

Malaysian PM First Official Visit: CAUSEWAY REOPENED Bilateral & Regional Connectivity Restored



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Great Potential in Digital**

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- Italy ■ Jordan
- Mongolia ■ Sierra Leone
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Presentation of Credentials

President Halimah Yacob received *virtually* the credentials of the non-resident Heads of Missions of the Republics of Sierra Leone and Zimbabwe as well as the Kingdom of Bhutan on 11th November 2021. This was followed by that of the ambassadors from Italy, Jordan and Hungary, who presented in person their credentials on 30th November 2021 at the Istana. On 6th December she received the credentials from the ambassadors of Mongolia and USA.

H.E. Ernest Mbaimba Ndomahina, High Commissioner of the Republic of Sierra Leone



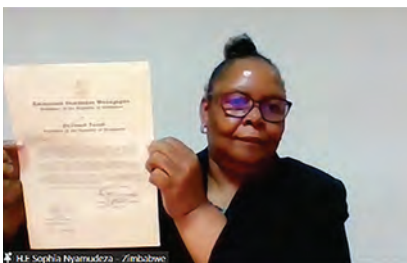
2018. He is also concurrently accredited to Malaysia, India,

PRIOR to his accreditation as High Commissioner of the Republic of Sierra Leone to Singapore (resident in Beijing) H.E. Ernest Mbaimba Ndomahina is also the Ambassador of Sierra Leone to China since

Australia, Indonesia, Japan, New Zealand, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Vietnam.

High Commissioner Ndomahina previously worked as an accountant and was a businessman. He has also served as Co-Chairman of the Peace and Reconciliation Committee of the Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP), Co-Chairman of the Fund-Raising Committee of the SLPP, and Leader & Co-Chairman of the Committee during which he oversaw the inauguration of His Excellency Dr. Julius Maada Bio, the President of Sierra Leone. High Commissioner Ndomahina is married and has four children.

H.E. Sophia Nyamudeza, Ambassador of the Republic of Zimbabwe



Nyamudeza joined the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Trade of Zimbabwe in 1988 and has accumulated 33 years of diplomatic experience. She previously served as the Deputy Permanent Representative at the Zimbabwe Permanent Mission to the United Nations in New York (2006

PRIOR to her accreditation as the Ambassador of the Republic of Zimbabwe to Singapore, H.E. Ms Sophia Nyamudeza (resident in Jakarta) was already accredited to Indonesia as well as to ASEAN.

– 2013) and as the Counsellor at the Zimbabwe Embassy in Rome, Italy (1995 – 2000).

She was also previously Deputy Director in the Zimbabwe Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Department of Policy Research and Communication, as well as Deputy Director of its Africa Department. She was also the Senior Desk Officer in the Zimbabwe Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Multilateral Affairs Department, International Organisations Department and Asia Department.

Ambassador Nyamudeza speaks English and Shona. She holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in History from the University of Zimbabwe and a Master's Degree in Development Studies from the UK Open University. She is a mother of two sons.

H.E. Kinzang Dorji, Ambassador of the Kingdom of Bhutan



He served as Minister/Deputy Head of Mission at the Royal Bhutanese Embassy in New Delhi (2011 – 2015), Head of Multilateral Department in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2009 – 2011), Chief of Planning and Policy Division in the Ministry of Finance

PRIOR to his accreditation here as the Ambassador of the Kingdom of Bhutan to the Republic of Singapore, H.E. Kinzang Dorji (resident in Bangkok) served as the Governor of Haa District in Bhutan (2016 – 2021).

(2007 – 2009), and Commissioner of Tax Division in the Ministry of Finance (2000 – 2007). He is concurrently the Ambassador of Bhutan to Thailand. Ambassador Dorji joined the Civil Service in 1993 and has served in various capacities, including in public administration, public finance management, and bilateral and multilateral diplomacy.

Ambassador Dorji holds a Bachelor's degree in Economics from Sherubtse College (affiliated to Delhi University) in Bhutan and a Master's Degree in Economics and Political Development from the London School of Economics and Political Science. He speaks Dzongkha, English, Nepali, and Hindi. He is married and has two daughters and two sons.

H.E. Mario Andrea Vattani, Ambassador of the Italian Republic



PRIOR to Ambassador Mario Andrea Vattani's accreditation to Singapore, he served in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as Co-ordinator for EU-Asia Pacific, and was also in charge of Italy's relations with regional organisations such as the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) for which he served as National Focal Point, and ASEAN. He concurrently serves as Ambassador of Italy to Brunei Darussalam.

Ambassador Vattani entered the diplomatic service in 1991. He has served in the United States and Egypt both in the economic and consular field. He has also served in Japan with a focus on economic and cultural relations. Ambassador Vattani was



diplomatic advisor to the Minister of Agriculture from 2001 to 2003, and to the Mayor of Rome from 2008 to 2011.

Ambassador Vattani is fluent in the Japanese language and was guest researcher in the Institute of Japanese Identity at Takushoku University in Tokyo. In 2003, he participated in the ETP Japan programme of the European Union. He has published two novels with Mondadori publishing house, and his essay "Svelare il Giappone" (Unveiling Japan) published in 2020

by Giunti, won the "Antonio Semeria Casino Sanremo" and the Premium International Florence Seven Stars literary awards. He has collaborated with *Il Foglio*, *Liberio*, *Tempi* and with other Italian daily newspapers and online publications, dealing with cultural, political and historical issues, especially Asia. He was a member of the Council of the National Union of Diplomats (SND-MAE). Ambassador Vattani is married with two children.



H.E. Samer Anton Naber, Ambassador of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan



PRIOR to his accreditation as the Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan to the Republic of Singapore H.E. Samer Anton Naber has held several leadership positions at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. These include: Director of the Policy Planning Department (2020 to 2021); Director of the European Affairs Department (2017 to 2020); Director of the Peace Negotiations Coordination Bureau (2011 to 2013); Director of the North America Department (2009 to 2011) and Director of the Legal Department (2001 to 2004).

Ambassador Samer Anton Naber has also served as Minister Plenipotentiary representing Jordan at the UN Security Council in New York (2014 to 2015) with a special focus on UN sanctions and humanitarian affairs. He was also a political and legal officer at Jordan's UN Mission earlier in his career. He has held several posts in Washington D.C, most recently as a Distinguished Fellow at the International Republican Institute (IRI), advising on Middle



East and North African regional issues, as well as head of political affairs at the Embassy of Jordan in Washington D.C. The Ambassador has represented Jordan at numerous international conferences and forums including the UN Beijing +5 International Women's Conference, UN Social Development +5 Summit, UN Drug Summit, International Court of Justice proceedings and UNESCO Executive board meetings.

Ambassador Samer Anton Naber holds a B.A. in Political Science & Economics with distinction from the University of Jordan (1992) and an M.A. in International Law from the University of Hull, UK (1994). He is the recipient of Jordan's Istiklal (Independence) medal of the First Order from His Majesty King Abdullah II Ibn Al-Hussein.

He is married with two children. He is passionate about humanitarian and gender issues and is an avid hiker/rock-climber.



H.E. Judit Pach, Ambassador of Hungary



State for Development Policy at the Hungarian Ministry for National Development. Following the restructuring of the government in 2012, she headed the newly established International Communication Office at the Office of the Prime Minister until 2014.

In recognition of her achievements during her career, Ambassador Pach received awards from the Hungarian Minister for National Development and the Hungarian Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade. She also holds state decorations from Belgium, Lithuania, and Poland.

PRIOR to her accreditation to Singapore as the Ambassador of Hungary to the Republic of Singapore, H.E. Judit Pach was the Ambassador of Hungary to Indonesia, East Timor and ASEAN.

From 2005 to 2011, Ambassador Pach served as the Chief of Press and Spokesperson of the President of Hungary. In 2011, she was appointed Chief of the Cabinet to the Minister of

Ambassador Pach has been active in the international field for over 15 years. She earned her first degree from the Faculty of Economic Diplomacy and International Management of the Budapest Business School, and shortly after finished her studies at the Institute of Modern Languages at the Université March Bloch de Strasbourg, from which she graduated as an interpreter.

H.E. Enkhbayar Sosorbaram, Ambassador of Mongolia

PRIOR to his appointment as Ambassador of Mongolia to the Republic of Singapore, Mr Enkhbayar Sosorbaram worked in the private sector.

After having worked as Lecturer at the School of Foreign Service, National University of Mongolia, he joined the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Mongolia as Research Officer in 1999, and later served various postings in the Department of Neighbouring Countries of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Mongolia, Consulate-General of Mongolia in Hohhot and the Embassy of Mongolia in Beijing. Ambassador Sosorbaram also served as Adviser to the Minister of Foreign Affairs from 2008 to 2009, Adviser to the Prime Minister from 2009 to 2012 and

Special Advisor to the Minister of Foreign Affairs from 2017 to 2020.

Ambassador Sosorbaram holds a Bachelor's degree and a Master's Degree in International Relations from the National University of Mongolia. He is married and has a daughter.



H.E. Jonathan Eric Kaplan, Ambassador of the United States of America

PRIOR to his accreditation as the Ambassador of the USA to Singapore, H.E. Mr Jonathan Kaplan was a prominent executive, entrepreneur, and philanthropist whose career has spanned numerous industries. He was the co-founder and Chairperson of EducationSuperHighway, a nonprofit organization that brought high-speed internet to over 49 million children in K-12 classrooms nationwide. Professionally, Mr Kaplan is best known for founding Pure Digital Technologies and inventing its revolutionary Flip video camera. In 2009, Cisco bought Pure Digital Technologies and he became Senior Vice President and General Manager of its Consumer Products Division.

Mr Kaplan was the founding CEO of The Melt, a chain of fast casual restaurants. Previously he was President and CEO of Sega.com and he was the founder and CEO of FamilyWonder, an entertainment and technology company. Mr Kaplan has travelled to over 75 countries and is a member and former Chapter Chair of the Young President's Organization (YPO). Mr Kaplan was named Northern California 2010 Entrepreneur of the Year by Ernst & Young and was named by Business Week among the Most



Influential People on the Web in 2008. He earned a B.S. from Carnegie Mellon University.



Malaysian PM First Official Visit: Causeway Opening Signify Restoration of Bilateral and Regional Connectivity



THE Prime Minister of Malaysia, Dato' Sri Ismail Sabri Yaakob, made his first Official Visit to Singapore in his official capacity on 29th November 2021. Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong and PM Ismail Sabri jointly witnessed the launch of the Vaccinated Travel Lane (VTL) across the Causeway between Singapore and Malaysia, a significant step towards the restoration of bilateral and regional connectivity.

Following the launch of the VTL, PM Ismail Sabri attended a Welcome Ceremony at the Istana where he called on President Halimah Yacob. Prime Minister Lee also hosted an official lunch in honour of the Malaysian PM. PM Ismail Sabri also had a new orchid hybrid named in his honour during a ceremony at the Istana. PM Ismail Sabri was accompanied by Malaysian Senior Minister of International Trade and

Industry Dato' Seri Mohamed Azmin Ali, Malaysian Minister of Foreign Affairs Dato' Saifuddin Abdullah, Malaysian Minister of Transport Datuk Seri Ir. Dr. Wee Ka Siong, Menteri Besar of Johor Dato' Hasni Mohammad, and senior officials.

For full article visit
www.indiplomacy.com



Interview: Dr Azfar M. Mustafar High Commissioner of Malaysia to Singapore

What went behind the scenes to implement this much awaited step towards normalcy?

The land borders between Malaysia and Singapore at the Causeway and Tuas Second Link have been closed since March 2020. Both sides acknowledged the importance of gradual reopening of the borders between Malaysia and Singapore. Both Prime Ministers spoke on the telephone on the gradual reopening of the borders, and officials of both sides followed up and discussed the matter. Both sides quickly came to an agreement on the reopening of the borders to enable people from both sides to travel, meet and reconnect with their families whom they have not been able to meet since March 2020. VTL is a quarantine-free travel arrangement, and therefore saves the time and money for people to meet their families either in Malaysia or Singapore.

What were the highlights of the visit?
Apart from the official programme highlights (see story above) PM Dato' Sri

Ismail Sabri also met with the staff of the High Commission before returning to Malaysia in the evening.

How is the VTL going on so far? What is the next stage of the process? How will it further open?

The VTL has been well received by peoples of both countries. VTL Air will be expanded in the future in terms of flight frequency and destination. The expansion will be subject to prevailing health situations in Malaysia and Singapore. Likewise, VTL Land will be expanded to include other categories of travellers, such as tourists, etc. It would also be expanded to include private vehicles and so on. The expansion will be done in a step-by-step manner, and will be announced by both sides from time to time.

Singapore's Foreign Minister Dr Vivian Balakrishnan also visited Johore recently; do you see this visit opening up more opportunities and doors?

The Malaysia-Singapore relation is multi-faceted, broad and comprehensive. Foreign Minister Vivian, accompanied by officials from the MFA, met with Duli Yang Maha Mulia Sultan Ibrahim ibni Al-

Marhum Sultan Iskandar, Sultan of Johor, Duli Yang Amat Mulia Tunku Ismail ibni Sultan Ibrahim, Crown Prince of Johor, and Chief Minister of Johor on 2nd December 2021.

During the visit, FM Vivian presented a letter from PM Lee Hsien Loong inviting His Majesty Sultan Ibrahim to undertake a State Visit to Singapore in the near future; he also delivered Singapore's donation of vaccine to Johor, apart from exploring new areas of cooperation between Singapore and Johor. The visit reflected the long-standing and warm relations between Singapore and Johor and will definitely open up more opportunity for cooperation and collaboration between Singapore and Johor.

There are plans to start the Johore Economic Tourism & Cultural Office in Singapore in 2022. Have any dates been fixed so far and what can Singaporeans expect from this new entity?

The plan to open the Johore Economic, Tourism and Cultural Office in Singapore was first mentioned in 2019, and it is still on the table and on track. However, due to COVID-19, there is no date being fixed on the opening of the Office in 2022. The Office is expected to facilitate the promotion of Johor's economic, tourism and cultural including investment opportunities in Singapore.

NEWS



Singapore-EU FTA: Great Potential in Digital

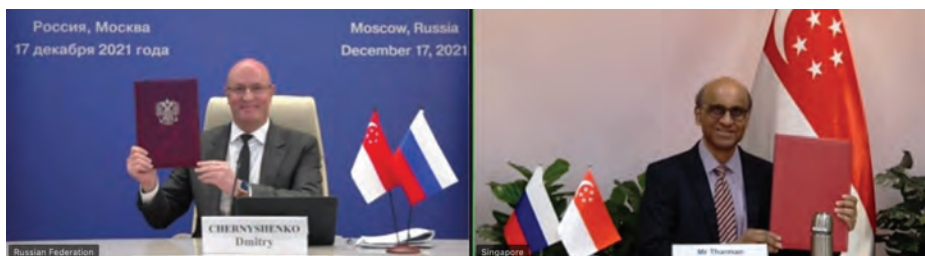
8th Dec 2021

The inaugural EU-Singapore Free Trade Agreement Trade Committee was co-chaired in Brussels by Valdis Dombrovskis, Executive VP of the European Commission in charge of an Economy that works for People, and Commissioner for Trade, and Minister S. Iswaran, Singapore's Minister for Transport and Minister-in-Charge of Trade Relations at the Ministry of Trade and Industry.

He was in Brussels to also sign the Administrative Arrangement (AA) that will create a framework for more regular engagement between industry clusters including information exchanges, joint exploration of business opportunities, in areas such as manufacturing, medical technology, food, lifestyle and consumer products, as well as sustainable urban solutions. For the future of EU-Singapore cooperation Minister Iswaran believed there is much untapped potential in the digital economy. The ASEAN digital economy is expanding at an exponential rate, and it is the fastest growing internet market in the world, with more than 125,000 new internet users every day. This will add an estimated US\$1 trillion to regional GDP over the next 10 years.

Minister S. Iswaran said that the potential of digital economies is not being fully realised, because traditional trade rules and policies are less suited for the digital or digitally-enabled transactions of the 21st century. Thus, Singapore is pioneering a network of Digital Economy Agreements (DEAs), with like-minded international partners and has signed DEAs with Chile, New Zealand, Australia, and is in advanced discussions with the Republic of Korea (ROK). He said, "We are also in dialogue with other partners, including the EU and EU Member States, to explore various modalities of digital agreements and initiatives."

For full article visit www.indiplomacy.com



From left to right: Russian Deputy Prime Minister Dmitry Chernyshenko, Senior Minister Tharman Shanmugaratnam (Photo: Singapore Ministry of Trade & Industry)

From Russia with IGC11 and Arctic Dialogue

17th Dec 2021

Russia featured in two video conferences on the same day in December: Senior Minister and Coordinating Minister for Social Policies Tharman Shanmugaratnam and Deputy Prime Minister of the Russian Federation Dmitry Chernyshenko co-chaired the 11th Session of the High-Level Russia-Singapore Inter-Governmental Commission (IGC11). Singapore's Special Envoy for Arctic Affairs, Mr Sam Tan, delivered the closing remarks at the Russia-Singapore Arctic Dialogue.

The IGC11 Co-Chairs reviewed progress since the 10th Session of the High-Level Russia-Singapore Inter-Governmental Commission, held in Vladivostok, Russia in 2019. Both sides also noted the good progress made to establish the Russian Cultural Centre in Singapore, which, once completed, will contribute to greater cultural exchanges and strengthen people-to-people ties between Singapore and Russia.

For their full speeches visit www.indiplomacy.com

5th Indian Ocean Conference

5th Dec 2021



Singapore's Minister for Foreign Affairs Dr Vivian Balakrishnan delivered remarks at the 5th Indian Ocean Conference (IOC) virtually to this year's host venue in Abu Dhabi. The theme was "Indian Ocean: Ecology, Economy and Epidemic" and the Singapore Minister addressed several major points in his speech that included:

■ **Climate Change:** "The Indian Ocean is warming up at a rate that is estimated to be three times higher than the Pacific, and these rising sea levels will contribute to extreme weather events, including more frequent floods in low lying areas, and severe coastal erosion. The multitude of flora and fauna that depend on our ocean will also be affected. By this century's end, Singapore expects to experience more frequent and intense rainfalls, (and) a rise of sea-levels up to one metre, which will really place us at the upper bound of the global estimates."

■ COVID & the Economy:

"...important for us to enhance cooperation to promote supply chain resilience. We used to organise supply chains on the basis of "just in time", but I think we need to replace this with a concept called "just in case". Free trade remains crucial for sustained recovery. We continue to strongly support free trade agreements

such as the CPTPP (Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership), as well as the RCEP (Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership). These are inclusive, open agreements, and the door remains open for others to join the RCEP. Singapore also welcomes economies that are able and willing to meet the high standards of the CPTPP."

"We need innovative financial instruments, including blue bonds, debt-for-nature, CSR investment and blended financing. We should also foster collaboration between communities, businesses and finance towards high standards of transparency. Ultimately, sustainability and accountability go hand in hand – they are based on the same value systems."

For video and transcript of the speech visit www.indiplomacy.com

EVENTS

Denmark & Singapore Celebrate 200 Years of Green Ties

24th Nov 2021 - 2nd Jan 2022

Denmark and Singapore share a collaborative history with green ties that span 200 years and are responsible for public diplomacy at the Embassy of Denmark in Singapore. The exhibition paid tribute to Nathaniel Wallich – a Danish surgeon and botanist who played an important role in botany throughout Asia especially in Singapore and India. In 1822 he was invited by Sir Stamford Raffles to help design and build Singapore's first botanical garden. In essence he laid the first seeds that establish Singapore's reputation as a 'Garden City!'

The Danish Embassy said it was such a pleasure to have Minister of State Kiat How Tan visit the Danish exhibition at the Botanic Gardens. The Minister of State toured the exhibition with Ambassador Sandra Jensen Landi and Group Director of the Singapore Botanic Gardens Dr Tan Puay Yok.

This auspicious start in Green relations continue till today as Denmark and Singapore's Ministry of the Environment have recently signed an MoU to cooperate in the area of environmental collaboration within the water, environment, and sustainable development space which spans for five years.



(From left): Dr Tan Puay Yok, Ambassador Sandra Jensen Landi and Minister of State Mr Kiat How Tan

Peruvian Film Festival 2021 4th - 26th Nov 2021



Opening night of the Peruvian Film Festival 2021 was on 23rd November where the organisers – the Embassy of Peru in Singapore and National University of Singapore (NUS) Alumni Relations – held a limited attendance event due to the venue's safety measures. The welcome remarks were given by H.E. Carlos Vasquez, the Ambassador of Peru in Singapore; and Mr. Bernard Toh, Director of NUS Alumni Relations. They introduced some of the best in Latin American cinema showcasing movies such as: *The Good Bastard*, *The Milk of Sorrow* and *Indigenous' Slayer*.

Costa Rican Food Delights at Project Dempsey

1st - 29th Dec 2021

A unique partnership was formed between The Project Dempsey restaurant, Costa Rican Chef Cindy Castro and the Costa Rican Embassy here in putting together a special menu that makes up **The Great Spice Potluck: Costa Rica Edition** promotion during December. Costa Rica's Ambassador Víctor Hugo Rojas González was interviewed by www.insiderrecent.com and shared how, "The Costa Rican embassy, which wanted to contribute to the best representation of the country's food, we selected a menu that offers an exquisite variety of dishes for all tastes and lifestyles, vegetarians and various meats to delight everyone."



Amb Víctor Rojas (far right) with guest diners at The Project Dempsey

Bayern Visit: Germany Commits to Greater Asian Presence

21st Dec 2021

The visit by German frigate *Bayern* at Singapore's Changi Naval Base in December was a sign of solidarity with Singapore as well as Germany's continued commitment to the Indo-Pacific region. This was the assurance given by Germany's ambassador here H.E. Dr Norbert Riedel in his welcome speech. The *Bayern* became the first German navy vessel to cross the South China Sea since 2002. Also present was German Navy Chief Vice-Admiral Kay-Achim Schonbach, who was on his introductory visit to Singapore. The Chief Vice-Admiral said the frigate's visit herald more German vessels can be expected to visit from 2023 onwards.



The German Navy Chief also called on Singapore's Minister for Defence Dr Ng Eng Hen during his visit here (Photo: MINDEF)

Hungarian Scholarship Application Closing Date: 15th Jan 2022

The prestigious Stipendium Hungaricum Scholarship of the Hungarian Government offers a wide range of courses for international students with an excellent academic track record. Find out more at: <https://stipendiumhungaricum.hu>



EVENTS

Indonesia Country Partner for SIJE 2021

2nd - 5th Dec 2021

The Singapore International Jewelry Expo (SIJE) 2021 (which also featured gems and luxury timepieces) attracted 12,000 visitors in both virtual and 'live' platforms. Speaking at the exhibition Indonesian Ambassador to Singapore H.E. Surya Pratomo said this is the first time Indonesia became a partner country for this international show and was able to showcase this year medium-sized Indonesian boutique jewellery houses from nine Indonesian provinces. He said SIJE provided an excellent platform to raise the profile of the creative talent of its jewellery designers as well as the quality of its jewellery craftsmanship.



Joint Concert for 50th Anniversary of India-Bangladesh Friendship

6th Dec 2021

The High Commissions of India and Bangladesh jointly organised the **Maitri Diwas** event here with the support of Singapore Indian Fine Arts Society (SIFAS). It celebrates the foundation of friendship between both nations and Prof Tommy Koh was the Guest of Honour for the concert which featured vibrant cultural performances by artists. Indian High Commissioner H.E. P. Kumaran described the current state of affairs between both countries as a 'golden chapter' of bilateral cooperation that ranged from connectivity, security,



(From left): H.C. P. Kumaran, Prof Tommy Koh and H.C. Md Tauhedul

trade, energy and education to space, economy, sustainable development and innovation. High Commissioner of Bangladesh H.E. Md Tauhedul Islam said that India and Bangladesh have forged a lasting friendship and that, "We set an example of a new definition of friendship and nationhood 50 years ago; something which is needed again in today's climate."



Flying Zolo Stopover in Singapore

24th Dec 2021

Zara Rutherford, a 19-year-old Belgian-British is attempting to be the youngest woman to fly solo around the world. When she arrived in Singapore at Seletar Airport on Christmas eve, it marked the more than halfway point of her record-breaking mission.



Zara is also well on the way to becoming the youngest person to circumnavigate the world solo in an ultralight aircraft. Through this daring adventure, Zara hopes to inspire girls and young women to get involved in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) and pursue careers in aviation. The Belgian embassy's Flanders Investment & Trade staff Nathalie Surmont was at the airport to greet Zara and wish her the best of luck for the rest of her journey!

Chinese Winter Olympics Gift

30th Dec 2021

China's Ambassador to Singapore H.E. Hong Xiaoyong and Mr Tan Chuan Jin, Speaker of Parliament and Deputy Chairman of Mandai Park Holdings, unveiled the nursery for *Le Le* - the first panda cub born in Singapore at River Wonders' Giant Panda Forest. *Le Le*'s giant panda parents were presented to Singapore in 2012 for 10 years. Ambassador Hong also presented a Beijing Winter Olympics mascot souvenir *Bing Dwen Dwen* to Deputy Chairman Tan.



(Photo: Mandai Park Holdings)

