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EXPERIENCE SINGAPORE

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Higher Learning

A revival of Nalanda University in Bihar



Country Colours

Red and white, and a part of S'pore's everyday life



Building Bridges

Forging ties with the Caribbean Community



In High Spirits

Singapore's National Day Parade 2013
is a sight and sound spectacular

Ed's Note

Dear readers,

Singapore celebrated its 48th National Day on 9 August 2013 with a spectacular parade that was themed 'Many Stories...One Singapore'. **Celebrations, Big and Small** gives an idea of how 6,000 participants and 26,000 spectators, mostly dressed in red and white (the colours of Singapore's flag), came together to celebrate the stories that each Singaporean has to share.

But Singaporeans 'celebrate' their nation each and every day too! Find out how in **Country Colours** which feature familiar sights around Singapore that are in red and white, from historical buildings, food to dwellings.

Beyond home, Singapore celebrates too. The country's ties with India goes back a long way, and Minister for Foreign Affairs K Shanmugam's July visit to the Indian state of Bihar reaffirmed these ties. Singapore is also playing a part in Bihar state's revived Nalanda University, now under construction. Find out more in **A Higher State of Learning**.

On the other side of the world, Singapore is continuing to forge strong alliances too, and **Building Bridges** gives details of how relations between the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and Singapore have been strengthened by a high level Ministerial Exchange Visit comprising CARICOM representatives.

An enhanced Technical Assistance Package was also announced during this visit which would see more CARICOM senior officials visit Singapore for customised training courses and study visits.

These new initiatives will encourage a greater exchange of ideas and knowledge and foster a better understanding of cultures and heritage.

All reasons for celebrating, indeed! We hope you enjoy this issue of *Experience Singapore*.

Teo Lay Cheng

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MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS
SINGAPORE

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Celebrations, big and small

Besides a spectacular show on 9 August 2013 staged on a floating platform, Singapore celebrated the 48th anniversary of its independence in other ways too!

WORDS BY GENE KHOR

The main event

26,000 spectators and 6,000 participants were involved as Singapore marked its 48th National Day with the theme "Many Stories... One Singapore" with a celebration that involved displays from students from various schools, voluntary and grassroots organisations, government bodies as well as teams from the Singapore Army, Singapore Civil Defence Force, Republic of Singapore Navy and the Singapore Police Force, among others. Ending the three-hour parade was a dazzling fireworks display which lit up the night sky.



Photos: Corbis, Shutterstock



Multi-cultural diversity

The Islamic holiday of Hari Raya Puasa was just a day before National Day, so Dunearn Secondary School celebrated both occasions on 7 August 2013 as a tribute to Singapore's multi-cultural diversity. The festivities concluded with students and teachers of the school singing Singapore's national anthem 'Majulah Singapura' and reciting the national pledge.



In a special way

Singapore strives to be an inclusive society, and students with special needs from Eden School contributed something special for the nation's birthday. They made decorative flags for their classrooms, while some of them also took part in a fashion show at the school's National Day concert on 6 August 2013 and paraded in National Day-themed outfits.



Floral tribute

At Gardens by the Bay, a park that houses over 250,000 rare plants from all over the world, visitors got to see a special floral display between 5 August to 1 September 2013. As a tribute to the colours and symbols of the national flag, red-and-white flora like orchids, roses and begonias were presented in five star-shaped containers.



Animal antics

The Singapore Zoo is one of the best in the world and home to over 2,800 animals representing over 300 species – and a couple of them were feeling rather patriotic! On 9 August 2013, special performances were held, including one where Gambir the Asian elephant performed a flag-raising ceremony, and Andi the California sea lion waved the Singapore flag and unveiled a banner to wish the audience a happy National Day.



Bonding over food

In two neighbourhoods in eastern Singapore, street parties were held on 9 August 2013 with curry as the main course. Four versions were served in the culinary traditions of Singapore's four main races – Chinese, Malay, Indian and Eurasian. This communal meal was part of the Big Makan – 'makan' meaning 'eat' in Malay – an inaugural event organised by the Singapore Kindness Movement, a non-profit organisation that executes public education programs aimed at cultivating kindness and graciousness in Singaporean society.

Youthful energy

Since 2007, *SCAPE has been a venue for youths in Singapore to pursue a broad spectrum of interests like music, dance, fashion, and sports. On 9 August 2013, the youth hub was transformed into a showcase for home-grown performers. *SCAPE A Nation, an event organised by young volunteers to celebrate Singapore's birthday, featured lively sets by rock bands, dance showcases and an after-party with club music.



Primary colours

In Eunos, located in eastern Singapore, residents showed that age wasn't a barrier to their community bond as 135 participants, young and old, came together on 18 August 2013 for the inaugural residents' parade procession. Waving the Singapore flag and wearing red shirts, they turned the common areas in the housing estate into a sea of red and white.



In Singapore

SEEING RED AND WHITE



← **CHILLI CRAB**

One of Singapore's most famous dishes, chilli crab is found at many seafood restaurants around the island and eaten with mantou, a deep-fried or steamed bun.



→ **TORCH GINGER**

Native to Southeast Asia, the flower buds and tender inner parts of the torch ginger plant are used as an aromatic in dishes like sour-and-spicy assam laksa noodles. The Ginger Garden at Singapore Botanic Gardens is home to hundreds of types of ginger.



COUNTRY COLOURS

THE SINGAPORE FLAG IS RED AND WHITE — RED TO SYMBOLISE UNIVERSAL BROTHERHOOD AND EQUALITY OF MAN, WHITE FOR PERVADING AND EVERLASTING PURITY AND VIRTUE. SOME FAMILIAR ICONS OF SINGAPORE ARE DECKED OUT IN THESE COLOURS TOO!

WORDS BY GENE KHOR



↑ **CHILLI PADI**

This tiny chilli pepper is much spicier than its larger counterparts. Chilli padi, or bird's eye chilli, features in many dishes served in Singapore — such as the spicy chicken curry dish, ayam lemak chilli padi — and is also used as a condiment.

Photo: Singapore Tourism Board and Shutterstock



← SELEGIE HOUSE

Selegie House was one of the tallest Housing & Development Board flats in Singapore upon its completion in 1963. Now painted red-and-white, the building stands out among public housing projects in Singapore.



← RED LIONS

The spectacular freefall displays of the award-winning Singapore Armed Forces Parachute Team — the Red Lions — are a perennial crowd favourite at each year's National Day Parade.



↑ ANG KU KUEH

Angku kueh — or 'red tortoise' cake — is a traditional Chinese pastry made of a glutinous rice flour skin stuffed with a sweet filling of green bean paste or minced peanuts. It's often eaten on festive occasions.



↓ CENTRAL FIRE STATION

Built in 1909, the Central Fire Station on Hill Street is the oldest operational fire station in Singapore. This historic building was gazetted as a national monument in 1998.



red dot design museum



↑ LIONSXII FANS

In 2012, the LionsXII national football squad marked the return of Singapore to the Malaysian football league. And with a 4-0 win in front of an 8,000-strong home crowd, much of whom was decked out in red-and-white, the LionsXII became league champions in July this year.

← RED DOT DESIGN MUSEUM

Housed in the former Singapore Traffic Police Headquarters built in 1928, the Red Dot Design Museum — established in 2005 — houses more than 1,000 exhibits, each of which is a winner of an international Red Dot Design award.



Reflections

ASSISTING IN AN EDUCATIONAL REVIVAL



↓ Mr Shanmugam (centre, in white shirt), and others at the site of Nalanda University Campus.



A higher state of learning

Close ties between Singapore and India were reaffirmed during a visit to New Delhi and the Indian state of Bihar by the Republic's Minister for Foreign Affairs K Shanmugam.

IN JULY 2013, Singapore's Minister for Foreign Affairs K Shanmugam, took a working trip to India, a country with whom the Republic enjoys close ties. Mr Shanmugam visited New Delhi and the state of Bihar in northern India. While in Bihar, Mr Shanmugam visited the site of the new Nalanda University, which is being built in the spirit of the earlier institute of higher learning in Nalanda.

Between the 5th and 12th century, Nalanda was a centre of learning for scholars from across Asia. Students came from all



Photo: Shutterstock



over Asia to study fine arts, science and medicine at one of the world's first residential universities. But the original Nalanda University was destroyed in an attack at the end of the 12th century, and the town around it fell into ruin.

However, the once-great educational hub has gained a new lease of life. In January 2007, plans to revive the University were endorsed by the East Asia Summit (EAS) in Cebu, Philippines. A new Nalanda University is being built 12km from the ancient one on a 182-hectare plot near Patna, the capital of Bihar, with construction to begin in 2014.



↑ The Vice-Chancellor explaining the model of the Master Plan of the campus to Mr Shanmugam and his wife, Dr Seetha Shanmugam.

Upon completion in 2020, Nalanda University will admit an annual intake of 2,500 Indian and international graduate students who will pursue intellectual, philosophical, historical and spiritual studies.

Singapore has been supportive of this important Indian initiative, as the University will strengthen the links between India and East Asia. Mr Shanmugam visited Nalanda on 29 July 2013 to see first-hand the progress of the project and demonstrate Singapore's support for the project.

India plays an important role in shaping a stable regional order and its "Look East" policy laid the foundation for its engagement of Southeast Asia and the rest of the region. The Nalanda University project will revitalise India's ancient cultural role as a hub for higher learning, and it represents the country's contribution to the EAS process of fostering regional dialogue and cooperation.

BENEFITS FOR SINGAPORE AND ASEAN

ASEAN — the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, of which Singapore is a founding member — is a diverse region with many distinct cultures and languages. But through education, and especially higher learning, greater mutual understanding can be fostered about the region's rich history, culture and heritage. Singapore was thus one of the early supporters of the Nalanda project, as educational and cultural cooperation is an area of common interest for ASEAN and other major Asian countries like India, China, Japan and South Korea. In fact, cooperation in education

can uncover how all these societies are more inter-linked than many people realise.

Of the Indian project, Mr Shanmugam said, "The Nalanda University is something that many Singaporeans have been involved in. It is a great centre of learning and people from all over the world come here. It is part of the project that India has started, as part of a wider engagement with East Asia. My intention of coming was to see it for myself because there is a lot of interest in Singapore, and to see how we can continue to play a role."

Singapore has already pledged to design and fund the building of the University's library. Sitting on the University's Governing Board are Singapore's former Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr George Yeo, and National University of Singapore Professor and Chairman of the Management Board of the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, Professor Wang Gungwu. Mr Yeo is also the chair of Nalanda University's International Advisory Panel.

Singapore also continues to extend support for the Nalanda University project through academic and cultural projects. The Nalanda-Sriwijaya Centre has been set up in the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies (ISEAS) to research historical interactions between Asian societies and civilisations and has published several books on the connectedness of Asian societies through history. In March 2012, an "On the Nalanda Trail" exhibition was held at the Asian Civilisations Museum in Singapore.

INVOLVING INDIA

An India that is engaged in the region benefits the whole region. And in this vein, looking ahead, Mr Shanmugam hopes to see India work on a full air transport agreement that includes passenger services with ASEAN countries. "If you look at it in terms of cross flow of people, nearly 700,000 Indians visit Singapore and a significant number of Singaporeans visit India," he said. "[In terms of] air connectivity, I am told there are 400 flights [between Singapore and India every week] and it is not enough. We are seeking to do more. In fact, if there is better air connectivity, a lot more can be done."



← The Nalanda ruins site, with the main stupa in the background.



Building bridges

At the inaugural high-level Ministerial Exchange Visit in July, Singapore looks to deepen relations with the Caribbean Community (CARICOM).

AT THE INVITATION OF Singapore Minister for Foreign Affairs and Minister for Law K Shanmugam, Ministers and senior officials from 10 Caribbean countries and the Secretary-General of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) visited Singapore from 15 to 19 July 2013 for the inaugural CARICOM High-Level Ministerial Exchange Visit.

The Ministers and senior officials were from Antigua and Barbuda, The Bahamas, Barbados,



Minister for Foreign Affairs and Minister for Law K Shanmugam (second from left) hosting the CARICOM delegation at the welcome ceremony.



Belize, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, Saint Lucia, Suriname, and Trinidad and Tobago.

A NEW BEGINNING

This inaugural high-level Ministerial Exchange Visit heralds a fresh step forward in Singapore and CARICOM relations.

At the welcome ceremony held

at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Minister Shanmugam highlighted the growing economic and political ties between Singapore and the Caribbean, and how Singapore's closer engagement with CARICOM countries have been invaluable in finding common ground and shared interests on bilateral and global issues.

↑ CARICOM delegation at the NEWater Visitors' Centre.

"In diverse areas spanning climate change and human rights, through to maritime and aviation issues, Singapore and the CARICOM states have found "strength in numbers," said Minister Shanmugam. "Like many CARICOM states, we are also active members of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) and the Small Island Developing States (SIDS). These groupings provide the common space for small states to share their experiences and strategies for development, and to exchange views on issues concerning global governance."

CARICOM Secretary-General Irwin LaRocque agreed with Minister Shanmugam's remarks, and said: "CARICOM Member States have enjoyed excellent relations with Singapore over many years, [...] but I think this visit marks a new beginning. It opens up room for greater cooperation in the international community."

The delegation was given briefings by Singapore ministries and





← The CARICOM delegation visiting the Pinnacle@Duxton, an iconic project in Singapore's public housing history



↑ CARICOM delegation receiving a briefing at the Urban Redevelopment Authority.

agencies on subjects of interest to them such as civil aviation, waste and water management, and urban planning. The delegation also visited the NEWater Visitor Centre, the Marina Barrage, Urban Redevelopment Authority, the Singapore Aviation Academy and other sites to complement their briefings.

The NEWater centre and Marina Barrage left a deep impression on the delegation, as many CARICOM countries faced similar geographical and water constraints, and they

found Singapore's way of sustainable water management innovative.

Bahamas Minister of Foreign Affairs and Immigration Frederick Mitchell said, "Water is a very serious issue in the Bahamas. There is a lot of thinking [about what could] be done when we get back home [in connection] with the things that we have learnt here."

The delegation also paid a joint courtesy call on Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong. They exchanged views on developments in the Caribbean and Asia. They also spoke about how Singapore and CARICOM countries could collaborate bilaterally, between regions, and on multilateral platforms, in order to build closer links and explore new cooperation areas.

FOSTERING GREATER TIES

Singapore has also been steadily deepening relations with the CARICOM through strengthening people-to-people relations and institutional links. In 2011, Ambassador Kemal Siddique was appointed as Singapore's first Plenipotentiary Representative to the CARICOM.

During the High-Level Ministerial Exchange Visit, Minister Shanmugam unveiled an Enhanced Technical Assistance Package for the CARICOM. Under this enhanced package, CARICOM officials will be accorded some priority places in training courses offered by the Singapore Cooperation Programme (SCP). Singapore also agreed to organise customised training courses and study visits for senior CARICOM officials on subjects most relevant to their development. Singapore will also award some post-graduate scholarships to CARICOM officials.

"We hope that these new initiatives will encourage a greater exchange of ideas and knowledge among our officials, and foster a better understanding of our respective cultures and heritage between our people," said Minister Shanmugam.

"The visit has really served to illustrate what we have been hearing for many years about the successes of Singapore," said Barbados' Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade Maxine McClean. "I think what it has done is to share [with us] some of [Singapore's] best practices. It allowed us to make comparisons in terms of what we are currently doing and what we [could] do in our respective countries."

