

# IN Diplomacy

MISSION TO COMMUNICATE

Supported by



DIPLOMATIC AND CONSULAR CORPS SINGAPORE

[www.indiplomacy.com](http://www.indiplomacy.com)

Issue 67 May-June 2021

## Singapore - Australia 6th Annual Leaders' Meeting



### Also inside

**Special ASEAN-China  
Foreign Ministers' Meeting,  
Chongqing**

**Singapore Continues  
Participation in Arctic  
Council**

**ASEAN Youth  
unConference Launch**

**Singapore Joins Eureka  
Network**

### AMBASSADOR INTERVIEW

**H.E. William Hodgman:  
High Commissioner  
of Australia**

**New  
Challenges  
and  
Opportunities**





**PUBLISHER** Sun Media Pte Ltd

**EDITOR-IN-CHIEF** Nomita Dhar

**EDITORIAL** Ranees Sahaney

**DESIGN & LAYOUT** Syed Jaafar Alkaff

**PHOTOGRAPHS** Michael Ozaki

Photos appearing in this issue  
also courtesy of:

- Singapore Prime Minister's Office
- Singapore Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- Singapore Ministry of Communication & Information
- Istana.org.sg

**Contact**

Sun Media Pte Ltd  
20 Kramat Lane #01-02 United House,  
Singapore 228773.  
Tel: (65) 6735 2972 / 1907 / 2986  
Fax: (65) 6735 3114  
Email: edit@sunmediaonline.com

**Website** www.indiplomacy.com

For advertising enquiries contact:  
Ms Nomita Dhar m: (65) 9831 1675  
Email: nomita@sunmediaonline.com

For editorial enquiries contact:  
Syed Jaafar Alkaff m: (65) 8485 8249  
Email: edit@sunmediaonline.com



© Copyright 2021 by Sun Media Pte Ltd. The opinions, pronouncements or views expressed or implied in this publication are those of contributors or authors. They do not necessarily reflect the official stance of any other organisation or authorities. While every effort has been made to ensure accuracy of all information contained, the publisher cannot be held liable for loss incurred in any way whatsoever by a company or a person relying on this information.

**CONTENTS** **ISSUE 67**



Page 5

**PRESENTATION OF CREDENTIALS**

- 3 ■ Republic of Turkey

**ASEAN EVENTS**

- 4 ■ Special ASEAN-China Foreign Ministers' Meeting, Chongqing  
■ ASEAN Youth unConference Launch

**SINGAPORE VISIT**

- 5 ■ 6th Singapore-Australia Annual Leaders' Meeting

**VISIT & INTERNATIONAL EVENTS**

- 6 ■ First Visit as Malaysian FM  
■ Singapore Continues Participation in Arctic Council  
■ Singapore Joins Eureka Network as Associate Country



Page 6

**AMBASSADOR INTERVIEW**

- 7 ■ H.E. William Hodgman

**COMMUNIQUE**

- 8 ■ DCC Activities Go On Despite COVID-19



Page 8

Supported by



**DIPLOMATIC AND CONSULAR CORPS SINGAPORE**



## Presentation of Credentials

President Halimah Yacob received the credentials of the Ambassador of the Republic of Turkey H.E. Mehmet Burçin Gönenli via video conference on 25th May 2021 at the Istana.

H.E. Mehmet Burçin Gönenli Ambassador of the Republic of Turkey to Singapore



Photo: Ministry of Communications and Information

*"Pleased to receive credentials from Ambassador of the Republic of Turkey Mr Mehmet Burçin Gönenli via a video conference. I welcomed him to Singapore and wished him a fruitful tenure here. We have reverted to having the foreign Ambassadors present their credentials to me virtually during this Phase 2 (Heightened Alert). This allows the Ambassadors to officially represent their respective countries while also reducing the interactions between the different parties involved in such an event. Given the tightened measures, we have to adapt how we carry out different activities at work and in our lives, and thankfully, technology has enabled us to do so without much disruption."*

**- President Halimah Yaacob**

**PRIOR** to his posting to Singapore, Ambassador Gönenli was the Deputy Director General for NATO and Euro-Atlantic Security and Defence Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Turkey.

Mr. Gönenli is a career diplomat with 22 years of experience in bilateral and multilateral diplomacy. He joined the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1995. He served at the Turkish Embassy in Poland, as Third Secretary (February 1999 to September 2003), and at the Turkish Embassy in Azerbaijan, as Second Secretary (October 2001 - September 2003). Mr. Gönenli attended the NATO Defence College in Rome (September 2003 - February 2004) before returning to the General Directorate for International Security Affairs at the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as First Secretary. Between September 2005 and October 2009 he served at the Turkish Permanent Representation to NATO.

Mr. Gönenli was assigned as the Head of Department for Afghanistan and Pakistan at the Deputy Directorate General for South Asia of the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs (October 2009 - September 2011). Between September 2011-September 2015 Mr. Gönenli was once again posted to the Turkish Permanent Representation at NATO, as the Defence Counsellor.

Mr. Gönenli returned to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Ankara in September 2015 and was appointed as the Head of Department for NATO and Euro-Atlantic Security and Defence Affairs. As of 1 December 2017 he was designated as the Deputy Director General for NATO and Euro-Atlantic Security and Defence Affairs, underneath the Directorate General for International Security Affairs.

Mr. Gönenli holds a Bachelors Degree of Science in international relations from the Faculty of Administration and Political Sciences of the Middle East Technical University. He is fluent in English. He was born in Ankara, Turkey in 1973.

He is married to Anetta Afekt. They have a daughter and a son



Singapore's national flower is a hybrid orchid - the Vanda Miss Joaquim

## Why Diplomacy Matters

**SINGAPORE** has more than 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's mission is to communicate and be a bridge between the diplomatic community and Singaporeans.

## Special ASEAN-China Foreign Ministers' Meeting, Chongqing

Held in conjunction with the 30th anniversary of ASEAN-China Dialogue Relations this year, high on its agenda is strengthening cooperation especially in the region's recovery from COVID-19 pandemic

**SINGAPORE'S** Foreign Minister Dr Vivian Balakrishna travelled to Chongqing, China from 6th to 7th June 2021 to attend the ASEAN-China Foreign Ministers' meeting as well as a bilateral meeting with PRC State Councilor and Minister of Foreign Affairs Wang Yi. He was later hosted to a dinner by State Councillor Wang for the ASEAN Heads of Delegation.

In a door stop interview with Singapore media via phone on 7th June 2021 Dr Vivian said it was an important commemorative meeting marking the 30th anniversary of ASEAN-China diplomatic relations: "The last three decades have been momentous. Within China, clearly, the economic development has been incredible. Within ASEAN itself, development, both economically as well as strategically, has also been very significant. For instance, everyone knows that China has been ASEAN's largest trading partner since 2009. But what many people may not be aware of is that last year, ASEAN was China's largest trading partner.

The Singapore Minister also pointed out there have also been challenges in the past three decades, for example, the situation in the South China Sea. However the occasion was to reflect on successes and how to move forward given the challenges that confront both China and ASEAN. He said there were three areas of focus:

■ **Meeting the danger posed by COVID-19:** There was very effective cooperation between China and ASEAN since last year, in terms of China's support for vaccination, provision of essential medical supplies, including gloves, masks, and PPE (Personal Protection Equipment). Assuming the situation stays under control discussions and negotiations will be carried out for the careful and safe re-opening of borders.

■ **Developing the economy:** There is favourable feedback on the way trade and investments have been developing in particular along the Belt and Road, and the opportunities for investment in connectivity and infrastructure that B&R provides for Southeast Asia. Particularly for Singapore, the China-Singapore



(Chongqing) Connectivity Initiative (CCI), and the CCI-New International Land-Sea Trade Corridor, and how this concept links both the B&R to Southeast Asia and beyond.

■ **Achieving sustainable development goals:** China has announced new, ambitious goals for green and sustainable development and what Singapore is doing with its "Green Plan" as well as the other opportunities across Southeast Asia - these all provided good material for discussion and ample opportunities for collaboration in the future.

### Difficult Issues

Dr Vivian also highlighted that ASEAN has also been working in the last few years on the Code of Conduct (COC) in the South China Sea: "This morning, the officials met at the Senior Officials' Meeting on the Implementation of the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea (SOM-DOC). All this is preparatory work for what I hope will be progress in the years to come, to a substantive COC, which will improve stability, security, peace and opportunities for prosperity across Southeast Asia and in the South China Sea, which is between us and China."

He also expressed the meeting's disappointment in the "very, very slow progress" on the topic of Myanmar: "I think all of us were united on the need for an immediate cessation of violence, the release of (political) detainees, and for meaningful negotiations and dialogue to occur amongst all parties. The appointment of an ASEAN Special Envoy only makes sense if there is a genuine desire within Myanmar for genuine dialogue, negotiation, and reconciliation. This is still work in progress."

## ASEAN Youth unConference Launch

The virtual conference hopes to cultivate an ASEAN network of youth leaders



**MORE** than 400 youth leaders from the region joined the inaugural ASEAN Youth unConference on 29th May 2021 with its theme 'Active Citizenship and Social Media'. Guest of Honour Dr Mohamad Maliki Osman, Minister in the Prime Minister's Office, Second Minister for Education & Foreign Affairs, was joined by Deputy Secretary-General of the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community Department, H.E. Kung Phoak, who graced the event as Special Guest.

Minister Maliki Osman in his opening address congratulated the organiser Jamiyah Singapore Youth Group (with the support of the Singapore-ASEAN Youth Fund by the National Youth Council of Singapore) for bringing together youth leaders from across ASEAN during the COVID-19 pandemic.

He highlighted that by 2038 the youth population will reach 220 million (compared to 200 million today) and they make up approx. 30% of the regional population, so it is not surprising that ASEAN members are naturally focussing on youth leadership development. The Minister said: "Our ability to grow as a region hinges on cross-border collaboration and that continued growth, peace and prosperity in ASEAN depends on cultivating in our youth a belief in strong multilateral and bilateral ties among ASEAN Member States and its peoples. This importance in regional friendships saw Singapore launch the ASEAN Youth Fellowship (AYF) in 2018. We hope that initiatives like the AYF and today's unConference will provide young leaders the opportunity to network, explore collaborations, and work together in establishing a more cohesive and united ASEAN."



## 6th Singapore-Australia Annual Leaders' Meeting

Prime Ministers Lee Hsien Loong and Scott Morrison pledged their commitment to strengthen the Singapore-Australia Comprehensive Strategic Partnership (CSP)



**SINGAPORE'S** Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong and Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison held the 6th Singapore-Australia Annual Leaders' Meeting at the Istana on 10th June 2021, that was followed by a virtual Joint Press Conference.

A Singapore Ministry of Foreign Affairs media statement described how the two Prime Ministers reaffirmed the excellent state of bilateral relations and their shared commitment to strengthen the Singapore-Australia Comprehensive Strategic Partnership (CSP).

The Prime Ministers noted the good progress made in the CSP over the past year despite challenges presented by COVID-19. They also welcomed the entry into force of the **Treaty on Military Training and Training Area Development** and the **Digital Economy Agreement (DEA)** in December 2020.

The Prime Ministers agreed to keep the CSP forward-looking by furthering cooperation in emerging areas such as **Low-Emissions Solutions** and **FinTech**.

### About the CSP

The CSP is a broad ranging agreement covering five main areas:

- Economics and Trade
- Defence and Foreign Affairs
- Science and Innovation
- Digital Economy
- People-to-People (Ties)

Building on the MOU on low-emissions solutions signed in 2020, both sides will embark on a public-private partnership on low-emissions maritime and shipping.

The Prime Ministers also discussed exploring a broader partnership on a **Green Economy Agreement** to facilitate trade and investment in environmentally sustainable goods and services. Building on the DEA, both countries will start discussions on a FinTech Bridge to enhance cooperation in FinTech policy and regulation. The Prime Ministers also welcomed the signing of an MOU on healthcare and health technologies.

The Prime Ministers agreed on the need to focus on COVID-19 economic recovery to position their countries strongly for the future. In that regard, they discussed how Singapore and Australia can resume two-way travel in a safe and calibrated manner, with *priority for students*, when both sides are ready. They welcomed the ongoing discussions between officials on both sides on a possible **Air Travel Bubble** and the mutual recognition of health and vaccination certificates.

The Prime Ministers also exchanged views on key regional and global developments. Prime Minister Lee welcomed Australia's contributions to regional initiatives to combat COVID-19, and affirmed Singapore's commitment to work together with Australia to support the region's COVID-19 recovery.

### Excerpts from the Joint Press Conference



PM Lee Hsien Loong

"We discussed how 2-way travel between Singapore and Australia can eventually resume in a safe and calibrated manner when both sides are ready. We need to maintain these people-to-people flows to maintain our excellent bilateral relationship. We need to prepare the infrastructure and processes to be ready to do this and it starts with mutual recognition of (most likely digital) health and vaccination certificates. Then we can start small with an Air Travel Bubble to build confidence on both sides."



PM Scott Morrison

"The Fintech Bridge is something I am particularly excited about. Previously we were able to secure such a bridge with the UK and now with Singapore, which I think is tremendous. Singapore is one of the leading economies in the world when it comes to financial technology. For Singapore and Australia to connect in this way will only add further to both to our countries' success."

"Equally important is cooperating in low emissions technology, especially hydrogen, which is the key game changing fuel for the future. Australia has always played a significant role in meeting the energy needs of Asia, particularly Southeast Asia. We intend to continue to do that by ensuring the achieving of technology that will enable us to continue to support our many partners in the region in their energy needs. I welcome the fact that we are making so much progress with projects like Sun Cable which can see Singapore homes powered by solar panels from Australia. Particularly the work we are doing in the maritime field and the important use of hydrogen, that is an obvious place of partnership between Australia and Singapore."

For the full text of the Joint Statement by the Prime Ministers of Singapore and Australia visit [www.indiplomacy.com](http://www.indiplomacy.com)

### First Visit as Malaysian FM

**DATO'** Seri Hishammuddin Tun Hussein undertook his first Official Visit to Singapore in his capacity as Minister of Foreign Affairs on 1st and 2nd May 2021. He also called on PM Lee Hsien Loong and Senior Minister and Coordinating Minister for National Security Teo Chee Hean. FM Hishammudin also discussed bilateral cooperation with his counterpart Dr Vivian Balakrishnan (pictured above



right) on the re-opening of borders in a gradual and safe manner; cross-border travel for compassionate reasons, and agreements on the mutual technical verification of health certificates.

### Singapore Continues Participation in Arctic Council

Singapore supports sustainable development of the Arctic and will work with incoming Chair Russia to actively participate in various Council Working Groups



*Reduction of marine litter or plastic pollution on the Arctic coast was one of the top priorities during Icelandic Chairmanship. (Photo: arctic-council.org)*

**SENIOR** Minister of State (SMS), Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of National Development, Sim Ann represented Singapore virtually at the 12th Arctic Council (AC) Ministerial Meeting on 20th May 2021. Singapore's Special Envoy for Arctic Affairs Sam Tan and officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs also attended the meeting.

According to a Ministry of Foreign Affairs media release the meeting reviewed the AC's progress under Iceland's two-year Chairmanship which was then handed over to Russia for the term 2021 to 2023.

SMS Sim delivered a statement expressing Singapore's readiness to continue working with Arctic States and the incoming AC Chair Russia on issues such as sustainable development, providing assistance to the Arctic Indigenous Peoples, youth engagement, and the conservation of Arctic flora and fauna. Singapore's statement is appended.

As a low-lying coastal state, Singapore is vulnerable to rising sea levels; the

Arctic is a barometer of climate change. Singapore contributes to the climate change agenda by participating in high-level international Arctic events, and raising regional awareness of Arctic issues. This is the fourth time Singapore has attended the AC Ministerial Meeting. Since joining the AC as an Observer State in 2013, Singapore has been supporting the sustainable development of the Arctic. This includes active participation in various AC Working Groups, and sharing Singapore's best practices and knowledge in areas such as preventing oil spills, conserving biodiversity, marine shipping, and sustainable energy development.

#### About the Arctic Council

It is the leading intergovernmental forum for discussing political, economic, environmental and scientific issues concerning the governments and inhabitants of the Arctic region. The AC work also includes issues such as sustainable development and environmental protection of the Arctic region; disseminating information, encouraging education, and promoting interest in the Arctic.

### Singapore joins Eureka Network as an Associate Country

**SINGAPORE** officially joined the Eureka network as an Associate Country on 18th May 2021. Under the agreement, Enterprise Singapore (ESG) will support the facilitation and funding of joint innovation projects between companies from Singapore and Eureka member countries, and explore further partnerships within the network. With a network spanning over 45 countries across Europe, North America, Africa and Asia, the Eureka network provides a platform for Singapore companies to participate in more cross-border co-innovation collaborations such as:

- **Eurostars**, bi-annual call for joint innovation projects between entities from 36 Eureka member countries
- **Eureka Clusters**, long-term and strategically significant thematic calls initiated by European industries under Eureka
- **Eureka Network Projects Programme**, a flexible instrument that allows Eureka member countries to set up country specific thematic calls of interest within a shorter timeline

Dr Ulrich Schuh, Eureka Chairperson and President of the Eureka Association, said: "I am delighted to welcome Singapore to the Eureka network. It's one of the most innovative countries in the world - in the top 10 global innovation rankings, with a tremendous number of innovative companies, universities and research institutes. Singapore's superb public funding and support, global trade position and investment and networking opportunities make it a formidable partner in Eureka. I'm pleased to learn that Singapore is not only increasing public spending on R&D, but it is also continuing to strengthen its innovative businesses with many support mechanisms for receiving patents, market expansion, accessing private investment and international collaboration to solve industry challenges."

Prior to joining the network officially, ESG worked with Eureka on three co-innovation calls through which more than 40 Singapore companies were supported for joint innovation projects with overseas enterprises from more than 20 partner countries.



## Ambassador Interview

# H.E. Will Hodgman: Stepping Up to New Challenges and Opportunities

After having served as a two-term Premier of Tasmania the new High Commissioner of Australia to Singapore takes a career turn towards diplomacy. He explains why he sees enormous opportunities ahead for Australia and Singapore

**THE** incredibly youthful looking 52-year old Will Hodgman is Australia's first ever politically appointed High Commissioner to Singapore. The former two-term Premier of Tasmania said: "Certainly there have been many successful and high profiled Australian politicians who have taken diplomatic roles across the world, especially in the US and UK, so I have had many fine role models."

He believes: "In many respects politicians have skill sets that can add value to this important role. I also received a little training in the art of diplomacy and some trade craft in foreign affairs and was well supported prior to my arrival through Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade." He shared that another component of this formula is being able to tap into a network of former Australian politicians who he used to work with and who are now in diplomatic postings across the world, such as the former premier of New South Wales, HE Barry O'Farrell, who was his contemporary, and is now the High Commissioner to India.

The catalyst for the career change for him stemmed from the fact that he entered parliament at a relatively young age and has already served 18 years in the Tasmanian Parliament, six of them as Premier and eight as opposition leader. "I was at a point where I wanted a new challenge in my professional life. I genuinely believe that the opportunity generously offered to me by the Australian Prime Minister as the High Commissioner to Singapore is a job of a lifetime. It's something that I am very excited about, notwithstanding the very challenging circumstances that we are all living in (brought about by COVID pandemic)," he shared.

His enthusiasm and energy was quite infectious as he shared the plans he has for his tenure. "It is a very important

relationship between Australia and Singapore and I am very optimistic about our future," he said.

The High Commissioner is no stranger to Singapore. He said: "In my former role as premier, I was also Tasmania's Tourism Minister, Trade Minister, and Defence Industries Minister and in those roles I have led trade missions to Singapore." In fact, as he wryly recalled with a smile: "I have previously visited



Photos by Michael Ozaki



to-people ties, especially in education, are also strong here, as there are literally thousands of Singaporeans who are former students of the University of Tasmania. Singapore is Australia's sixth largest trade partner and there are also very important..."

**For the full interview and more on the Australian High Commissioner's Residence visit [www.indiplomacy.com](http://www.indiplomacy.com)**



the Residence here (see accompanying story online) and had dinner with then High Commissioner Philip Green and met with representatives of industry here such as Keppel Infrastructure Trust who, by the way, owns the Basslink power cable that connects Tasmania and Australia, which is very important for my state. People-







## DCC Activities Go On Despite COVID-19



THE programme and duties of the Dean of the Diplomatic and Consular Corps (DCC) of Singapore continues even with the COVID pandemic (pardon the pun) hanging in the air. Unfortunately COVID restrictions have meant the suspension of the Corps' traditional meet and farewell lunch gatherings. But the ever indefatigable Dean and Ambassador of Mongolia H.E. Lkhagvadorj Tumor was still able to welcome newly arrived diplomats as well as personally bid the departing ones goodbye with farewell souvenirs. They included (pictured top row from left): the new Ambassador of Angola H.E. Daniel Antonio Rosa and new Ambassador of Turkey H.E. Mehmet Burçin Gönenli; the outgoing South Korean Ambassador H.E. Ahn Youngjip and Vietnamese Ambassador H.E. Tao Thi Thanh Huong.

On 20th May 2021 Singapore's Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) invited all of the heads of missions and representatives of international organisations (see second row video capture photo) to the fourth briefing via video conference on Singapore's response to the pandemic. It was conducted by MFA's Parliamentary Secretary Mr Chee Wee Kiong.

Members of the Corps were also invited to visit ITE (Institute of Technical Education) College Central at Ang Mo Kio for a closer look at the training and facilities that included (pictured third row) its Aerospace Hub located within the ITE's School of Engineering. The tour was organised by the Singapore Business Federation on 6th May 2021.

Finally (pictured right and below) are some candid snaps taken from the DCC sports calendar - the annual tennis tournament that was held on 10th December 2021.

