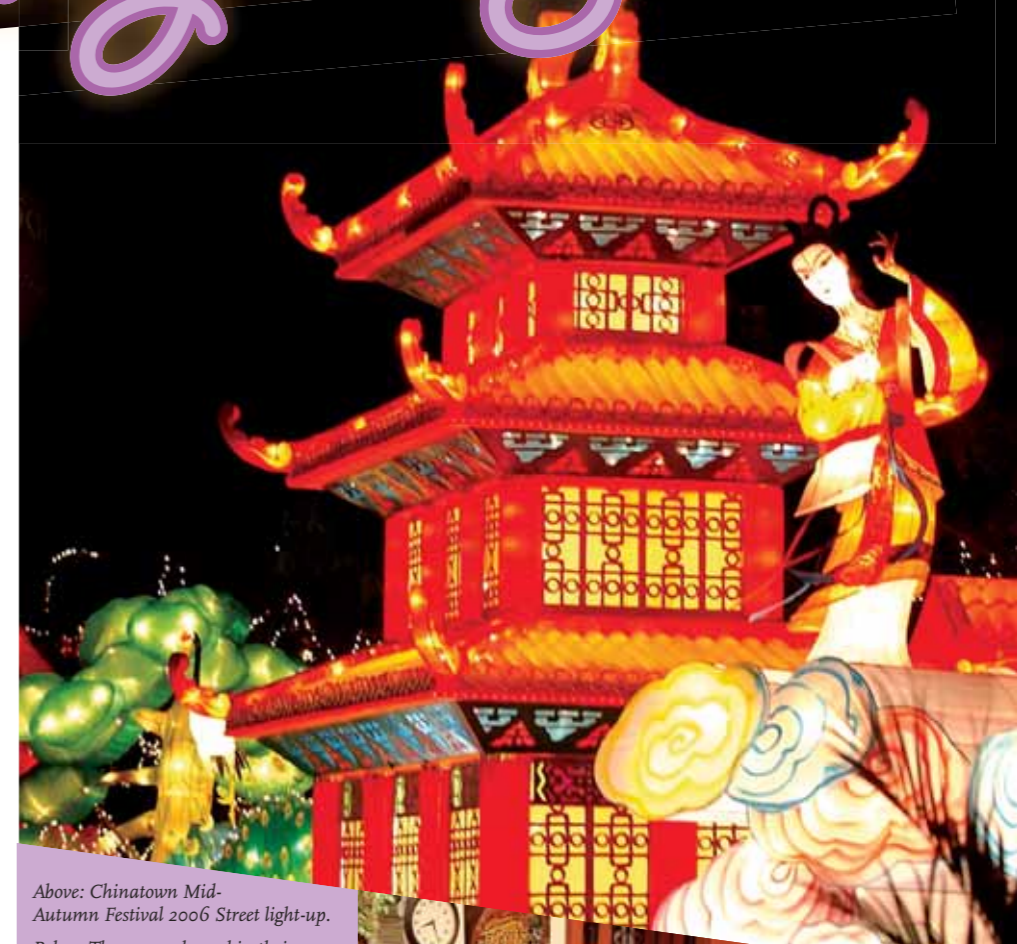


A City Aglow



Above: From left to right: Nediva Divya Singam, 8, with her mother Monica and brother Ruben Hemant Singam, 7, celebrating Deepavali at home. On the floor is a Rangoli made up of broken rice arranged in a floral pattern. Hindus celebrate Deepavali or the festival of lights every year and an important practice is to light lamps to mark the triumph of good over evil. Below: The annual Deepavali lights up at Little India.



Above: Chinatown Mid-Autumn Festival 2006 Street light-up.

Below: These men dressed in their Hari Raya finery, led by Ustaz Sallim Jasman, called on four households to recite a 10-minute takbir. At the fourth house, the host set up a tentage and a buffet of traditional Malay dishes. The act celebrates the end of fasting month and marks the beginning of Syawal, the month of Hari Raya Puasa.



In recent years, Singapore's streets have become more and more brightly illuminated after dark. In October this year, night lighting reached a new height of brilliance in many parts of Singapore's city centre.

Singapore's population is about 77 per cent Chinese, 14 per cent Malay and 8 per cent Indian. Street light-ups to celebrate major festivals of the various ethnic groups have become part of the country's landscape and events calendar, something to look forward to for residents and visitors alike. But this year was extra special with not two, but three, festivals happening in the same month – Deepavali, Hari Raya Puasa and the Mid-Autumn Festival.

These three festivals are based on lunar calendars and normally do not fall within the same month. The Mid-Autumn Festival usually occurs in September, while Deepavali usually falls in October or November. However, due to a leap seventh month in the Chinese lunar calendar this year, the Mid-Autumn Festival was one month later than usual. Hari Raya, which takes place in a different month every year, was coincidentally in October this year as well.

In Chinatown, as part of the celebrations leading up to the Mid-Autumn Festival on October 6, moving giant lanterns strung in the sky added a dynamic aspect to the festive revelry of the crowd thronging among the 300 stalls and stage shows in the streets below.

At Little India, 244 colourful peacocks made from glittering lights donned the streets in anticipation of Deepavali on October 21. Besides heritage exhibitions and bazaars, the highlight was a street parade that featured 25 contingents and 350 performers, including the traditional fire-walking procession.

Over at Kampong Glam and Geylang Serai, 600 neon bulbs crafted into three symbols – a mosque dome, star and flower – spiced up the festivities at the 120-booth street bazaar and stage performances as the Malay community celebrated Hari Raya.

Both locals and tourists gave the light-ups two thumbs up, for the way they helped people appreciate other cultures.

Madam Rekha Bhatnagar from Bangalore, who visited Chinatown during the festival, said: "The decorations are very good, very different. It makes the places look so chirpy."