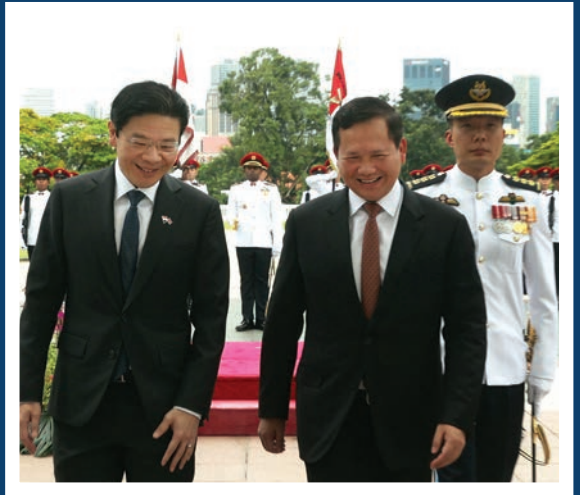


IN DIPLOMACY

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Introductory Visits



**Brunei ● Cambodia ● Indonesia
Malaysia ● Philippines**

Shangri-La Dialogue
Keynote Address:
**President Ferdinand
R. Marcos Jr. on Regional
Security Challenges**

WOF 2024 Interview:
Ambassador Ong Keng Yong
Interviews:
Ambassador Kateryna Zelenko
Pak IGAK Satrya Wibawa



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Regional and Global Security Challenges under the Spotlight



In this June edition of INdiplomacy, we bring you the latest updates from the world of diplomacy and international relations.

We cover the recent Shangri-La Dialogue, where Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. addressed the gathering, highlighting the importance of regional cooperation in addressing security challenges.

We also report on the visit of Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy to Singapore, where he met with leaders and reiterated his country's commitment to strengthening ties with Asia.

In an exclusive interview, Ukraine's Ambassador to Singapore, Kateryna Zelenko, shares her insights on the ongoing conflict and her country's efforts to build stronger relationships with Asia.

As we count down to our upcoming World Opportunities Forum, we continue our series of interviews with thought leaders. This month, we feature an interview with Mr. Ong Keng Yong, Director of the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS), who shares his views on the evolving geopolitical landscape and its implications for Asia.

The Middle East Institute recently held its annual conference, titled "Acid Test: Are Gulf Classrooms Ready for Economic Transformation?" We interviewed Dr. Hanaa Almoaibed, a visiting Fellow at the LSE Middle East Centre, who shared her insights on the transformation taking place in Saudi Arabia.

These interviews and articles offer valuable insights into the complex issues shaping our world today. We hope you find this edition informative and thought-provoking.

Nomita Dhar

Publisher Sun Media Pte Ltd

Editor-in-Chief Nomita Dhar

Editorial

Ranee Sahaney
Syed Jaafar Alkaff

Advertising & Research Lovelyn Palec

Design & Layout

Padhiyar Jeet Pratapray
Syed Jaafar Alkaff

Photos Singapore Ministry of Culture and Information | Ministry of Foreign Affairs | Michael Ozaki
Airlangga University

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Contact

SUN MEDIA PTE LTD
20 Kramat Lane,
#01-02 United House,
Singapore 228773.
Tel: (65) 6735 2972

Email: edit@sunmediaonline.com
Website www.indiplomacy.com

Advertising enquiries:

Tel: (65) 6735 2972
Email:

business@sunmediaonline.com

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21st Shangri-La Dialogue Keynote Address Delivered by President F. Marcos Jr



This year's edition of the IISS Shangri-La Dialogue, Asia's premier defense summit, was held in Singapore from May 31 to June 2, 2024. The 21st edition featured a special address by General (Retd) Prabowo Subianto, President-elect and Minister of Defense, and a keynote address by Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr., who emphasized the importance of unity, dialogue, and adherence to international norms in addressing regional security challenges.

President Marcos highlighted the need for archipelagic unity and sovereignty, peace and the rule of law, and cooperation to address Indo-Pacific security challenges. He also stressed the importance of strategic dialogue, shared responsibility, and hope for a peaceful international community.

The Dialogue provides a platform for open and constructive conversations on strategic issues, bringing together government ministers, senior officials, business leaders, and security experts to discuss security issues in the Indo-Pacific region.

President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. delivered a thought-provoking presentation against a backdrop of geopolitical uncertainties as the Philippines faces a range of challenges, from climate change to heightened regional tensions. In his address, President Marcos emphasized several key points on **Archipelagic Unity and Sovereignty; Peace and the Rule of Law and Indo-Pacific Security Challenges.**

For video of speech and Q&A session, audio of speech and full transcript of speech visit: www.indiplomacy.com

Ukraine Ambassador Shares Valuable Insights



(Above, far left) President Zelenskyy witnessed an Air Services Agreement with Singapore. (Below right): Ambassador Zelenko said that despite the war Ukrainian businesses still can operate and even export

In an exclusive interview with *IN Diplomacy*, Ukraine's Ambassador to Singapore, Her Excellency Ms. Kateryna Zelenko, discussed the outcomes of President Zelenskyy's historic visit to Singapore, Ukraine's economy, and the significance of the Ukraine-Singapore Air Services Agreement. She also highlighted the importance of the recent Ukraine Recovery Conference and the upcoming Global Peace Summit, emphasizing the need for global support in achieving a just and lasting peace in Ukraine

SINGAPORE, 14 June 2024 – *IN Diplomacy* had an exclusive interview with Her Excellency Ms. Kateryna Zelenko, the Ukraine Ambassador in Singapore. The ambassador spoke about the follow-ups and outcomes of President Zelenskyy's visit to Singapore, Ukraine's economy, the Ukraine-Singapore air services agreement, the just concluded Ukraine Recovery Conference on 11-12 June 2024 in Berlin, Germany, and the upcoming inaugural Global Peace Summit on 15-16 June 2024, in Bürgenstock, Switzerland.

Q. What are the follow-ups and outcomes of President Zelenskyy's recent visit?

A: The visit of the President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelenskyy to Singapore was important in many aspects. It was the first visit of the President to Southeast Asia over the period of his tenure and the first visit of Ukraine's leader to the region since the beginning of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine. During the visit President Zelenskyy addressed the participants of the 21st IISS Shangri-La Dialogue including more than



580 delegates from 55 countries, while also drawing the attention of more than 350 media outlets covering the summit to the common need to protect sovereignty, independence, unity, and territorial integrity of states within their internationally recognized borders enshrined in the UN Charter and key principles of international law.

This address, as well as the President's meetings with other leaders in the Asia-Pacific region, offered us an opportunity to highlight the negative global impact of the ongoing Russian aggression against Ukraine and to present Ukraine's view of a path leading to its just end. President Zelenskyy also had bilateral meetings with the President of Singapore Tharman Shanmugaratnam and the Prime Minister of Singapore Lawrence Wong. These meetings confirmed the high level of relations between the two countries and allowed us to discuss prospects of future cooperation, including trade, food security, digitalization, and other areas of mutual interest.

Q. What's the current state of the economy and what are the areas Ukraine is seeking assistance for?

Ukrainian industrial and agrifood facilities, as well as maritime ports, are still targeted by Russian missile and drone attacks, which limit their operational capacities. At the same time, Ukrainian armed forces were able to push back the Russian fleet in

the Black Sea from Ukrainian shores and successfully unblock the maritime trade routes for Ukraine's largest seaport – the port of Odesa. However, to ensure that all enterprises and farms continue to operate, Ukraine needs more air defence systems to withstand Russian missile attacks. Improved air defence capabilities would allow for better protection of the Ukrainian civilian population from Russian missile terror. Better air protection would also have a positive impact on the stability of supply chains, playing a crucial role in ensuring food security in Africa and Asia.

However, despite the challenges of the ongoing war, Ukrainian businesses continue to operate, produce goods, sustain, and even increase exports in some cases. For example, in 2023 trade turnover in goods between Ukraine and Singapore increased by 62%, and Ukrainian goods exports increased by 103% thanks to an increase in supplies of sunflower and rapeseed oils, table eggs, poultry meat, and barley.

Q. What is the scope of and implementation of the Ukraine-Singapore Air Services Agreement?

A: During President Zelenskyy's visit to Singapore, an intergovernmental Air Services Agreement was signed. The agreement is aimed at facilitating air connectivity between both countries – it creates a bilateral legal framework for the establishment and operation of regular air services between Ukraine and the Republic of Singapore, which will help establish and expand effective economic relations and intensify people-to-people contacts.

The agreement became a forward-looking step in developing prospective areas of cooperation despite the challenges faced by Ukraine due to Russia's military aggression.

Q. For the upcoming conference what is your message to Singaporeans?

A: This week, there are two major high-level events dedicated to Ukraine.

On 11-12 June the Ukraine Recovery Conference took place in Berlin, Germany. It focused largely on the prospects of Ukraine's future restoration and growth. Dozens of countries and hundreds of private companies had the opportunity to engage with Ukraine's leadership to define areas of their potential interest in investing in Ukraine now and after the establishment of sustainable and just peace in Ukraine. We saw a vivid interest of numerous foreign companies and partner states to participate in Ukraine's reconstruction, which we expect to become the biggest building site in Europe.

Full interview at
www.indiplomacy.com

Amb Ong Keng Yong

Shares Insights on the Geopolitical Climate before the World Opportunities Forum 2024

ASEAN's Busy Landscape

Today, we are here at RSIS with Mr. Ong Keng Yong, a very dear and special ambassador whom I have had the pleasure of knowing for over 25 years. He is a highly distinguished son of Singapore.

Good afternoon, Ambassador. You have been involved in numerous endeavors, including your work at RSIS. As a special Ambassador-at-Large, you work closely with ASEAN. Please share with our readers the current state of affairs in these areas.

Thriving Economic and Political Relations

Well, in terms of ASEAN, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, we are all very busy - not just Singapore, but all the other member states as well. The economic, political, and commercial relations among the 10 member states are thriving. Although we face some challenges with member states and neighbouring countries, these issues are manageable. ASEAN has 50 years of experience, and we are approaching our 60th anniversary. The economic and commercial activity in our region is vibrant due to our strategic geographical position between the Indian Ocean and the Pacific Ocean, as well as our proximity to populous countries like China and India.

A Hub of Activity

We are naturally involved in many things, from political relationships to econom-



IN Diplomacy brings you an interview with Ambassador Ong Keng Yong, a seasoned diplomat with over 25 years of as an Ambassador-at-Large with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Singapore and Executive Deputy Chairman of the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS) at the Nanyang Technological University

ic activities, digitalization, and climate change. If you are in any of the Southeast Asian capitals, you will be very busy. Some ambassadors have mentioned that they no longer have time to go to the golf course. That is a significant sacrifice because you can accomplish a lot on the golf course, but at the same time, there are other things that can be done off the golf course. Overall, ASEAN is a very busy place with numerous opportunities and a lot of interest from different parts of the world. If you are serious about promoting your country's commercial, economic, political, or strategic relationship with anyone in Southeast Asia, you will be very busy.

Meaningful Times

So, very often, we, as ASEAN officials or diplomats, have a very meaningful time. Sometimes it's better to be busy than not. Yes, but that's where we are, and I suppose this will continue for a long time. We will try to make the best of what we have. Generally, Southeast Asia is business-like, with tourism moving from one country to

another. Apart from Myanmar, everywhere else is very open and welcoming. Musicians and performers from all over the world want to come to Southeast Asia, making the region even more exciting.

Growing Middle Class

The middle class in Southeast Asia is growing, and more people are excited by the prospect of working in this environment with opportunities for business growth. The middle class is growing well, and compared to

previous times, this is a positive advantage. Southeast Asia is geographically in the middle of everything, with the East, West, North, and South all connecting here. The region is quite peaceful and attractive for business and other activities. Most ASEAN member states are now ten, and democracy is a common feature.

Planning ahead and mapping out what can be done are key characteristics of Southeast Asia. This is an interesting aspect that differentiates it from Africa or Latin America.

ASEAN has maintained peace and openness, attracting people and opportunities. The region is active in acquiring new technology and is generally well-educated, focusing on growth and sharing the benefits. Leadership is crucial, and there is a belief in the possibility of a better future through education and openness. Regional organizations like ICAO can help, and if countries believe in Southeast Asia's optimism, the region will continue to prosper.



SMS Sim Ann (centre) at the Opening Plenary of the Summit on Peace in Ukraine. (Photo: Swiss Federal Dept of Foreign Affairs)

Singapore @ Ukraine Peace Summit

Singapore's Senior Minister (SMS) of State for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of National Development, Ms Sim Ann, reaffirmed Singapore's commitment to international law and nuclear safety at the Summit on Peace in Ukraine held in Switzerland on 15- 16 June 2024.

She attended the event as the Special Envoy of the Prime Minister to

the summit which took place in Switzerland. During the summit, SMS Sim reiterated Singapore's unwavering commitment to international law and the United Nations (UN) Charter.

She emphasized Singapore's support for the territorial integrity, political independence, and sovereignty of all countries. She also stressed that upholding these principles is crucial for global security and particularly important for Singapore.

DCC Bids Welcome and Farewell

The Diplomatic and Consular Corps (DCC) of Singapore bade a fond farewell honouring distinguished diplomats for their exceptional service and welcomed new heads of diplomatic missions to the city state



(Above): A warm welcome hand for the new diplomats and their spouses

The circle of diplomatic life in Singapore continued when the DCC Singapore said goodbye to notable diplomats who have contributed greatly during their posting and welcomed a new batch of diplomats ready to make their mark here. The reception was held at the Shangri-La Singapore on 7th June 2024 where H.E. Agustin Garcia Lopez Loaeza, the Dean of the Diplomatic Corps and the Ambassador of Mexico to Singapore, gave heartfelt speeches, raised a toast and presented souvenirs to an honoured list of diplomats' outstanding careers.

H.E. Kara Owen, the British High Commissioner to Singapore since June 2019, was among those honoured. During her tenure, she demonstrated remarkable sensitivity and diplomatic skills, earning accolades such as the CVO (Commander of the Victoria Order) and the CMG (Companion of St Michael and St George) from HM the Queen for her services to diplomacy.

Another distinguished diplomat recognized was **H.E. Ambassador Alfonso Valencia**, who made history as the youngest Ambassador to Singapore and was instrumental in establishing the Embassy of El Salvador in the city-state. His departure from the diplomatic service to enter the private sector marks the beginning of a new chapter in his life.

Additionally, the reception honored **H.E. Ambassador Enrique Villegas González** of Panama. Ambassador Villegas González, has significantly strengthened Panama-Singapore relations. His efforts in areas such as maritime cooperation, logistics, and technology have been highly appreciated.



Leaving our shores our diplomats from (top) Britain, (middle) El Salvador and (above) Panama

New Diplomats

The event also served as a welcome reception for the new Ambassadors of China, **H.E. Cao Zhongming**, Thailand, **H.E. Ureerat Chareontoh**, and Uzbekistan, **H.E. Alisher Kayumov**, who were introduced to the diplomatic community in Singapore.

IGAK Satrya Wibawa: Enhancing Educational and Cultural Ties Between Singapore and Indonesia

Mr. Satrya, the Education and Cultural Attache of the Indonesian Embassy here discussed the embassy's role in collaborating with Singapore in these areas



Singapore, 11th June 2024 – In an exclusive interview with Sun Media, Mr. Satrya shared insights into his role and the ongoing efforts to strengthen educational and cultural ties between Singapore and Indonesia.

Q. We want to know more about you, your department, and the collaboration between Singapore and Indonesia.

A: I joined about two years ago, and my family is also here with me. My wife and two daughters are studying in Singapore. The first one is in primary school and will soon be in high school. We came from Bali, which is a special place for us.

Q. Tell us about your career path and your role in the embassy.

A: I was a lecturer at a public university in Indonesia, teaching and working on various projects. When this position opened in 2021, I saw it as an opportunity to face new challenges and explore new opportunities. Here in Singapore, I lead several programs to enhance collaboration between our two countries.

Q. What are your thoughts on the education system in Indonesia, and how do you see collaboration with Singapore? And how are job opportunities for students back in Indonesia?

A: Under the leadership of our Minister, Nadine, we promote innovative and motivating educational practices. Our goal is to tailor education to different contexts, like those in Jakarta and Papua. We emphasize project-based learning and encourage students to explore and enjoy the learning process. Singapore's education system serves as a benchmark for us, and we aim to learn from their experiences while considering our cultural context. The Indonesia's job market is evolving rapidly, and it's essential to provide students with a solid foundation of knowledge and skills to prepare for future opportunities.

Full interview at
www.indiplomacy.com

VISITS

Saudi Scholar on Vocational Education and Future Opportunities in the Gulf



Saudi Ambassador H.E. Abdullah AlMadhi (far left) welcomed guests at the Saudi Embassy (from his left) Dr Hanaa Almoaibed and Ms Nomita Dhar (IN Diplomacy)

practical skills to the youth, enabling them to thrive in their respective fields. Her work sheds light on the evolving educational landscape in the Gulf, which is increasingly integrating vocational training with traditional academic education.

Reflecting on the broader geopolitical environment, Dr. Almoaibed expressed concerns about the future her children will inherit. Herself a mother of two boys aged 11 and 14, she acknowledged the challenges posed by current global instability. However, she remained optimistic, believing

In an interview with Sun Media Singapore Editor-in-Chief, Ms. Nomita Dhar, Dr. Hanaa Almoaibed, a Visiting Fellow at the LSE Middle East Centre, shared her perspectives on education and vocational training in the Arab Gulf states. She emphasized the warm and welcoming nature of the people and addressed the current geopolitical climate.

that the younger generation is equipped with the necessary resources, knowledge, and technology to address these challenges. She stressed the importance of utilizing these tools for positive change and building on the foundations laid by previous generations.

Dr. Almoaibed, who has published a chapter on vocational education, was invited to present her findings at a conference. She highlighted the significance of imparting

Dr. Almoaibed highlighted the significant changes in Saudi Arabia over the past few years. From being a restricted and quiet place, it has transformed into a hub of entertainment, luxury services, and cultural activities.

Royal Thai Embassy Celebrates His Majesty The King's 6th Cycle Birthday Anniversary

On 19th June 2024, the Royal Thai Embassy in Singapore held a grand reception and exhibition at their premises on Orchard Road to celebrate "His Majesty the King's 6th Cycle Birthday Anniversary on 28th July 2024." The event was graced by distinguished guests, including ambassadors, diplomats, and members of the Thai community in Singapore.

The evening commenced with the arrival of guests, followed by opening remarks from Her Excellency Mrs. Ureerat Chareontoh, Ambassador of the Kingdom of Thailand to the Republic of Singapore. Ambassador Chareontoh highlighted the significant contributions and initiatives of His Majesty the King, praising his dedication to public service and the advancement of Thailand. A representative from the Thailand International Cooperation Agency (TICA)



addressed the attendees, elaborating on the global impact of the King's initiatives. This was followed by a detailed presentation on the Royal Activities of His Majesty the King of Thailand, offering insight into his numerous projects and programs.

Cultural performances began with a traditional Thai dance, showcasing Thailand's rich cultural heritage. A jazz band performance set a celebratory tone for the reception. Guests were then invited to tour the exhibition, which highlighted the King's contributions and initiatives, providing a comprehensive look at Thailand's cultural and developmental achievements.

Philippines 126TH Anniversary and 55 Years of Diplomatic Relations



In celebration of the 126th Anniversary of the Proclamation of Philippine Independence and Nationhood, the Philippine Embassy in Singapore hosted a Diplomatic Reception at the ParkRoyal Hotel on Beach Road on Friday, 14 June 2024. Singapore's Minister for Health, Mr. Ong Ye Kung, served as the Guest of Honor, accompanied by two Members of Parliament, Mr. Liang Eng Hwa for Bukit Panjang and Mr. Murali Pillai SC for Bukit Batok.

The event drew a large crowd of over 400 attendees from various sectors, including the diplomatic corps, international organizations, Singapore government agencies, the business community, academia, and partners of the Philippine Embassy. Guests were greeted at the foyer with an exhibit by award-winning Filipino photographer Joel Forte, marking his first solo exhibition in Singapore.

This year's National Day Diplomatic Reception held special significance as the Philippines and Singapore celebrate 55 years of diplomatic relations, formally established on 16 May 1969.

In his remarks, Ambassador Macaraig expressed appreciation for the leadership of former Prime Minister and now Senior Minister Lee Hsien Loong and looked forward to continuing the strong and fruitful partnership with Prime Minister Lawrence Wong. He highlighted the robust bilateral relations between the Philippines and Singapore, encompassing trade, investment, defense, security, and cultural ties. He also noted recent high-level visits, including Minister for Foreign Affairs Dr. Vivian Balakrishnan's visit to the Philippines in April 2024 and President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr.'s visit to Singapore in May 2024, where he delivered the Keynote Address at the 21st IISS Shangri-La Dialogue.

Ambassador Macaraig shared President Marcos' emphasis on the importance of a rules-based international order, multilateralism, and adherence to the ideals of the United Nations and ASEAN for the peaceful settlement of international disputes.

IN Diplomacy Briefs Heads of Missions on World Opportunities Forum 2024



H.E. Abdullah Mohammed A. Almadhi, the Saudi Arabia Ambassador to Singapore and First Secretary Ms Mashael Suliman J. Alshamars



H.E. Azfar Bin Mohamad Mustafar, the Malaysian High Commissioner to Singapore



H.E. Samer Anton Ayed Naber, the Jordanian Ambassador to Singapore



H.E. Francisco Tenya Hasegawa, the Peruvian Ambassador to Singapore



H.E. Jessica Maria Lopez Pina, the Republic of Venezuela Ambassador to Singapore

In a diplomatic briefing, IN Diplomacy met with heads of missions from various countries to update them on the upcoming World Opportunities Forum, scheduled for August 21, 2024. The forum aims to bring together global leaders, investors, and experts to discuss investment opportunities, economic growth, and sustainable development. The briefing provided an opportunity for *IN Diplomacy* to share insights on the forum's objectives, themes, and expected outcomes, and to explore potential collaborations and participation from the diplomatic corps.

For more information or book a seat / table please visit: www.eexpo.sg

Penang Branded Hawker Buffet A Big Success

The Penang Branded Hawker Buffet Festival had its grand opening at the Mandala Club, Singapore, with esteemed guests including the Deputy High Commissioner Malaysian Mr Yan. The event celebrated the vibrant and diverse street food culture of Penang, featuring renowned hawkers such as Ah Khuan with his char koay teow, Auntie Lei's Assam Laksa, and Ah Soon Kor's Hokkien Prawn Mee, among others.

The festival highlighted traditional dishes like Grandpa Ong's chee cheong fun and introduces new flavors like Moh Theng Pheow's Nyonya salad sauce. Iconic products such as Lingham's Chilli sauce and Cheong Kim Chuan's tau sar pneah and nutmeg juice were also featured. This event, inspired by the late celebrity chef Anthony Bourdain's love for Assam Laksa, showcased the depth and variety of Penang street food.



The Penang Branded Hawker Buffet Festival is the first in a series aiming to corporatize street food culture, leveraging technology and centuries-old recipes. Penang's significance extends beyond its culinary delights, being a top destination for living and tourism, and a hub for global semiconductor giants like Intel and Broadcom Inc.



FACETIME in June 2024



Prime Minister Wong, Mrs Wong, and the delegation were received by His Royal Highness Al-Muhtadee Billah, the Crown Prince and Senior Minister at the Prime Minister's Office of Brunei Darussalam, and Her Royal Highness Pengiran Anak Isteri Pengiran Anak Sarah, who hosted a Welcome Ceremony at the Brunei International Airport on 11 to 12 June 2024



President Volodymyr Zelenskyy of Ukraine visited Singapore to attend the Shangri-La Dialogue. He met President Tharman Shanmugaratnam and Prime Minister Lawrence Wong. Discussions covered regional and international developments, emphasizing adherence to international law. They also explored potential bilateral cooperation in trade and economic relations. President Zelenskyy and Prime Minister Wong witnessed the signing of the Ukraine-Singapore Air Services Agreement, enhancing air connectivity and strengthening bilateral relations.



The Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Cambodia, Samdech Moha Borvor Thipadei Hun Manet, was on an Official Visit to Singapore from 18 to 19 June 2024. Prime Minister Hun Manet received a ceremonial welcome at the Istana this afternoon and called on President Tharman Shanmugaratnam. Prime Minister Hun Manet also had a bilateral meeting with Prime Minister and Minister for Finance Lawrence Wong, who hosted an official dinner in honour of Prime Minister Hun Manet. Prime Minister Hun Manet had a new orchid hybrid, Vanchoanthe Hun Manet, named in his honour.



Service Exchange Programme (CSEP) 25-26 June 2024, Bangkok

Singapore's Foreign Minister Dr. Vivian Balakrishnan visited Thailand and met with Deputy Prime Minister Anutin Charnvirakul and Foreign Minister Maris Sangiampongsa. They discussed enhancing bilateral relations through carbon credits collaboration and the Singapore-Thailand Civil Service Exchange Programme. High-level exchanges focused on defense cooperation, digital economy, and regional energy connectivity. The visit reinforced the strong partnership and mutual interests between Singapore and Thailand.



U.S. Congressional delegations, led by Senator Tammy Duckworth, Senator Dan Sullivan, and Representative Michael McCaul, visited Singapore for the Shangri-La Dialogue. They held high-level meetings with Prime Minister Lawrence Wong, Defence Minister Dr. Ng Eng Hen, and Foreign Minister Dr. Vivian Balakrishnan. Discussions focused on defense, security, and economic cooperation, celebrating 20 years of the US-Singapore Free Trade Agreement. The visit highlighted shared strategic interests and future collaboration opportunities.



Indonesia's President-Elect and Defence Minister Prabowo Subianto visited Singapore for the Shangri-La Dialogue which was held from 31 May to 2 June 2024. He also met Prime Minister Lawrence Wong. They discussed enhancing bilateral cooperation in renewable energy, sustainability, and regional issues. Both leaders reaffirmed the strong bilateral and people-to-people ties between Singapore and Indonesia. The visit underscored the importance of continued collaboration and dialogue, reinforcing the robust relationship between the two nations.