreed to work together to expand the United States' engagement of the Asia-Pacific region, especially ASEAN.

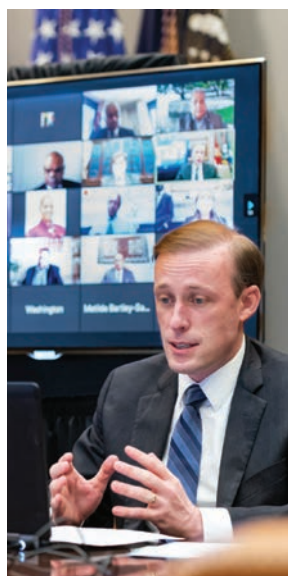


Photo: National Security Council Tweet

Singapore-UK Partnership for the Future



UK Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab and Singapore Foreign Minister Dr V Balakrishnan issued the Joint Political Statement on 4th March 2021

SINGAPORE and the United Kingdom launched the Partnership for the Future in 2019 to celebrate the nations' historical links, cooperation in security and defence and research and innovation and look forward in the future towards collaboration on next-generation issues such as digital trade, emerging technologies, and climate action.

Both countries have issued a joint political statement on the 4th of March 2021 saying that it will build on this, noting the recent entry into force of the UK-Singapore Free Trade Agreement on 11 February 2021, and joint aim to commence negotiations on a bilateral Digital Economy Agreement in early Spring 2021 as well as commitment to enter into negotiations to deliver updated, high standard and ambitious investment protection commitments within the next two years.

The Joint Statement also reaffirms the countries' commitment under the Partnership for the Future to further broaden and deepen longstanding ties especially under the following five areas:

- **Economic and Trade**
- **Climate and Sustainability**
- **Technology**
- **Knowledge and Education**
- **Security and Resilience**

Following the issue of the Statement Minister Balakrishnan also said: "We had a good discussion on ways to enhance cooperation bilaterally and in multilateral fora like ASEAN and COP26, as well as regional developments in Europe and the Asia-Pacific, including Myanmar.

The full text of the Statement can be viewed at www.indiplomacy.com

Smart Cities and Cybersecurity Tackled in Middle East eConference

THE National University of Singapore's (NUS) Middle East Institute, the organisers of the **'Meeting the Future Together: Opportunities and Challenges for the Indo-Pacific and the Middle East'** virtual conference had Singapore's Foreign Minister Dr Vivian Balakrishnan as one of the key note speakers. He spoke on the topic of *The Role of Technology – Building Resilience through Smart Cities and Cybersecurity*.

He posited that while COVID-19 has not changed history, it has exposed the pre-existing defects and has accelerated on-going technological, economic, social and strategic tsunamis sweeping across the world; he also offered these four points for consideration:

- The rapid rise and use of Digitalisation to meet the crisis arising from the pandemic.
- Even as the battle was going on during the pandemic, he said that leveraging digitalisation can facilitate a more robust economic recovery post pandemic: "We must never waste a crisis. This is obvious in the potential of the digital economies in Southeast Asia and in the Middle East."
- Digitalisation needs a safe, secure, and stable cyberspace. Countries will be exposed to new risks and vulnerabilities. He said "Disinformation and conspiracy theories have spawned info-pandemics in their own right. Malicious cyber activities will continue to be a clear and present danger, especially if there were a successful attack on Critical Information Infrastructure."
- At the international level, common standards need to be established. He pointed out: "There is a need to develop frameworks to promote digital trade across borders. There is an ongoing effort by a group of WTO (World Trade Organisation) members to update global trade rules in order to facilitate this digital trade." He also said: "We also need to continue dialogue at the UN to develop international rules and norms for responsible State behaviour in cyberspace."

For the full speech visit
www.indiplomacy.com

India HC Brings Bollywood's Best



ON the opening night of the 6th edition of the **Indian Film Festival** the High Commissioner of India to Singapore H.E. P. Kumaran and Director of the NUS Alumni Team, Bernard Toh (both pictured above) jointly inaugurated the event. The film festival is jointly presented by the Indian High Commission and the National University of Singapore Alumni Relations. Audiences were able to view the films either physically at the Shaw Foundation Alumni House or virtually in the comfort of their homes. A stellar collection of movies were shown that included *Badrinath Ki Dulhania* (*Badrinath's Bride*), *Kahaani* (*Story*) and *Queen*, which represents some of India's best in celluloid.

Mr Toh provided some background information on the festival: "The first such Festival was held in 2015, marking the completion of 50 years of India-Singapore diplomatic relations. As you all know, the Indian film industry is the largest in the world, producing about 1500 films per year in over 40 languages, creating a box-office value worth nearly US\$3 billion. It has come a long way since the first full-length Indian feature film – *Raja Harish Chandra* – which was released in 1913.



In partnership with the Indian High Commission the festival's objective has been to bring glimpses of the flourishing creativity of Indian Cinema to a Singapore audience, to enhance their understanding of contemporary India, and indeed, the Indian art scenario.

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CARIBBEAN CINEMA SHOWCASE

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