

The background of the entire cover is a photograph of the Supertrees at Gardens by the Bay in Singapore. The trees are tall, with intricate metal frameworks and greenery. In the background, the Marina Bay Sands hotel is visible. The sky is blue with some clouds.

# experience **singapore**

A newsletter of the  
Singapore Cooperation Programme  
July - September 2012  
ISSUE 44

## **JEWEL** in the **SKYLINE**

**MEGA PARK GARDENS BY THE  
BAY IS A FANTASY IN BLOOM**

### **GREEN WITH A PURPOSE**

**THE MAKEOVER OF  
SINGAPORE'S PARKS**

### **REBUILDING A COMMUNITY**

**A HELPING HAND FOR  
PAKISTAN'S FLOOD VICTIMS**



# Dear readers,

In our last issue of *Experience Singapore*, we revealed Singapore's plans to transform from a "Garden City" to a "City in A Garden". We provide more details in this issue. Our cover story **Jewel Of A Park** is dedicated to Singapore's new Gardens By The Bay which was officially opened by Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong on 28 June 2012. The Gardens, which took 8 years to complete, are set to become an intrinsic part of Singapore's new downtown.

Outside of the city, the rejuvenation of our community parks is also well underway. In **Beautifying With A Purpose**, find out how a utilitarian canal in Bishan-Ang Mo Kio park was transformed into a beautiful waterway employing natural bioengineering techniques to keep the water clean.

This issue also explores how Singapore NGO Mercy Relief recently completed a project to reconstruct homes for the people in the village of Wazir Ali Jat in Pakistan, who were displaced in the nation's worst-ever flood. Find out more about Mercy Relief's efforts in **Rebuilding A Community** in our Joining Hands pages.

Our **Reflections** page puts the spotlight on a group of young visitors from Thailand, who were in Singapore for a study tour in May. Not only did these VIPs from the Young Ambassadors of Virtue Foundation visit our schools, libraries, National Museum and the Zoo, they were also hosted to a tea reception by Singapore's Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Mr Masagos Zulkifli.

We hope you enjoy this issue of *Experience Singapore*. This year marks the 20th anniversary for the Singapore Cooperation Programme. Our next issue of *Experience Singapore* would be a commemorative special. Do look out for it!

**Sudesh Maniar**

**Director**

**Public Affairs Directorate**

**Ministry of Foreign Affairs Singapore**

## BE PART OF THE SCP'S 20TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION!

To celebrate this occasion, we will be publishing a special commemorative issue later this year. If you are an alumnus of the Singapore Cooperation Programme (SCP), take this opportunity and share with us your fond memories in Singapore as part of the SCP! We would love to hear your stories and experiences. Do send us photos together with captions, and see them published in the next issue of *Experience Singapore*!

Please send in your stories to [mfa\\_scp@mfa.gov.sg](mailto:mfa_scp@mfa.gov.sg).



## QUOTES FROM READERS' LETTERS

"Thank you for the April-June issue of *Experience Singapore*. I collect all the issues that you send me. Any latest news of Singapore never fails to impress me. When I saw the latest cover, my mind went back to the Chinese cultural centre in Chinatown - it was one of the most striking places I visited in Singapore four years ago."

**Premachanda Abeywickrama**  
**Danapala, Sri Lanka**

"After my wonderful experience in Singapore, where I had the opportunity to participate in the SCP course 'Enhancing Pedagogy Skills For Teacher Trainers', I want to tell you that I have improved and put in practice all the knowledge acquired through the course. I am now in a new job which allows me to demonstrate everything I have learnt at the National Institute of Education at Nanyang Technological University. And a very important link to your country is the *Experience Singapore* magazine that you send me."

**Martinod Catalina, Ecuador**

"Each time I receive your magazine I am widely reminded of the hospitality and humility of your country. Thank you for maintaining the connection."

**Mathias Chinanayi, Zimbabwe**



**MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS**  
**SINGAPORE**

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**Cover photo: Wilson Pang**

## DESTINATION HOTSPOT



Singapore has been named as one of the world's top five travel spots for 2012, thanks to its two integrated resorts, shopping and dining choices and other attractions.

The MasterCard Global Destinations Cities Index also placed Singapore fourth in visitor arrivals and fifth in tourist spending out of 132 cities.

This is a slight improvement from last year, where Singapore had also come in fourth in visitor arrivals but was ranked seventh in tourist spending.

The index, released on 18 June, ranked London tops in both expenditure and the number of tourist arrivals.

The cities are assessed in terms of their

international visitor arrivals on direct flights, and how much such visitors spent in their destination cities in previous years.

Separately, the Singapore Tourism Board said in March that Singapore could expect up to 14.5 million visitors this year, up from 13.2 million last year.

## TALKING POINT

**"Through its curriculum, programmes and community, the Yale-NUS College will contribute to a deeper understanding between Singapore and the United States, and more broadly between Asia and the West, in a century when such understanding is going to be crucial to all forms of progress."**

— Professor Pericles Lewis, 43, president of the new Yale-National University of Singapore (NUS) College. The college is due to open in August 2013.



## ALL WIRED UP



Three in four people in have a smartphone — making Singapore the country with the highest smartphone ownership in the world. And when it comes to tablet computers, Singapore

ranks No 2 globally.

According to a global study by Swedish telco equipment maker Ericsson released on 18 June, Singapore's 74 per cent smartphone ownership rate ranks it ahead of places such as Hong Kong (73 per cent) and the United Arab Emirates (64 per cent).

Singapore's tablet ownership stands at 31 per cent, slightly behind Hong Kong at 34 per cent. The survey polled more than 47,500 Internet users aged 16 to 60 ages in 58 countries — including 500 from Singapore — in the first quarter of this year.

## RECORD EU-SINGAPORE TRADE

Trade between Singapore and the European Union (EU) reached record levels in 2011 despite the region's economic woes. It rose seven per cent to reach S\$106 billion, and was up 11 per cent in the first quarter of 2012.

A free trade agreement (FTA) between the EU and Singapore is also expected to be concluded later this year, said Ambassador Marc Ungeheuer, head of the EU delegation in Singapore.

The EU is Singapore's second biggest trading partner, slightly behind Malaysia. In turn, the Republic is the EU's fifth largest trading partner in Asia, and 13th globally. The EU is also the largest source of foreign direct investment in Singapore, with a stock of S\$169 billion in 2010.

## SINGAPORE BY NUMBERS

**1** The top logistics hub in the world as recognised by the World Bank's Logistics Performance Index. Singapore beat 154 other countries.

**1** Singapore has also maintained its pole position as Asia's top convention city for the 10<sup>th</sup> consecutive year, according to the latest globalrankings by the International Congress and Convention Association.

**8** Singapore dropped two places to rank as the 8<sup>th</sup> most expensive city in Asia for expatriates — behind Tokyo, Nagoya, Yokohama, Kobe, Beijing, and Seoul. However, it rose six places from 2011 to be the 32<sup>nd</sup> most pricey in the world. The Cost of Living survey by ECA International takes into account food and clothing, electrical goods, motoring and meals out.





# JEWEL OF A PARK

A 128m-long skybridge links two of the Supertrees

## EIGHT YEARS IN DEVELOPMENT, BAY SOUTH AT GARDENS BY THE BAY IS NOW OPEN AS SINGAPORE'S LATEST VISITOR ATTRACTION.

WORDS BY FAIROZA MANSOR

In hot and humid Singapore, being able to walk through a cooling mist and hear the roar of a six-storey high waterfall — right in the heart of the bustling city — sounds like fantasy.

But fantasy comes alive at 'Cloud Forest', a conservatory at Gardens by the Bay. Walking through a cloud of mist at its entrance is like entering a different world. Not only are you greeted by the majestic spectacle and sound of a waterfall thundering down 30m, your senses are immediately assailed by the sight and scents of flowers, plants and foliage you never thought would exist in tropical Singapore.

Cloud Forest is one of two climate-controlled conservatories in Bay South, the first of three gardens that comprise Gardens by the Bay. Inspired partly by other international cities that have been enhanced by parks — both economically and aesthetically — Gardens by the Bay occupies 101 hectares of land at Marina Bay, near the central financial area in the southern part of the island.

Described by Singapore's Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong as "a jewel in the skyline of the Singapore city", the mega park's star attractions are the two conservatories — Cloud Forest and 'Flower Dome'. Both are reputed to be two of the world's

largest climate-controlled conservatories, filled with about 226,000 plants from every continent except Antarctica.

Cloud Forest emulates the cool-moist climate of regions between 1,000 to 3,500m above sea level. The enclosure also boasts a 35m mountain that has a crystal cave with stalactites and stalagmites.

On the other hand, Flower Dome replicates the cool-dry climate of the Mediterranean and semi-arid subtropical regions like South Africa. Temperatures at the two conservatories are kept between 23°C and 25°C using energy-efficient cooling technologies.

There are also 18 futuristic-looking Supertrees, which are vertical gardens of up to 50m tall. These showcase over 162,900 plants from more than 200 species of orchids, ferns and tropical flowering climbers. In the day, their large canopies provide shade





Photo: NParks



TOP: A six-storey high waterfall greets visitors to 'Cloud Forest'. LEFT: Flora and fauna from South Africa and Central Chile are on display in the 'Flower Dome'. RIGHT: Sculptures at Dragonfly Lake, one of two lakes at the park



and shelter. At night, they light up dramatically, powered by solar energy harvested by photovoltaic cells embedded in them.

By walking along a 128-metre-long skyway that links two Supertrees,

**"Our planners in URA believed that a large and beautiful park was an important element of our new downtown in Marina Bay South, just like Central Park in New York, or Hyde Park in London."**

Singapore's Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong

residential developments, right in the middle of the new Singapore city. But our planners in URA (Urban Redevelopment Authority) believed that a large and beautiful park was an important element of our new downtown in Marina Bay South, just like Central Park in New York, or Hyde Park in London."

"I think what will amaze many is the experience of stepping into a totally different botanical world and seeing plants not commonly found in Singapore," said Dr Tan Wee Kiat, the Chief Executive of Gardens by the Bay.

Gardens by the Bay is an example of how Singapore's living environment is being transformed, said Prime Minister Lee. "[Singapore] may be a densely populated city, maybe one of the densest in the world, but we are determined that our people should be able to live comfortably,

pleasantly, graciously.

"Not just good homes, efficient public transport, which we are working hard to improve, or safe streets. But also be in touch with nature, never far from green spaces and blue waters," he said.

Two lakes called Dragonfly and Kingfisher, as well as a green space with two themed gardens are also within the 54-hectares that make up Bay South, which took eight years and S\$1 billion to build.

For more information, log on to [www.gardensbythebay.org.sg](http://www.gardensbythebay.org.sg)

## BAY BEAT

The other two gardens in Gardens By The Bay will be Bay Central and Bay East. The plan is to develop Bay Central into an activities park like the East Coast Park and make Bay East a relaxing and tranquil park in the city.

The full development of the 32-hectare Bay East will be carried out at a later stage, taking into consideration the infrastructural works of other projects in the area. Bay Central, the smallest at 15 hectares, will be open after the other two gardens have been fully developed.



# BEAUTIFYING WITH A PURPOSE

**THE REJUVENATED BISHAN-ANG MO KIO PARK IS A NATURE HAVEN.** WORDS BY FAIROZA MANSOR

Looking at the meandering waterway flowing through the 62-hectare Bishan-Ang Mo Kio Park that serves as an expansive green oasis between two public housing estates, one would be hard pressed to imagine that the river was once a canal.

But that it was, before the park was renovated at a cost of S\$76 million and officially re-opened on 17 March 2012 by Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong.

The waterway, the park's highlight, has gentle slopes covered with lush greenery, allowing park users to stroll along the water's edge. The reconstruction of the Kallang River @ Bishan-Ang Mo Kio Park — so named

because the waterway connects to the Kallang River in the south — involved soil engineering techniques with the use of rocks and plants to stabilise the slopes and prevent erosion. Water in the river is kept clean using carefully selected plants — rather than chemicals — so that impurities are removed naturally. These plants help to cleanse water by filtering pollutants and absorbing nutrients.

Such natural bioengineering techniques has meant that the biodiversity in the vicinity has increased by 30 per cent. Migratory birds such as the Purple Heron and Little Egret, as well as various species of dragonflies are now a common sight at the park.

Other than being visually pleasing, the Kallang River @ Bishan-Ang Mo Kio Park has also been designed on a floodplain concept. This means that during heavy rain, the river banks become a natural channel to convey rainwater



Purple Heron

**Migratory birds such as the Purple Heron and Little Egret, as well as various species of dragonflies are now a common sight at the park.**

downstream to Marina Reservoir, the largest of Singapore's 17 reservoirs, and the first in the heart of the city.

## FUN IN THE SUN

The park has three playgrounds as well as a fitness corner and a foot reflexology footpath. Open fields and event lawns — covering more than



Aerial view of the 'new' Kallang River @ Bishan-Ang Mo Kio Park.



'An Enclosure for a Swing' by Singapore sculptor Kelvin Lim stands atop Recycle Hill.

40,000 sq metres — make great spots for recreational activities such as soccer and kite-flying.

Recycle Hill, aptly named because it was formed using concrete slabs from the former canal, gives visitors a panoramic view of the park. At its top stand a larger-than-life installation by Singapore sculptor Kelvin Lim. Called 'An Enclosure for a Swing', it contains a functional swing within its metal bars.

The initiative to rejuvenate the Bishan-Ang Mo Kio Park is part of the Government's commitment to make Singapore the "best home", said Prime Minister Lee at the park's official re-opening.

"After all, Singapore is not just defined by tall buildings or skylines, or even exciting events like F1," he said. "But rather by the places where we grew up, the people we meet daily and the community spaces we enjoy together."

It is especially important to improve the living environment in the

heartland through projects like upgrading homes and transport networks as that is where "we raise our families, forge new memories and strengthen our emotional ties".



Cleansing plants at the Pond Gardens help to filter pollutants and clean the water.



A bridge at Punggol Waterway.

## ABC EXPLAINED

Singapore has 17 reservoirs, 32 major rivers and more than 7,000 kilometres of canals and drains.

The Active, Beautiful, Clean Waters (ABC Waters) Programme was launched by Singapore's national water agency, PUB, in 2007 to transform utilitarian drains, canals and reservoirs into beautiful and clean streams, rivers and lakes with the view of making Singapore into a vibrant City of Gardens and Water. Under this on-going programme, 'blue green' spaces are created and integrated with adjacent land developments to encourage lifestyle activities in and around the waters.

A total of 100 potential projects have been identified island-wide for implementation over the next 10 to 20 years. The ABC Waters Programme also aims to improve Singapore's water quality by incorporating design features such as rain gardens and constructed wetlands into its projects. This way, storm water on these sites is treated before it flows naturally into waterways and reservoirs — making Singapore one of the few countries in the world to harvest urban storm water on a large scale for its water supply.

Some of the latest ABC Waters to be completed include Punggol Waterway, the longest man-made waterway in Singapore at 4.2 km; Lorong Halus Wetland, created out of what used to be Singapore's last land-based landfill; and Marina Reservoir, Singapore's largest reservoir located in the heart of the city.



# REBUILDING A COMMUNITY

**FIFTY FAMILIES FROM ONE OF THE WORST HIT AREAS IN THE FLOODS THAT RAVAGED PAKISTAN IN LATE JULY 2010 NOW HAVE NEW HOMES AS WELL AS LAND FOR GROWING CROPS, THANKS TO DONATIONS FROM SINGAPORE.** WORDS BY FAIROZA MANSOR

It has been two years since Pakistan was hit by the worst floods in the country's history. The flood waters have long subsided, but many survivors have lost their homes and livelihoods.

Rebuilding their lives is now possible though — at least for 50 affected families from the village of Wazir Ali Jat in the Thatta district in the province of Sindh. A social mobilisation programme to rebuild their homes was launched by Mercy Relief in June 2011. A Singapore-based non-governmental organisation (NGO), Mercy Relief worked in partnership with Pakistan's National Rural Support Programme (NRSP) to facilitate the construction of 50 houses in the village.

Wazir Ali Jat village was chosen because it was in one of the worst hit areas. It was also one of the first areas to have received immediate aid from Mercy Relief, said Mr Abdul Jaffar Mydin, the NGO's Assistant Director of International Programme Division.

The flood, which started on 27 July 2010, was caused by heavy monsoon rains. It submerged about one third of the country and led to the cancellation of its Independence Day celebrations on August 14 that

year. Although the floods had generally begun to recede, new floods were reported by mid-September 2010 in some areas such as in the southern province of Sindh. About 2,000 people were killed nation-wide.

## LONG TERM IMPACT

"Unlike acute emergency relief where the relief phase is temporary, reconstruction of homes is meant for long-term impact. It is not just about reconstructing homes, but more about rebuilding communities," said Mr Abdul Jaffar.

Construction of the houses — made mostly of brick and cement — took about 11 months. With a floor area of 18sq m, each house in the new estate comprises a bedroom, kitchen, veranda and toilet. Previously, the

families lived in makeshift wooden houses built on low, uneven ground.

Each house has its own garden space to farm vegetables for personal consumption. The farming village was also given an 84-acre communal plot to grow commercial crops.

Each family was also given livestock, including goats and chickens, as well as seeds and fertilisers to help restart their lives. The families have since settled into their homes and are already growing rice and sunflower (for the seeds) on the communal plot.

At the opening ceremony on 20 April 2012 for the new estate, the families each received a certificate of ownership for their homes. They also received a carton of ready-packed meals. The ceremony was attended by six Mercy Relief representatives as well as NRSP management members.

The S\$233,000-estate, which has brick paths and street lighting, was funded through various fundraising efforts organised by Mercy Relief in Singapore as well as through public donations.

"Many of the villagers expressed their gratitude and told me that the new houses are something beyond their dreams," said Mr Abdul Jaffar.



Construction of the 50 new houses at Wazir Ali Jat village in Thatta district, Sindh province, began in June 2011.





Assistant Director of International Programme Division at Mercy Relief, Mr Abdul Jaffar Mydin, distributing fresh meat to the affected villagers soon after the flood hit.

“Also, they now have access to clean water from taps.”

Also present at the ceremony was Mr Wazir Ali Jat, who donated 14,000sq m of his family’s land to support the reconstruction. He said with great joy, “You saw our houses before this [the reconstruction], and today you can see the happiness on the faces of the villagers. We — the men, women and children of this village — will always remember the people of Singapore for the support they have provided us.”

As one villager told *Channel News-Asia*, “We now have cement houses. We are safe from future flood waters because the houses are built two to

**“We — the men, women and children of this village — will always remember the people of Singapore for the support they have provided us.”**

Mr Wazir Ali Jat, who donated 14,000sq m of his family’s land to support the reconstruction



SingHealth medical practitioners providing basic medical care at the Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camp in Sukkur district, Sindh.

three feet above ground.”

Economically, the future looks brighter as well. “When we sell the livestock in a few months, we expect we will have enough money, and we can use this money for our children, for their education and health,” said another villager.

### MEDICAL MISSIONS

Before the reconstruction efforts in Wazar Ali Jat, Mercy Relief had also worked with Singapore’s SingHealth and Pakistan’s South City Hospital to dispatch medical relief teams to Pakistan in the immediate aftermath of the 2010 floods. Two medical missions were deployed to the Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camp in Sukkur district, also located in Sindh province.

The first medical team of two doctors and six nurses was led by Dr Gene Ong from Singapore’s KK Women’s and Children’s Hospital’s department of emergency medicine. They were at the IDP camp from 8 to 22 October 2010 to provide basic medical care. A second medical team, also SingHealth medical practitioners, was deployed

from 17 to 31 October. Each day, the teams attended to more than 200 patients suffering from conditions that included upper-respiratory tract infections as well as gastro-intestinal problems and skin complaints.

Dr Razi Yousuf, managing director of South City Hospital, said then that as many flood victims were living in crowded communal facilities, there was the risk of an epidemic of water-borne diseases as well as dengue and malaria — especially in areas where water sources had become contaminated by pollutants from debris.

In total, Mercy Relief made more than 10 trips to the Khyber Pakhtunhwa province in north-west Pakistan and Sindh province throughout the relief, rehabilitation and reconstruction phases from 1 August 2010 — about a week after the flood first hit. Besides tents, fresh meat and food packs, Mercy Relief also donated 20 units of ultra-filtration water systems.

The total value of donations collected by Mercy Relief to fund all its aid efforts in Pakistan came up to S\$1.63 million.



# YOUNG THAI AMBASSADORS IN SINGAPORE

**SIX YOUNG AMBASSADORS FROM THAILAND'S YOUNG AMBASSADORS OF VIRTUE FOUNDATION VISITED SINGAPORE TO LEARN OUR DEVELOPMENT STORY.** WORDS BY ROSA ATAN

**T**hey were captivated by a 3.5 million-volt coil at the Singapore Science Centre. They captured seafood in drawings and painted pictures with coffee at Anderson Primary School. They also got up close and personal with the animals at the Singapore Zoological Gardens.

These were some of the fond memories that six primary school pupils from Thailand brought home after their study visit to Singapore from 2 to 5 May, 2012.

The students, aged between 10 and 12 years, were members of Thailand's Young Ambassadors of Virtue

Foundation (YAVF), an organisation established in 1999 under the auspices of Thailand's Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Foundation aims to promote national unity, character development and volunteerism among the country's youths. The pupils, along with their teachers, were selected from over 2,500 Thai schools for this study visit, based on their ideas of how youths could contribute to forging stronger national unity.

The Foundation, whose patron is Her Royal Highness Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn, organises activities aimed at promoting youth development and volunteerism. The delegation was led by the Foundation's Chief Executive Officer Ms Pornpimol Kanchanalak.

On their first day in Singapore, the 20-member delegation was hosted to a tea reception by Singapore's Minister of State for Foreign Affairs and Home Affairs, Mr Masagos Zulkifli, at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Mr Masagos said the

visit reflected the close ties between Singapore and Thailand. The two countries have long enjoyed close cooperation in many areas, with both sharing a keen desire to achieve an ASEAN Community by 2015. He also

**"If there is one single country in the world that has proven how important human resources are, it's Singapore."**

Ms Pornpimol Kanchanalak, Chief Executive Officer, Thailand's Young Ambassadors of Virtue Foundation



National Museum



Singapore Science Centre





Anderson Primary School



Tea reception with Singapore's Minister of State for Foreign Affairs and Home Affairs, Mr Masagos Zulkifli, at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs



Woodlands Regional Library

go anywhere else?" He also said that he was looking at making the visit an annual affair.

The Singapore trip had certainly left a deep impression on the Thai visitors.

In an article published in Thailand's English-language newspaper, *The Nation*, shortly after returning from the trip, Ms Pornpimol noted that Singapore had "in less than one generation...gone from rags to riches — for the people, not politicians".

"If there is one single country in the world that has proven how important human resources are, it's Singapore. The country has absolutely no natural resources, not even fresh water. The only resource it has is people."



Singapore Zoological Gardens

delegates visited Anderson Primary School and Raffles Institution (RI) to learn more about Singapore's education system. At RI, the visitors were impressed by the campus tour that took the delegation to the library, lecture theatres and heritage centre.

For a glimpse into the Republic's heritage and culture, the Thai delegation visited the National Museum, Woodlands Regional Library and the Science Centre. They also visited the Singapore Zoological Gardens.

Ambassador Don Pramudwinai, co-founder of YAVF, who was part of the delegation, was pleased to observe how the Thai students were enriched by their first overseas experience as YAVF delegates. He told *The Straits Times* newspaper that the Republic was chosen for the study visit because of its economic and educational success. "This is such a resourceful country," he said. "Why should we

noted that the two countries have established exchange programmes, such as a school twinning scheme that pairs 10 Singapore schools with their Thai counterparts. Some 1,000 students and teachers from Singapore have visited Thailand under this programme.

During their four-day stay, the Thai



Elephant Statue at Old Parliament House



# SINGAPORE AND OMAN BOOST TIES WITH NEW INSTITUTE

**MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING SIGNED DURING SINGAPORE FOREIGN MINISTER'S VISIT.**



LEFT: Singapore's Foreign Minister K Shanmugam (left), and Oman's MFA Secretary-General Sayyid Badr bin Hamood Al Busaidi signing an MOU to establish the Regional Institute for Infrastructure Development (RIID). ABOVE: Minister Shanmugam speaking to course participants at RIID.

**S**ingapore's Minister for Foreign Affairs and for Law K Shanmugam and Secretary-General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Oman Sayyid Badr bin Hamood Al Busaidi signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to establish the Regional Institute for Infrastructure Development (RIID) during his introductory visit to the Sultanate of Oman in May 2012. The RIID is co-located at the Sultan Qaboos University and will be the platform for Singapore to offer capacity building courses in infrastructure development and vocational skills to the Omanis. These courses cover areas such as electrical network management, civil aviation and water management.

Minister Shanmugam also observed the first RIID course on "Distribution Network Asset Management" during this visit to the Sultanate.

The course was conducted by trainers from Singapore Power and the Energy Market Authority. One of the course participants, Mr Naveen Kumar, Technical Manager of the Al Batinah Power Company, said that the course provided "more insights into how the energy industry functions... [and] there are many aspects that can be adopted to enhance the energy industry capability in Oman".

While in Oman, Minister Shanmugam also met Deputy Prime Minister for the Council of Ministers His Highness Sayyid Fahd bin Mahmoud Al Said, the Chairman of the Majlis A'Shura (Consultative Assembly) Khalid bin Hilal Al Mawali, and

the Undersecretary of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry Ahmed Hassan Al Dheeb.

They discussed the state of Singapore-Oman relations and identified new areas where both countries could cooperate.

Minister Shanmugam also met the Singaporean community in Oman at a reception hosted by Singapore's Non-Resident Ambassador to Oman, Mr Teng Theng Dar.

**The RIID is co-located at the Sultan Qaboos University and will be the platform for Singapore to offer capacity building courses in infrastructure development and vocational skills to the Omanis.**