

Singapore

*A monthly update
from the
Singapore Embassy*

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President Bush Visits Singapore; New Bilateral Initiatives Announced

U.S. President George W. Bush made his first visit to Singapore last month during a fast-paced swing through Asia. He met with Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong and thanked Singapore for its friendship with the United States.



Prime Minister Goh and Mrs. Goh Chok Tong with President Bush and Mrs. George W. Bush

The Presidential visit built upon the existing strong and multi-faceted U.S.-Singapore partnership, which saw the signing earlier this year of the U.S.-Singapore Free Trade Agreement, as well as a strengthening of defence and security ties.

President Bush called Prime Minister Goh a “wise man” whose advice he valued, and described Singapore as a nation that shared an agenda of “peace and freedom, as well as prosperity through trade.”

At their meeting, the two leaders discussed the situation in Iraq and regional efforts in the war against terrorism. Singapore also announced that it would send military assets, including a transport plane and a naval vessel, to assist in the reconstruction of Iraq.

President Bush expressed his

gratitude for the contribution, and further commended the Singapore Police unit that recently returned home after training 1,500 Iraqi police officers to protect critical installations.

Both President Bush and Prime Minister Goh pointed out that much headway had been made in disrupting terrorist networks in Southeast Asia. They agreed, however, that more needed to be done. They pledged therefore to continue working closely to defeat terrorism, both bilaterally and through multilateral institutions such as APEC (Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation), ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) and the United Nations.

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C O N T I N U E D

New Security and Health Initiatives Announced

To drive home their message, the two leaders announced that the U.S. and Singapore would create a strategic framework to enhance joint action in tackling new security threats posed by terrorist groups and the spread of weapons of mass destruction. Called the Framework Agreement for the Promotion of a Strategic Cooperation Partnership in Defence and Security, it could also allow for joint military exercises, policy dialogues and the sharing of defence technology.

The plan would formalize and bring under one umbrella the many aspects of ongoing cooperation between the two countries. Both leaders said they hoped to see the agreement implemented as quickly as possible.

President Bush meeting
with Singapore President
S.R. Nathan



The second initiative was aimed at enhancing efforts to respond to new threats, principally emerging diseases and the use of biological agents by terrorists. REDI, or the Regional Emerging Diseases Intervention Centre, would rest on a partnership between the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and Singapore's Ministry of Health, and would use the country as a "nerve centre" for the region.

Officials indicated that the first research target would be SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome). The REDI Centre would start work immediately on developing a vaccine against it. It would also monitor large outbreaks of influenza and other diseases that could disrupt the Asia-Pacific region.

American experts will be based at the REDI Centre to train public health officials, researchers, clinicians and other health professionals, and to beef up surveillance and rapid response to infectious diseases and other security threats.

Whirlwind Trip

President Bush made his overnight stop in Singapore after attending the annual APEC summit, which was held this year in Bangkok, Thailand. In addition to meeting Prime Minister Goh, President Bush also met with Singapore President S.R. Nathan and other senior Cabinet members. He was accompanied by First Lady Laura Bush and key U.S. officials, including National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice, White House Chief of Staff Andrew Card, Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs James Kelly, and National Security Council Senior Director for Asian Affairs James Moriarty.

During his Asia trip, President Bush also visited Australia, Indonesia, Japan and the Philippines. The last American Presidential visit to Singapore took place in 1992, when the country welcomed President George H.W. Bush. ❖

Singapore Airlines to Offer World's Longest Flight

Singapore Airlines (SIA) plans to introduce the world's longest commercial flights with a non-stop route from Singapore to Los Angeles. The SIA service to Los Angeles will take 16 hours, and the return service from Los Angeles about 18.5 hours. This is a saving of 1.5 to two hours over SIA's current one-stop flights via Tokyo or Taipei.

"It will set a record for the longest non-stop commercial flight," said SIA spokeswoman Wendy Wong. U.S.-based Continental Airlines currently has the record for the longest non-stop commercial flight with a New York to Hong Kong route that takes just under 16 hours.



Singapore Ranks Near Top of Anti-Corruption Survey

Singapore remains one of the world's five least corrupt countries according to a report recently released by Transparency International, a German-based non-government organization.

Finland was rated the least corrupt country in the world,

followed by Iceland, Denmark, New Zealand and Singapore. Hong Kong tied for 14th with Austria, while the U.S. was rated as the 18th least corrupt economy.

First launched in 1995, the Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) is a composite measure that draws on 17 different polls from 13 independent institutions carried out among business people, academics and country analysts. In the survey, corruption is defined as "the abuse of public office for private gain," and CPI examines problems such as bribes taken by officials awarding government business contracts.

Singapore Named Best Business City

Singapore has been voted the "Best Business City in the World" for the third consecutive year by the readers of *Business Traveller Asia-Pacific* magazine.

In addition, Singapore Airlines was voted the "World's Best Airline," Changi Airport was voted the "World's Best Airport," the Shangri-La Singapore was voted the "Best Business Hotel in the World," and the Fullerton Singapore was voted "Best New Business Hotel in the Asia-Pacific Region."

Last year, 1.5 million visitors travelled to Singapore for business-related reasons, accounting for 20 percent of total visitor arrivals and generating S\$2 billion (US\$1.16 billion) in tourism receipts.

Business Traveller Asia-Pacific is one of seven regional editions of the magazine published around the world. The annual poll was conducted of the magazine's subscribers, comprising frequent travellers based mostly in the Asia-Pacific region.

Honeywell Expands Singapore Operations

U.S.-based aerospace giant Honeywell International is expanding its operations in Singapore, which serves as the company's Asia-Pacific headquarters and is currently the base for 60 percent of its workforce in the region. While these employees are involved primarily in the manufacture of aircraft electronics, Honeywell will add intellectual property, training, research and development and technology functions to its existing Singapore business.

Mr. Torbjorn Karlsson, Honeywell's Singapore-based Asia-Pacific vice president of commercial aerospace, said Asia's air travel demand growth, coupled with a relatively young fleet of aircraft with longer service lives, means good business for Honeywell in the region.

Honeywell also noted that government-backed incentives, an educated work force and recent free trade agreements with the U.S. and Australia have made Singapore an efficient regional base to develop, build, test and export technology. ❖

Prime Minister Goh Advocates Faster Southeast Asian Integration, Including Common Market



In a series of recent speeches, Singapore Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong outlined Singapore's vision for the future economic configuration of Southeast Asia and the wider East Asian region. He foresees increasing cross-border integration, with the creation of a web of closely connected economies, bringing about greater prosperity.

Speaking in conjunction with the ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) summit meeting in Bali, Indonesia in October, the Prime Minister stressed that it was vital to the long-term stability and prosperity of the 10 member strong grouping that it move quickly towards the creation of a common regional economic market. This would allow it to stay competitive with other Asian and global markets.

At the summit meeting, all leaders endorsed the concept of an ASEAN Economic Community (AEC), an ambitious plan to create by the year 2020 a stable, prosperous and competitive economic region, with a free flow of goods, services, investment and skilled labour and a freer flow of capital, equitable economic development and reduced poverty and socio-economic disparities.

However, Prime Minister Goh has expressed hope the AEC could be achieved even earlier. Addressing a meeting of chief executives ahead of the APEC (Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation) meeting in Thailand later that month, the Prime Minister said that both Singapore and Thailand intended to speed up the process by liberalizing certain sectors bilaterally, with other ASEAN countries joining in when they are ready to do so. For example, he mentioned that the two countries had earlier planned to fully liberalize their air cargo services sector and that Brunei, Cambodia and the Philippines announced last month they would come on board as well.

"We must make it easy for investors to take advantage of each other's competitive strengths if we want to sustain economic growth and to regain our dynamism," Prime Minister Goh said. He stressed that the collapse of the recent World Trade Organization (WTO) talks in Cancun was likely to lead to more regional and bilateral trade arrangements, further underscoring the urgency of the ASEAN common market.

The AEC aims to create an ASEAN community based on three pillars — political and security cooperation, economic cooperation and socio-cultural cooperation. ASEAN will continue to forge links with

other regional economies such as China, Japan and Korea to help bring the northern and southern halves of East Asia together.

East Asian Prosperity

On the wider East Asian region, the Prime Minister also gave a positive forecast. Despite concerns about terrorism, SARS and the slowly rebounding global economy, Prime Minister Goh remained optimistic — even bullish — about East Asia. "East Asia will pursue pragmatic policies and cooperation to bring about a common future of peace and prosperity," he said to participants of the World Economic Forum's East Asia Economic Summit held recently in Singapore.

Prime Minister Goh predicted that by 2025 there would be four major nodes of growth in East Asia, each spurring the others on: China, Japan and Korea, ASEAN and, although not conventionally part of East Asia, India.

He said that while East Asian growth of the past several decades may not be magical or a miracle, neither is it a mirage. "The will to succeed is the motor that drives East Asia. It propelled many decades of continuous growth. It will propel East Asia to a more prosperous 2025," Prime Minister Goh said. ❖

Asia's Health Hub

Johns Hopkins Medicine Opens Division in Singapore

The Maryland-based Johns Hopkins Medicine school will be opening its first overseas division at Singapore's Biopolis centre for biotechnology and medical research. Johns Hopkins' 12 full-time faculty members in Singapore will supervise local PhD students specializing in areas such as immunology, cancer biology and bioengineering.

In addition to training scientists, the division will focus on specific areas of research, such as looking for diagnostic tools and therapies for nose and throat cancer.

Johns Hopkins Medicine Chief Executive and Dean Edward Miller said that the move underlined and expanded Johns Hopkins' commitment to Singapore. The renowned institution has already established a research centre at Singapore's Science Park and a small clinical wing at the National University of Singapore.

Meanwhile, global pharmaceutical and consumer health giant Novartis has also unveiled plans to move its Institute for Tropical Diseases into the Biopolis complex.



Looking Ahead, Staying Competitive

The announcements by Johns Hopkins and Novartis underscore Singapore's efforts to become Asia's premier research and medical hub. Singapore's Acting Health Minister Mr. Khaw Boon Wan recently announced that the city-state's health care system treated about 200,000 foreign patients last year, but the government's goal to make Singapore a regional medical hub "has not fully blossomed."

Minister Khaw also said that Singapore was seeking to serve one million foreign patients by 2012, five times the current number. "In three specialties alone — heart, eye and cancer — I see tens of millions of middle-class patients within a seven-hour flying radius, waiting to be served," he said.

The demand for quality health care in Southeast Asia is rising as each year more of the region's 500 million people enter the middle class. "Just 10 percent alone would be a sizable volume for our health care sector," Minister Khaw pointed out.

Although Singapore has been the leading medical hub in Southeast Asia, competition from other countries in the region has increased. As with other sectors of the economy, Singapore is adapting by enhancing its cost-competitiveness. "Being a regional



Singapore's Acting Health Minister
Mr. Khaw Boon Wan

medical hub and containing healthcare costs are not mutually exclusive," Minister Khaw said.

About Biopolis

Biopolis, which officially opened last month, is Singapore's new, world-class biomedical sciences research and development (R & D) complex. The Biopolis campus provides space for R & D activities in an environment designed to foster a collaborative culture among the private and public research community.

The campus covers 18.5 hectares and includes seven buildings. It was built at a cost of approximately S\$500 million (US\$290 million) and eventually will host more than 1,500 scientists. ❖

For more information, visit the Biopolis and Ministry of Health websites at:
www.biopolis.org.sg
and www.moh.gov.sg

Singapore Names Orchid in Honour of First Lady Laura Bush

The orchid, called the "Mokara Laura Bush," is a lemon-yellow bloom speckled with delicate orange-brown spots.

As part of President and Mrs. Bush's recent visit to Singapore, the First Lady was presented with an orchid named after her at a ceremony in Singapore's National Orchid Garden, which forms part of the city-state's 52 hectare Botanic Gardens.

The orchid, called the "Mokara Laura Bush," is a lemon-yellow bloom speckled with delicate orange-brown spots. Mrs. Bush received her orchid from Dr. Chin See Chung, director of the Botanic Gardens, who also gave her a "birth certificate" for the flower.

"I can't image anything nicer than having an orchid named for yourself," said Mrs. Bush, who joins more than 60 other luminaries so honoured, including her mother-in-law, Mrs. Barbara Bush, who visited Singapore 11 years ago as First Lady.

Mrs. Bush visited the Botanic Gardens with Mrs. Goh while their spouses, President George W. Bush and Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong met for bilateral talks at Singapore's Istana, or government house. Mrs. Bush and Mrs. Goh were serenaded as well by 60 local schoolchildren and enjoyed a five-course Chinese dinner.

Also attending the dinner from the U.S. side were Mrs. Ann Lavin, wife of the U.S. Ambassador to Singapore; Ms. Joanne Blakemore, president of the American Association of Singapore; Mr. Robert Gross, superintendent of the Singapore American School; Ms. Andrea Ball, chief-of-staff to Mrs. Bush, and the spouses of several Singapore cabinet members.

Singapore is known throughout the world as a major orchid cultivation center. The internationally-famous



National Orchid Garden at the Botanic Gardens houses 60,000 orchid plants comprising 400 species and more than 2,000 hybrids, including Singapore's national flower, the Vanda Miss Joaquim, a violet and mauve natural hybrid. ❖

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