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EXPERIENCE SINGAPORE

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COOPERATION PROGRAMME



An Inside Perspective

Expatriates share interesting tidbits of life in Singapore



Warm Friendships

Affirming our shared past with other countries



Forging Ties With Africa

Sub-Saharan African delegates came for a high-level visit

A Year To Be Proud Of

Celebrating Singapore's key achievements and breakthroughs in 2014

Ed's Note

Dear readers,

Happy 2015! Every New Year gives us a moment to look over the past year and relive our best memories. As Singapore ushers in the Golden Jubilee this year, this issue of *Experience Singapore* walks you through some of the best moments for Singapore in 2014. Toast to an extraordinary 2014 in **A year to be proud of** as we celebrate our several remarkable achievements – from our athletes' splendid performance in the international arena to ground-breaking innovations.

Our extensive and strong friendships, both at the people-to-people and at the government level, are also worth celebrating.

In **An inside perspective**, we meet Switzerland's Sabine Seilliere and Ken Hickson from New Zealand who have chosen to take up residence in Singapore, as they share intriguing tidbits of their lives on this sunny island.

Similarly, **Warm friendships** shed light on our enduring ties with the United Kingdom and Malaysia.

Our valuable, long-lasting friendship with Africa was also further cemented as Ministers from seven Sub-Saharan African countries visited Singapore to learn from our experiences in urban planning, education and water technologies. Flip to **Forging ties with Africa** to find out more.

As we ring in a brand new year and Singapore's 50th birthday, we wish for world peace and stability, as well as a fruitful and joyous year 2015. Once again, a Happy New Year to you.



↑ **Warm friendships**
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Teo Lay Cheng

Director
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Keep
in touch!

Share with us your memories,
photos and experiences in
Singapore under the
Singapore Cooperation
Programme. Email us at
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SINGAPORE

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A year to be Proud of

2014 was a year of breakthroughs for Singapore. *Experience Singapore* marks a fulfilling closure to this year and celebrates some of Singapore's key achievements.

WORDS BY FAIROZA MANSOR

SPORTS

GOLD STROKES

Singapore's flag flew high and proud in the international sports arena. At the Asian Games in Incheon, South Korea, Team Singapore brought home six Gold, six Silver and 13 Bronze medals. Notably, local swimming star Joseph Schooling set a new record at the Games' 100m butterfly event. The 19-year-old's victory ended Singapore's 32-year wait for a men's swimming gold at an Asiad since the 1982 New Delhi Games. Schooling also bagged a bronze in the 200m butterfly and silver in the 50m butterfly. Another key highlight was our first-ever fencing medal, made possible by Lim Wei Wen, who clinched a Bronze medal.



↑ Singapore swimming star Joseph Schooling made a splash in Incheon by winning a Gold.





ARTS

BIG WIN FOR THE BIG SCREEN

↑ Director and producer Anthony Chen at the Golden Horse Awards.

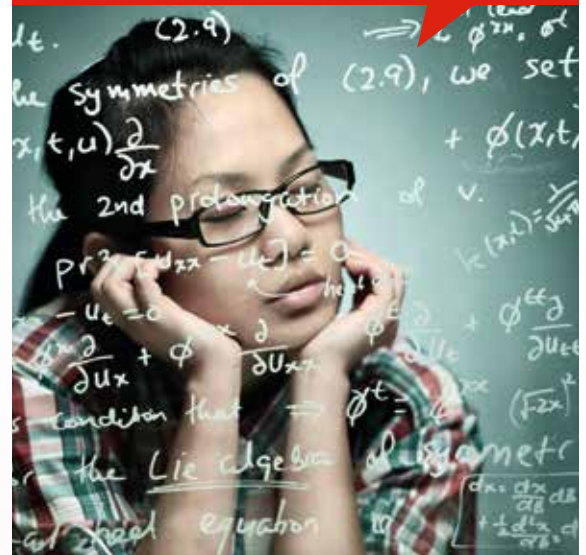
Singapore films also made waves at international award ceremonies. Anthony Chen's drama feature *Ilo Ilo* continued its Cannes glory at the prestigious 50th Golden Horse Awards in Taipei, where it clinched four major awards, including Best Feature Film, Best New Director, Best Original Screenplay and Best Supporting Actress for Yeo Yann Yann. At the 8th Asian Film Awards, dubbed the "Oscars of Asia", Anthony Chen scored a Best Director nomination and Yeo Yann Yann bagged another Best Supporting Actress title. Local short film *Oh Lucy!* also emerged from over 1,631 submissions as the runner-up at the acclaimed 17th Cinefondation Selection, a foundation under the patronage of the Cannes Film Festival.

→ Singapore's mathematics curriculum is making its way around the world.

ACADEMIA

LEADING IN LEARNING

In the academic world, Singapore is a role model for many countries. Singapore's education system is ranked third in the world according to a report by the world's largest education company, Pearson. In particular, our mathematics curriculum has garnered the interest of many countries, with as many as 10 countries, including South Africa, Brunei and the Netherlands, using customised mathematics textbooks based on our curricula. Our universities have also clinched top positions in the international rankings — the National University of Singapore tops the QS ranking of Asian universities in 2014, while Nanyang Technological University was named the World's Best Young University.



Photos: AP, Getty Images, Shutterstock

HUMANITARIAN



→ Relief efforts for Filipinos affected by Typhoon Haiyan continued well into 2014.



ECONOMICS

OPEN FOR BUSINESS

Noted for its high efficiency and high quality for contract enforcement, Singapore maintains its position as the world's most business-friendly economy for the eighth year according to the World Bank, ahead of New Zealand and Hong Kong. In particular, Singapore's trading platform, TradeNet, was singled out by the World Bank and the International Finance Corporation as an example of "global good practice".

↑ Singapore's efficient regulatory framework led to the economy being named the world's most business-friendly.

INNOVATION

CUTTING-EDGE TECHNOLOGY

Singapore-based medical technology firm Innovations Exchange (INEX) is breaking new ground in medicine and changing the way doctors treat patients. INEX has been developing and licensing technologies that help to diagnose ovarian cancer early and test foetuses for genetic anomalies fast, and in a non-invasive manner. These include a diagnostic toolkit that distinguishes between benign and malignant cysts, as well as Flashfish which allows patients to receive the results of an amniocentesis test (which looks for foetal abnormalities) within three hours. Previously, patients had to wait anything between 24 hours and three weeks to get the results. INEX has received requests from clinicians in the United States and Europe who want to license these technologies for use in their countries.



ASSISTANCE AID EFFORTS

helping hand. The Singapore government and local-based humanitarian aid groups raised funds for humanitarian relief efforts and reconstruction of Gaza. The Singapore Red Cross raised more than S\$10 million for the Philippines which was devastated by Typhoon Haiyan — an amount that started with S\$200,000 seed money from the government. Singapore was also one of the first countries to render assistance on the ground, with two C-130 military aircraft deployed to send essential relief goods to affected communities.

Singapore also played its part as a global citizen in the fight against the Ebola crisis. The government donated US\$150,000 to the WHO to support the WHO Ebola Response Roadmap, in addition to Singapore's earlier contribution of an aid package, comprising medicines, medical supplies and personal protective equipment which are in short supply for medical professionals on the ground. Two health-care workers from Singapore's National University Hospital, Associate Professor Dale Fisher and Ms Sharon Salmon, also volunteered in West Africa to help with the management of the crisis.



In Singapore

HOME AWAY FROM HOME



AN INSIDE PERSPECTIVE

Every year, more than 10 million foreigners visit these sunny shores for a 'uniquely Singapore' experience. Yet to others, this place has grown so close to their hearts that it is more than just a tropical getaway. *Experience Singapore* sat down with two expatriates — one fairly new to the country, the other a 'veteran' who has lived here for 21 years — as they share interesting tidbits of their lives in Singapore.

INTERVIEWS BY FAIROZA MANSOR

SABINE SEILLIERE, 34, **FROM SWITZERLAND** **IN SINGAPORE SINCE 2012**

Within a few of weeks of moving to Singapore in 2012, Swiss Sabine Seilliere discovered the joy of buying groceries from the wet market — a morning-only source of fresh produce found in housing estates around the country. Enthralled by the high-quality fresh fruits and vegetables, the 34 year-old soon became a wet market regular like many locals.

Sabine, whose husband's job in a perfume company brought the couple here, found each trip to the Tiong Bahru wet market near her previous home, to be so rewarding that she decided to set up a delivery service so others could conveniently get their hands on fresh fruits and vegetables. In April 2013, her online business, Sabine's Baskets, began delivering across Singapore.

"Wet market produce is superior to that of supermarkets, but the problem is that wet markets only open in the morning," says Sabine.

When *Experience Singapore* paid Sabine a visit, the new mother was preparing for her first Christmas in

Singapore, having previously returned home for the holidays in years past. "Adapting to life here was easier than I had imagined, largely because Singapore has reliable systems in place which work very efficiently," she says. "There's also no language barrier to worry about because everyone, from the 'uncles' and 'aunties' in the wet market as well as the folks I encounter on public transport, can speak some English."

Running a business has also given the couple plenty of opportunity to venture into neighbourhoods they might not have discovered otherwise. "We are very fond of the Joo Chiat area, possibly because we are fans of culture and architecture and that neighbourhood has both of these to offer. It's distinctive," Sabine says of the Peranakan-influenced enclave located in the eastern side of Singapore that's known for its quaint shophouses.

The couple is also thrilled

to be able to raise their baby Ernest in Singapore. "It's really one of the best places to raise a child — it is safe, clean and everything works and public places to seem to be family- and kid-friendly," says Sabine. "We are taking it like one big family adventure!"



Sabine is fond of the distinctive architecture found in Joo Chiat.

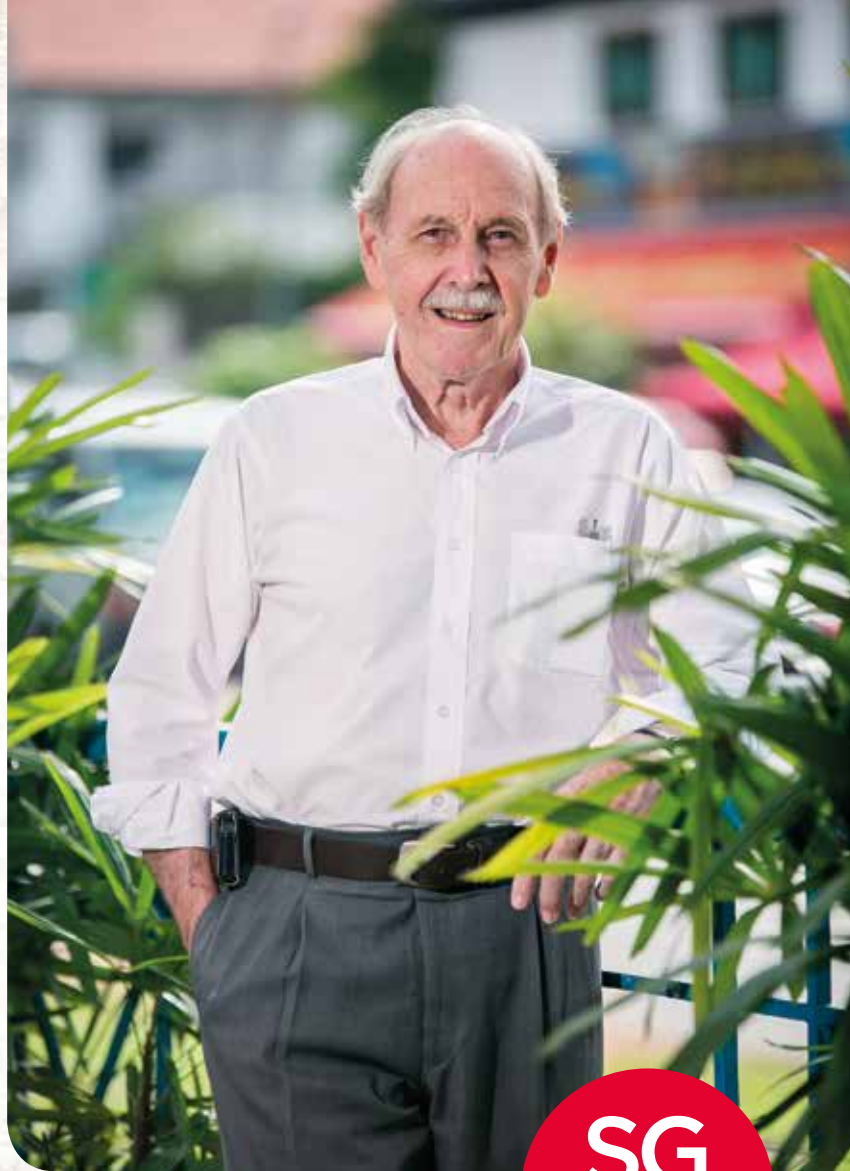
**KEN HICKSON, 70, FROM NEW ZEALAND
IN SINGAPORE FROM 1983 TO 2000,
AND SINCE 2010**

Writer, editor, lecturer and public relations (PR) consultant Ken Hickson is no stranger to Singapore. The former journalist has written five non-fiction books. His most recent, *Mr SIA: Fly Past*, is a biography of Mr Lim Chin Beng, the founding Managing Director (1972 to 1982) and later Deputy Chairman (1982 to 1996) of Singapore Airlines (SIA). The book was recently launched at the Singapore Writers Festival in November 2014.

While the 70 year-old is a master at chronicling the journeys of others, his own life story is worth telling, too. Ken moved to Singapore from New Zealand in 1983, with his artist wife and their three young children in tow, to work as a public affairs consultant for SIA. He went on to set up Hickson Public Relations, which was later acquired by FleishmanHillard in mid-1990s. Ken relocated to Australia at the end of 2000 but returned to Singapore with his wife in September 2010 to run a sustainability consultancy. He continues to actively scribe and give talks on climate change and sustainability.

After all these years of being a resident here — 21 years and counting — Ken still sings Singapore's praises. "You could say that I'm an unofficial ambassador of the Republic!" he quips. "In my travels, work trip or otherwise, I constantly point out the ways in which Singapore is better. It is, in my opinion, a wonderful destination to visit and one of the most livable cities in the world."

Often, Ken also recommends his overseas clients and acquaintances to base their companies here. "Being so well-connected, Singapore is simply a great place to do business. It is an ideal global city."



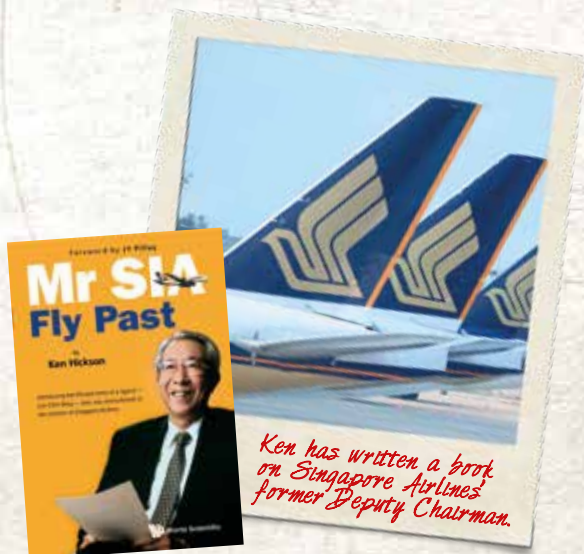
He wants to pen a book celebrating Singapore's 50th year of independence.

And as a champion for the environment, he applauds Singapore's efforts in reducing its carbon footprint. "In terms of energy-efficiency, Singapore is doing a good job. More corporations are making their buildings 'green' and operations energy-efficient. Singapore has come some way in taking care of the environment," says Ken.

But he suggests that more can be done, including adopting more thorough and environmentally-conscious waste management methods, and actively promoting eco-products. He would also like to make the annual Formula 1 Singapore Grand Prix night more energy-efficient. "If the London 2012 Olympics can be the most sustainable grand event in the world, I'm positive Singapore and the F1 organisers here can do the same," says Ken.

He is as enthusiastic as any local about Singapore's 50th anniversary of independence in 2015. He plans to write a book to commemorate SG50, as the year-long celebrations are being called. When Experience Singapore asked how long he's planning to stick around this time, Ken smiles and says, "I'll stay as long as Singapore would have me."

In terms of energy-efficiency, Singapore is doing a good job. More firms are making their buildings 'green'.



Photos: Wilson Pang, Shutterstock



Joining Hands
OLD FRIENDS

As Singapore celebrates its 50th birthday in 2015, we look back at two prominent visits which demonstrated such warm and solid relationships — the visit of Malaysian Prime Minister Mr Najib Razak for the official opening of Agrobazaar Malaysia, a Malaysian goods and produce store, and the State Visit of President Tony Tan Keng Yam to the United Kingdom (UK), the first by a Singaporean head of state.

Warm friendships

EMBRACING SINGAPORE'S SHARED PAST WITH OTHER COUNTRIES ENSURES LASTING CLOSE TIES.

WORDS BY ASHUTOSH RAVIKRISHNAN



↑ Mr Lee (left) and Mr Najib at the symbolic official opening of Agrobazaar Malaysia.

A TASTE OF MALAYSIA IN CENTRAL SINGAPORE

The Agrobazaar was opened on 27 August 2014 by Prime Minister Mr Lee Hsien Loong and Mr Najib Razak. At the opening, the two leaders — dressed in matching batik shirts — enjoyed Malaysian-style iced milk tea, popularly known as *teh-cino ais*, and the tropical fruit durian.

In his opening speech, Mr Lee spoke of the close bond between the two countries and likened their relationship to a flowering fruit tree which needs constant nurturing and tending to.

This relationship, he said, will strengthen with the future development of the Rapid Transit System link between Johor Bahru and Singapore, as well as with the High Speed Rail Link between Kuala Lumpur and Singapore.

Mr Najib said the 5,100 sq ft Agrobazaar, which is loosely modelled after a farmers' market, is the result of the two



↑ The two Prime Ministers and their wives enjoying a refreshing drink on the rooftop of Agrobazaar Malaysia.



→ President Tony Tan Keng Yam with Queen Elizabeth II. The Queen was wearing her Order of Temasek sash.



countries' "strong and enduring relationship". Centrally located, it aims to make access to Malaysian produce even easier for Singaporeans.

TWO COUNTRIES, ONE TONGUE

Singaporeans are no strangers to Malaysian produce. According to Mr Najib, more than a fifth of Malaysian agricultural goods are exported to Singapore, a proportion which he hopes will grow with the opening of the Agrobazaar.

Malaysian produce and products available there include tropical fruits such as durians, labelled the Southeast Asian "king of fruits", as well as homemade sauces and jams. Malaysian-produced honey and coffee are also available.

Singaporeans are certainly well-acquainted with Malaysian food, too. As Mr Najib said, Singaporeans and Malaysians taste with "one tongue". The restaurant on Agrobazaar's rooftop serves Malaysian and Singaporean fare such as *nasi lemak* (a dish of rice made fragrant with coconut cream and pandan leaves, and accompanied by fried anchovies, sliced cucumbers, fried fish, and a sweet chili sauce) as well as chicken curry.

A ROYAL WELCOME

The relationship between the UK and Singapore began with the



↑ President Tan and Prince Philip inspecting a Guard of Honour.

arrival of Sir Stamford Raffles in 1819. Singapore's independence from the UK in 1963 may have concluded one chapter of the relationship but it certainly did not close the book on our partnership and long-standing ties. The State Visit of President Tony Tan Keng Yam to the UK in October 2014 further cemented the substantive connections and long historical ties between the two countries.

The first State Visit to the UK by a Singapore President was greeted with much pomp and fanfare in London. President and Mrs Tan received a ceremonial welcome with gun salutes, marching band renditions of Singapore's national anthem and a carriage procession from the Horse Guards Parade Ground to the Queen's London residence, where President and Mrs Tan stayed for two nights.

THE BANQUET

At a grand banquet held for President Tan in the Palace, the Queen spoke of the countries' warm ties. "Looking back at half a century of co-operation, and ahead to new chapters in our story, it is clear that our countries remain firm friends," the British monarch said.

President Tan also spoke fondly of the countries' relationship and invited the Queen to Singapore in 2015 to mark 50 years of independence.

KING CHARLES II MEDAL

President Tan was also conferred the King Charles II medal, which is awarded to foreign heads of state or governments who have made contributions to furthering scientific research in their country.

Only four other heads of state have received the medal: Japanese Emperor Akihito, former Indian President Mr Abdul Kalam, German Chancellor Ms Angela Merkel and Chinese Premier Mr Wen Jiabao.

"It is a great honour for me and my country that I am being conferred the King Charles II medal, whose previous recipients were all leaders of powerhouses in the sphere of science and technology," President Tan said at the conferment ceremony.

The six-day visit reaffirmed the excellent bilateral relations and co-operation the two countries share in matters as diverse as science and defence policy.



Forging Ties Between Singapore and Africa

Ministers and senior officials from seven Sub-Saharan African countries were in Singapore for a two-day high level visit themed 'Singapore-Africa: Partnering for Growth'.

Dressed in their bright traditional attire, a group of ministers and senior officials arrived in Singapore for the Sub-Saharan Africa High Level Ministerial Exchange Visit (AHLMEV) held from 25 to 26 August 2014. The visit came at the invitation of Singapore's Minister for Foreign Affairs and Minister for Law Mr K Shanmugam, and was attended by Ministers from seven Sub-Saharan African countries (Angola, Ghana, Mauritius, Nigeria, Rwanda, Tanzania and Zimbabwe).

During a reception at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Mr Shanmugam noted Singapore's long-standing friendship with Africa that dates back to nearly 50 years ago. Over these years, relations between Singapore and the African continent have deepened through numerous high-level visits, trade missions and technical cooperation through the Singapore Cooperation Programme (SCP).

More than 7,700 African government officials have attended training courses in areas such as public administration, sustainable development and trade promotion under the SCP. To meet the unique needs of the African nations, a special technical cooperation package which includes customised training courses in public governance, economic development and vocational education as well as post-graduate scholarships at Singapore's universities for African officials was unveiled.



↑ Minister for Foreign Affairs Mr K Shanmugam (left) meeting the delegates.

↓ The delegation with Deputy Prime Minister Mr Tharman Shanmugaratnam (centre), Second Minister for Foreign Affairs Ms Grace Fu (fourth from right) and Senior Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Mr Masagos Zulkifli (second from left).

LEARNING FROM SINGAPORE

The theme of the visit was "Singapore-Africa: Partnering for Growth". The delegation was given briefings at the Urban Redevelopment Authority (URA), the Institute of Technical Education (ITE) College Central and Hyflux, a Singapore-grown integrated water management company. These visits provided the delegation a first-hand account of Singapore's developmental experiences in urban planning, education and water technologies. They also took a tour of popular attractions such as the Merlion and Chinatown.

Professor Viola Adaku Onwuliri, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, was impressed after her visit to the ITE College Central. "Instead of seeking white-collar jobs, students are encouraged to be the best they can be in the area of technical education, and we saw the passion in these young children who are there to learn everything," she said.

Minister for Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration of the Republic of Ghana, Ms Hanna Tetteh added, "We had the opportunity to go to the URA, and it is very interesting to see how they have actually planned over the last five decades the





Delegates making a joint courtesy call on Prime Minister Mr Lee Hsien Loong.

redevelopment of Singapore; keeping spaces as green areas and maintaining heritage buildings. At the same time, they have given opportunity for the city to constantly develop new areas.” Likewise, delegates were impressed by the emphasis placed by Hyflux on sustainable water management.

STRENGTHENING FRIENDSHIP AND TIES

The African ministers and senior officials also paid a joint courtesy call on Prime Minister Mr Lee Hsien Loong at the Istana, where they exchanged views on how Singapore’s development experience could be useful reference to African countries. They also expressed interest to see greater interactions between Singapore and Africa through platforms such as the biennial Africa Singapore Business Forum.

The two sides have every reason to cooperate. This will bring new challenges and opportunities.



The delegates were briefed on Hyflux’s operations.



The group visiting ITE College Central.

Singapore and Rwanda also took the opportunity to sign an Avoidance of Double Taxation Agreement to encourage trade and investments between the two countries.

The AHLMEV concluded with an official dinner hosted by Singapore’s Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Finance Mr Tharman Shanmugaratnam. Mr Mahadhi Juma Maalim, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the United Republic of Tanzania said of the two-day visit, “With the development which Singapore has gained, and with the unlocking of the African potential, both parties have every reason to cooperate.”

