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EXPERIENCE SINGAPORE

Northern Exposure

Of canary birds and sustainable development

Unsung Heroes

What it takes to make each SCP programme a success

Friendship Ambassadors

Tracing the journey of pandas Kai Kai and Jia Jia

JAN - MAR 2013 / ISSUE 45

A NEWSLETTER OF THE SINGAPORE COOPERATION PROGRAMME



Singapore
Cooperation
Programme

SCP'S 20TH ANNIVERSARY

Sharing Singapore's Experiences For More Than 20 Years

Ed's Note

Dear readers,

On behalf of the *Experience Singapore* team, I would like to wish all our readers a happy 2013. This is a special issue, commemorating the 20th anniversary of the Singapore Cooperation Programme (SCP). We have taken the opportunity to revamp the magazine to make it even more attractive and reader-friendly. We now have a glossy cover, new masthead and sections, and a new logo to usher in a new milestone in SCP's history.

In this bumper issue, we have a full three-page spread of the highlights from our 20th Anniversary celebration event. SCP would not have come this far without the unsung heroes working behind the scenes. We interviewed three individuals intimately involved in the SCP to find out more about their contributions and to pay tribute to their tireless work. Meet Pearl Cheng, the liaison officer who is the 'go-to' person for the duration of the participants' stay in Singapore; Samikannoo, the long-serving office attendant in our Technical Cooperation Directorate which manages SCP; and Sandy Ng, who has built lasting friendships with families he hosted.

In **Helping Hands**, read about the experiences Singapore shared on sustainable development and environmental protection with visiting leaders from the Arctic Circle. Trace the journey of Kai Kai and Jia Jia, a pair of male and female giant pandas from Sichuan, China as they make Singapore their new home in our **Making Friends** section. The ASEAN-India Car Rally was another exciting event on Singapore's calendar as drivers from the 10 ASEAN member countries and India made an extraordinary 8,000-kilometre road trip from Singapore to New Delhi.

My team and I hope you will enjoy this commemorative issue of *Experience Singapore*. Thank you for being a part of SCP and being loyal readers of our magazine. And do continue to write in and let us know what you think of the new revamped *Experience Singapore*, and propose any ideas for further improvement you may have.

Sudesh Maniar
Director
Public Affairs Directorate
Ministry of Foreign Affairs Singapore



↑ **Pandas' passage**, pg12

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MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS
SINGAPORE

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www.timesprinters.com. ISSN: 0219-2896

Experience Singapore is a publication of the Public Affairs and Technical Cooperation Directorates of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Singapore. The Singapore Cooperation Programme (SCP) is administered by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Singapore, and is aimed at sharing Singapore's developmental experience with other developing countries.

Cover photo by Wilson Pang
Publishing Consultant
MediaCorp Pte Ltd

Keep in touch!
Share with us your memories, photos and views of your experience in Singapore under the Singapore Cooperation Programme. Email us at mfa@mfa.gov.sg.



Focus

20 YEARS OF SCP



Two decades of cooperation

The Singapore Cooperation Programme celebrates 20 years of sharing the Republic's knowledge and expertise with other countries.

WORDS BY AMIR ALI / GENE KHOR

SINGAPORE'S RAPID DEVELOPMENT since its independence in 1965 is a story that fascinates and inspires many. For the past 20 years, Singapore has been sharing its development experiences with friends around the world through the Singapore Cooperation Programme (SCP). The SCP celebrated its 20th anniversary at

a commemorative event held on 29 November 2012 at Singapore's Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA).

At the event, Mr K Shanmugam, Singapore's Minister for Foreign Affairs and Minister for Law, spoke about the ethos behind the SCP. Firstly, giving back to the international community is the right thing to do. This is because Singapore had benefitted from technical assistance in the early years of

its independence. Singapore believes that all people have a right to social and economic development.

Singapore also believes that providing technical assistance is a more effective and prudent way to help others. "From the onset, we decided financial aid was not the way we would go or finance infrastructure projects. We understood from our own experience that technical assistance is equally or more effective in creating the right conditions for growth," Mr Shanmugam said.

Helping others through the SCP also helps Singapore. Mr Shanmugam explained that Singapore is a small state and a price-taker in international relations. Singapore could not prosper in a turbulent and unstable environment. Likewise, Singapore benefits when countries all around the world are well-equipped to deal with common challenges such as



financial crises, terrorism and pandemics — threats that are magnified by the inter-connectedness of our world today.

Mr Shanmugam summed up the SCP's success so far: "The SCP has been successful because Singapore has been successful. Our experience stands as a powerful example, because it shows that a small country without natural resources can not only survive but thrive, as long as it has good leadership, political stability, rule of law, well-run and forward looking institutions, as well as sustained investments in its people...and a willingness to learn from others, to constantly adapt good practices to local conditions."

DOING MORE

Singapore, with almost no natural resources, cannot fulfill all requests for assistance. But Mr Shanmugam stressed that Singapore wants to do more, and can do more, through the SCP by providing "smarter assistance". The SCP is concentrating its efforts in areas where it can make



FACTS ABOUT THE SCP

The SCP has trained some 80,000 government officials from 170 countries, in areas where Singapore has expertise, such as public administration, economic development, port management, civil aviation and water management. While most participants hail from ASEAN, many others come from China, South Asia, the Pacific Islands, the Caribbean and Africa.

A significant part of the SCP is aimed at strengthening ASEAN through the Initiative for ASEAN Integration (IAI).

To date, Singapore has committed S\$170 million to the IAI and has trained more than 50,000 officials from ASEAN to enhance human resource and governance capacities of ASEAN countries.

The SCP also collaborates with over 40 other countries – including the United States and Japan – and international organisations – like the International Monetary Fund, UNDP and World Bank – to provide joint training to other countries under the SCP's Third Country Training Programme framework.

"Singapore has limited resources... At the same time...we want to do more and can do more. We will provide smarter assistance... and concentrate our efforts in areas where we can make the greatest positive impact."

MR K SHANMUGAM, SINGAPORE'S MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND MINISTER FOR LAW

the greatest positive impact. It acts upon feedback to improve existing programmes and to customise new ones. It develops new courses and experiments with new tools, such as Public-Private Partnerships. It revitalises its network of partnerships with aid agencies, international organisations and other developed nations. And the SCP will work even more closely with Singapore's

domestic agencies in a "Whole-Of-Government" way to tap their know-how and expertise in training officials from other nations.

Singapore is already embarking on this approach. One example of Singapore assisting a friend in the region came in January 2012, when Singapore put together a customised enhanced technical assistance package — the



Singapore-Myanmar Technical Cooperation Programme — to support Myanmar's political and economic reforms.

In February that year, Singapore and the United States also signed a Memorandum of Understanding to establish the Singapore-US Third Country Training Programme to provide joint technical assistance in support of ASEAN's community-building efforts.

A new programme on sustainable development and climate change was also created to assist small island states and

less-developed nations deal with the effects of climate change. In August 2012, Singapore hosted ministers from 11 Pacific Island states at the inaugural Singapore-Pacific Ministerial Study Visit. Singapore shared its policies and challenges in public administration, education, healthcare, transport and water management, all of which are areas of interest to Pacific nations.

Singapore is also currently collaborating with the Chinese government to share their respective experiences on social management.



1

↑ Mr S R Nathan, Minister Shanmugam and Senior Minister of State for Foreign Affairs and Home Affairs Masagos Zulkifli viewing an exhibition that was commissioned to showcase the development of the SCP over the past 20 years and its current programmes.



2



3

1 ASEAN participants (of a border control course) examining specimens of forged passports

2 Ministers from 11 Pacific Island States participated in the inaugural Singapore-Pacific Ministerial Study Visit held in Singapore in August 2012

3 Chinese officials during a study visit on urban planning in Singapore, in 2009

NEW LOGO



The SCP's 20th anniversary celebration saw the unveiling of a new corporate logo. The striking red globe in the middle embodies the global nature of the SCP, while the white ascending pathways across it signify the forward-looking and cooperative nature of the programme.



Focus

FELLOWSHIP PROGRAMME

S R Nathan Fellowship

ALSO PRESENT AT the SCP's 20th anniversary commemorative event was the 6th President of Singapore, Mr S R Nathan, who was on hand to launch the new S R Nathan Fellowship programme. The fellowship programme provides more opportunities for Singapore to engage policymakers, thinkers and opinion-shapers from around the world to exchange ideas, experiences and

perspectives on current and long-term challenges.

Addressing the diplomats and dignitaries in attendance, Mr Nathan said: "Many of our friends, including some big countries, are fully aware that Singapore is a small city-state, and that our systems and development experience may not be so easily replicated in their countries. Yet, they still

"My message to the participants of this fellowship is not to regard their visit to Singapore as a one-off contact, but the start of a long and meaningful journey filled with conversations with their Singaporean counterparts that continue even when they return home."

MR S R NATHAN, 6TH PRESIDENT OF SINGAPORE



Mr S R Nathan greeting a guest at the SCP's 20th anniversary commemorative event, which saw the launch of the S R Nathan Fellowship programme

find it useful to visit Singapore to look at what we do to solve similar social, economic, technical or environmental challenges they face back home."

He added: "In a way, Singapore is to them a 'living lab' for them to study not just how we moved from the Third World to the First, but also how we manage the new challenges development has brought us." These challenges include maintaining economic competitiveness through continual change, maintaining racial and religious harmony, as well as managing the effects of a greying population.

Mr Nathan hoped that the fellowship programme will help participants gain insight from it, as well as clarifying any doubts that might have arisen during their stay in Singapore. He also stressed that the interactions with visiting fellows should not be just a one-way endeavour; Singapore officials should also make the most of their interactions with other participants of the programme and learn about their countries and the problems they face to give a better appreciation of Singapore and its story.



In Singapore

BEHIND THE SCENES

Unsung heroes of SCP

Experience Singapore speaks to three individuals who work behind the scenes to contribute to the smooth running of SCP programmes. **WORDS BY FAIROZA MANSOR**

PEARL CHENG

43, Liaison Officer

→ **WHEN SHE WAS** in school, Pearl Cheng found it challenging to address the class. Nowadays she finds it hard to stop talking. After all, keeping up the flow of conversation is a large part of her job. As Pearl says, her role as Liaison Officer involves "tending to the overseas participants in Singapore on training programmes, interacting with them and making sure they are comfortable during their stay".

Pearl's job is to ensure that everything goes smoothly for the participants, from the moment they land at Changi Airport until they go through the departure gates. She is their 'go-to' person when they are in Singapore.

"My fellow liaison officers and I have to manage all sorts of problems that may crop up along the way. We have to be just a phone call away when we are not with the participants physically. Sometimes the participants lose their way when they go out on their own, and they'd call me for directions. Sometimes they want to know where to shop or even just

→ For Pearl, meeting new people is the best part of her job



how to get a taxi," she says.

Pearl's responsibilities for each assignment start with welcoming the participants at the airport and ensuring that they get to their respective hotels. During their stay, as part of the programme, Pearl accompanies them to places of interest — such as Sentosa and the Night Safari.

"When they are attending lectures or workshops, I'm also there during tea breaks and meals. I chat with them, especially the more reserved ones so they would come out of their shells and enjoy their experience of being in Singapore more," she says.

For Pearl, who has been on

the job for 12 years now, meeting new people is the best part of her job. An accountant by training, she relishes the fact that no two working days are similar in this part time position. Some days she need not report to work but on other days, she could be managing three groups at the same time.

"The hours are erratic and I could be spending my weekend at the airport waiting for different flights to land," says Pearl.

What constantly amazes her is how people from different backgrounds and countries can connect so intensely. A SCP programme is typically two weeks long. "They tear up when they have to say goodbye to each other. I try to comfort them by telling them they can always keep in touch through Facebook."

"What SCP is doing is much needed and desired by many small island nations, in the hope that our workforce will elevate its skill levels and thus advance our people and island nations."

MS EUNICE AKWIO
Director, Bureau of Domestic Affairs,
Ministry of State, Palau



In Singapore

BEHIND THE SCENES

SAMIKANNOO S/O LOUIS

40, Office Attendant

→ **SAMIKANNOO, OR SAMI** as he is affectionately referred to by his colleagues, is a familiar face in the Singapore Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), and notably the longest serving staff in the Technical Cooperation Directorate which oversees the SCP.

Though Sami's job scope does not require him to interact with participants directly, he plays an integral role in ensuring that every participant receives a complete set of the information kit — course materials, stationery and souvenirs in sleek SCP document bags.

"I need to make sure that everything that the participants need for the course is in the bag. Then they can start the training immediately without any time being wasted," says

Sami, who has slight speech and walking difficulties, the result of a series of fits he had suffered as a toddler. Undeterred by his condition, Sami relishes his responsibilities and being in the company of his colleagues.

"It makes me happy that I am able to play a part, right at the beginning of the participants' programme. And that I am contributing to their memorable experience of being in Singapore," he says.

"Being in Singapore – a country that can be figuratively compared to a phoenix that has risen from the ashes – I was given a hope that with determination, knowledge, skill and passion to turn things around, we can work to make our countries resilient against climate change disasters."

MS HAZEL V. ELIZES
Executive Assistant II, Climate Change Commission, Philippines



"I won't forget the way the training was conducted. We had to leave our shoes on a rack at the entrance and enter the classroom barefooted. There were also times when we had to squat on the floor like preschoolers to draw and play. Those days were full of fun, fun, fun while learning!"

MRS MARIE CHRISTINE N. REYES
Education Program Supervisor,
Department of Education,
Division of Vigan City, Philippines



→ Sami checks to see that all is in order before a course starts



at Clarke Quay or Boat Quay for drinks. We want to show our guests a slice of Singapore's nightlife," says Sandy, who admits to being a naturally sociable person.

Sandy and Christina remember every participant they have hosted — 40 participants from more than 19 countries so far. Their visitors have come from ASEAN countries as well as Turkey, Sierra Leone and Ghana. Their most high-profile guest so far has been the former Prime Minister of Laos, Mr Bouasone Boupvanh.

The couple's memories are documented in bulging photo albums. They also have the flags of all the countries where their visitors come from. They spend just a day with the visitors but Sandy and Christina, a veterinary nurse, keep in touch with them via email and texts. The couple has also been invited to their guests' home countries and has attended their weddings in Cambodia and Thailand.

"It's all about friendships," says Sandy, who was invited to be a host when he was a community leader responsible for bonding his fellow residents. "Each experience is fulfilling and meaningful. I hope that in treating our overseas guests well, our fellow Singaporeans who venture overseas will also be given similar warm treatment."

SANDY NG AIK HONG

60, Host Family

→ **SINCE 1998**, Sandy and his wife Christina has been receiving SCP participants at their 5-room Housing and Development Board (HDB) flat to give them an idea of Singapore-style public housing.

As a good host, Sandy usually starts the visit by picking up the participants up and driving them to his home. The couple usually entertains up to three visitors each time they have an 'open house'. This tour, according to Sandy, is really

all they are expected to do but they are more than happy to take the participants out on a full day excursion around Singapore.

"We take them to places of interest like Chinatown or Little India, show off our beautiful reservoirs and parks, and let them try some local food. I've also brought guests to my neighbour's wedding for them to witness a typical Malay wedding," says Sandy, who is semi-retired.

During their day out with the Ng family (who have two sons aged 28 and 27), participants rarely make it back to their hotel before midnight. "We really want to show them a good time so we normally end up

↑ Sandy shows off mementoes given to him by participants he had hosted

"What interests me is how Singapore masterminded its own destiny. It obtained independence in 1965, and with no natural resources, became one of the most prosperous, productive countries not only in the Asia-Pacific region, but also the world. We aspire to reach that kind of level."

MR TOM MARSTERS
Deputy Prime Minister, Cook Islands



B

EFORE THE DAYS OF

electronic detectors, canary birds were brought into coal mines to test the air quality. They acted as an early warning system as they could detect toxic gases quickly. A distressed canary was a clear sign of unsafe conditions.

Today, the indigenous people of the Arctic Circle say they are the canary birds of the world. They are the first to feel the effects of climate change, with the Arctic warming up twice as fast than anywhere else.

In 2009, 3,500 walrus were stranded on Alaska's north-west coast because of reduced ice. Scientists estimate that polar bears are likely to be extinct in 70 years when they lose their breeding and hunting grounds because of melting ice.

"We don't want to die. We want our cultures to flourish, and not be wiped out," said Chief Gary Harrison of the Arctic Athabaskan Council.

Chief Harrison and five others from the Arctic Council Permanent Participant organisations (see box) were in Singapore in May 2012 on a study visit. For five days, they met government agencies and institutions that shared with them Singapore's experience in environmental protection, sustainable development, education and community-

building. They also visited the Sungei Buloh Wetland Reserve, an internationally recognised site for migratory birds.

Chief Harrison and Mr Olav Mathis Eira of the Saami Council (representing the Saami indigenous people) were impressed by Singapore's focus on sustainability and planning for the future. Mr Eira said that the government seems unafraid to impose environmental standards on industries and that private companies are well aware of them. Also, he observed that instead of seeing environmental concerns as barriers, businesses here see them as opportunities.

NOT AGAINST DEVELOPMENT

Chief Harrison, who leads the Chickaloon tribe in Alaska, said the extraction of oil, coal, copper, gas and other resources in his village has led to heavy pollution, threatening animal and plant species. Natural resources are being exploited too

quickly, without long-term planning. As a result, the tribe's traditional way of living off the land – foraging and hunting – has been affected.

"We should look seven generations ahead, but they look at the now," he said.

Fearful of further pollution, his people are fighting plans for a new coal mine in Chickaloon. After spending US\$1.2 million (about S\$1.47m) to rehabilitate their waters that had been badly polluted by previous coal mining activities, salmon is finally breeding well again in their area. But a new coal mine could halt the recovery.

"I don't want to revolt," said Chief Harrison, "but I want to change a revolting situation. We're not against development but if you can't do it cleanly, don't do it. In the long run, the clean-up is costly."

Like canary birds in the coal mine

Two leaders from the Arctic Circle — which is warming up twice as fast as anywhere else — were in Singapore recently to learn about sustainable development.



FEELING THE EFFECTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE

Agreeing, Mr Eira, an ethnic Saami who lives in the northernmost part of Norway, said his people are also feeling the ill effects of climate change and rapid development.

Mr Eira is a reindeer herder who inherited the ancestral occupation from his father. For the Saami people, reindeer are a source of food, clothing and trade.

Mr Eira hopes his three sons will take over his reindeer and continue the Saami culture. But climate change is a big threat.

Warmer temperatures mean there are

now rains in the winter. The rain causes traditional winter herding routes over lakes and rivers to become dangerous – the normally frozen ice becomes unstable. Two of his nephews have fallen through ice before.

"Winter is crucial to the reindeer," Mr Eira said. "When it rains in the winter, they can starve." The ice that forms after a rain covers up the reindeer's only source of food during winter – lichens.

To cope, Saami herders now feed the reindeer with expensive food pellets.

Ironically, the Saami people are also affected by climate change mitigation programmes, pointed out Mr Eira. For instance, the Scandinavian countries are now installing giant windmills to generate clean energy.

But the windmill farms have encroached on traditional reindeer grazing lands, impacting the reindeer's hunt for food yet again.

"We're not against development but if you can't do it cleanly, don't do it."

CHIEF GARY HARRISON,
ARCTIC ATHABASKAN
COUNCIL

Olav Mathis Eira (left) of the Saami Council and Chief Gary Harrison of the Arctic Athabaskan Council

THE NEED TO INNOVATE

The indigenous people know they have to innovate and adapt if they

are to survive climate change and rapid development.

For instance, the Athabaskans of Chickaloon Village set up Alaska's only tribally owned full-time school to teach and preserve the Athabaskan culture. Their salmon rehabilitation project, called the Moose Creek Restoration Project, has been recognised for habitat conservation.

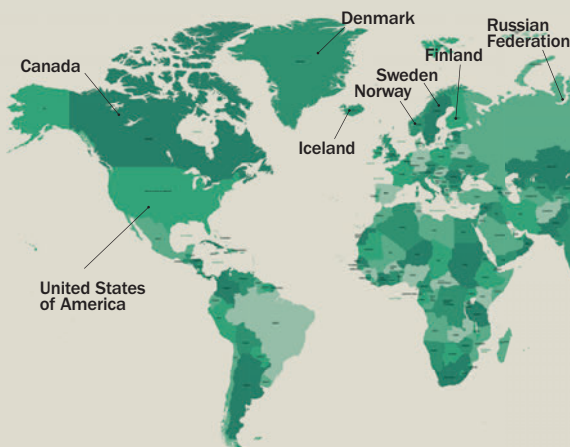
Reflecting on his study visit, Mr Eira said he was impressed by Singapore's unique situation of having no natural resources, and yet being able to thrive and "find new ways to be sustainable".

Chief Harrison hoped that more countries, even those that are still resource-rich, would think this way before it is too late.

For that to happen, the world would have to take its canary birds' distress signal more seriously.

"The world is a living thing and we're all co-dependent. You people down here (in the south) are all co-dependent on us up there (in the north)," he said.

THE ARCTIC COUNCIL MEMBER STATES



THE PERMANENT PARTICIPANTS OF THE ARCTIC COUNCIL

- Arctic Athabaskan Council
- Aleut International Association
- Gwich'in Council International
- Inuit Circumpolar Council
- Russian Arctic Indigenous Peoples of the North
- Saami Council

www.arctic-council.org



Making Friends

FROM SICHUAN TO SINGAPORE



Get ready Singapore...

Wildlife Reserves Singapore (WRS) and China Wildlife Conservation Association (CWCA) ink their commitment to the loan of the pair of male and female pandas in the presence of Singapore Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong and Chinese President Hu Jintao. The loan marks 20 years of diplomatic relations between Singapore and China, and underscore the joint research effort by WRS and CWCA to raise public awareness on wildlife conservation.



NOVEMBER 2009

Stocking up on bamboo

WRS grows bamboo at several locations within the Night Safari and the Singapore Zoo, as well as at the River Safari where the pandas will take up residence. Four different species — Buddha's belly bamboo, Ougon-Kou Chiku bamboo, hedge bamboo and Siamese bamboo — are planted. Giant pandas feed mainly on bamboo leaves, stems and shoots, each consuming about 20kg daily to meet their energy needs.

MARCH 2010

The name game

WRS and real estate company Capitaland launch a nation-wide competition inviting members of the public to name the pandas.

15 JUNE 2010

PANDAS' PASSAGE

22 SEPTEMBER 2010

When pandas fly

Singapore Airlines sponsors a special freighter flight to transport the pandas, together with a team of zookeepers, veterinarians and researchers, from Chengdu to Singapore.

Giant pandas Kai Kai and Jia Jia went on public display in Singapore for the first time on 29 November 2012. *Experience Singapore* chronicles their journey from Sichuan province in China to Wildlife Reserves Singapore, their home for the next 10 years. WORDS BY FAIROZA MANSOR



Signing ceremony photo by Bjorn Olesen; Panda illustration from Getty Images
Other photos from Wildlife Reserves Singapore



On the move

At 3.20pm, Kai Kai and Jia Jia prepare to set off from the Ya'an panda base in Sichuan, China. They receive a grand send-off with song and dance performances put up by the local residents.

5 SEPTEMBER 2012



Safe landing

Kai Kai and Jia Jia arrive in Singapore at 8.30am and settle down at their new home at the River Safari.

6 SEPTEMBER 2012



Here's to health

Kai Kai and Jia Jia go for their first health check, which includes an X-ray of their chests, ultrasound examination of their livers, kidneys and for Jia Jia, her womb. Both pandas are declared to be in the pink of health.

20 SEPTEMBER 2012

Finally, a peek

The Giant Panda Forest opens to the public for a special preview. It is part of the key highlights of the River Safari, Asia's first and only river-themed wildlife park. Together, Kai Kai and Jia Jia draw 2,000 visitors on the first day of the opening.

29 NOVEMBER 2012



← Jia Jia

16 MARCH 2011

The names are in!

Almost 1,000 entries are submitted for the naming competition. A seven-member judging panel comprising representatives from the Singapore Tourism Board, the Chinese Embassy and WRS vote for the male panda to be named Kai Kai (meaning 'victorious') and the female, Jia Jia (meaning 'beauty').



← Kai Kai

14 SEPTEMBER 2012

Happy Birthday Kai Kai!

Kai Kai celebrates his fifth birthday in Singapore and is treated to a five-kilogram "cake" filled with carrots, apples and high-fibre biscuits.

11 OCTOBER 2012

Their new home

After completing their one-month quarantine, Kai Kai and Jia Jia are introduced to their new home, the Giant Panda Forest. The \$8.6 million, 1,500 sq m enclosure is designed to imitate their natural habitat in Sichuan, down to the temperature and humidity. Visitors can walk along the elevated boardwalk that cuts through the exhibit and view the pandas up close.





Joining Hands

ASEAN-INDIA CAR RALLY

Beyond borders

The ASEAN-India Car Rally 2012, a nine-country journey, was held recently to mark 20 years of ASEAN-India ties.

WORDS BY GENE KHOR

→ A member of the Cambodian team waving her country's flag proudly

↓ Participants pose for a group shot before setting off



IT WAS AN 8,000-kilometre road trip from Singapore to New Delhi, that took its participants through nine countries to locations as diverse as the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Borobudur in Yogyakarta, Indonesia and the pristine beaches of Phuket, Thailand.

But the ASEAN-India Car Rally 2012 — which flagged off in Singapore on 28 November 2012 — was not an ordinary road trip. It was held to mark 20 years of ASEAN-India ties and to demonstrate the physical and people-to-people connectivity between ASEAN and India.

Dr Tan Poh Heng from the Singapore team said, "It is exciting to be able to see places that tourists wouldn't normally go to, like

small villages in the countryside. Being able to go from one country to another to visit areas like these also highlight how interconnected the ASEAN countries and India are, and how we should bridge the relationship between these countries further."

Jointly organised by Singapore's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Indian High Commission in Singapore, and the New Delhi-based Confederation of Indian Industry, the 22-day event drew 124 participants from each of the 10 ASEAN member countries — Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Singapore, Thailand, The Philippines, Vietnam, and from India.

Photos by Wilson Pang



The participants, comprising local celebrities, members of the media as well as civil servants, travelled in 31 Mahindra XUV500 sports utility vehicles which had been specially brought in from India for this event. Each country was represented by eight participants travelling in two cars. They were accompanied by technicians, Indian media officials and a camera crew.

A JOINT EFFORT

Lending his support to the event was Singapore's Minister for Foreign Affairs and Minister for Law, Mr K Shanmugam, who flagged off the rally at the F1 Pit Build-

ing in central Singapore. "This is a landmark event and we're happy and honoured that Singapore was selected as the ceremonial flag-off point," he said. "But this is more than just a car rally through scenic routes. This journey will remind us of the strong historical links and ancient cultural ties between the ASEAN countries and India, and set a stronger foundation for cooperation between the two regions."

Also present was Mr P S Raghavan, Additional Secretary (Development, Partnership, and Administration) from India's Ministry of External Affairs. "ASEAN and India have been natural partners for

↑ The rally participants in high spirits

↓ Mr K Shanmugam (left) and Mr P S Raghavan flagging off the convoy

centuries," he said.

"We are looking to collectively address our requirements for human resource development and capacity building. India is, therefore, supportive of the ASEAN objectives of integration and the ASEAN Community by 2015."

A MILESTONE

The latest ASEAN Car Rally marks a special milestone in the dialogue partnership between ASEAN and India as the cooperation between them expands, including in areas such as infrastructure, energy and environment.

The Rally, which was first launched in 2004, was officially flagged down in New Delhi where leaders from the ASEAN member states and India had attended the ASEAN-India Commemorative Summit 2012 from 20-21 December.

Indian Member of Parliament Mr Tarun Vijay, who participated in the Rally, said, "We hope that this journey will bring more awareness to our regional friends and enhance productivity throughout all of them."

"There is immense potential in India's relationship with ASEAN and by strengthening it, we hope to bring peace, eliminate conflict and bring more smiles to the residents of all these countries."

The first Car Rally featured countries like Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam, and lasted 14 days.





MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS
S I N G A P O R E



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