

# LIVING HISTORY

170 years of The Straits Times





Exchange  
Weekly Editor of the Sydney Herald  
Sydney

# STRAITS TIMES.

AND SINGAPORE JOURNAL OF COMMERCE.

VOL. 1ST.

TUESDAY MORNING JULY 15th. 1845.

NO. 1.

## NOTICE TO ADVERTIZERS

THE scale of charges for Advertisements in the STRAITS TIMES is made on liberal terms. Contracts may be entered into with the Printer. Advertisements intended for insertion in the Straits Times must be sent before 12 o'clock on the day previous to the Publication of the Paper.  
Singapore, July 15th 1845.

## THE STRAITS TIMES.

THIS day is published at the office No. 7, Commercial Square, Singapore, a new Journal (entitled as above) to be issued on the morning of Tuesday and continued weekly. The arrangements made by the Proprietors, will, it is confidently expected, ensure for the STRAITS TIMES a wide circulation, especially amongst the mercantile Community, whilst the principles on which the publication will be conducted are those which will ever identify the Straits Times with the general interests of the Settlement. No pains will be spared to make the Journal of Commerce a correct record of Prices Current and to maintain the accuracy of its Market Reports.

The Straits Times will be printed with new types, on fine Japan Paper, and consist of eight folio pages.

A monthly Summary will be published to be ready for despatch by the Steamer to Europe, consisting of eight pages and comprising a précis of intelligence connected with the Straits, China, &c.; also a full report of the Prices Current and a full report of the Prices of the Markets during each month. Price of each copy half a Spanish dollar.

## FOR MANILLA.

THE Spanish Brig *Dardo* Captain Jose D'UCEDA will have prompt dispatch.  
For freight or passage apply to  
W. R. PATERSON & Co.  
Singapore, 11th July, 1845.

## FOR LONDON.

THE S. S. Teak Ship ANNA MARIA, 487 tons Register, Captain T. P. TAYLOR, has a full cargo engaged and will be dispatched on the 25th instant.

For passage only, having excellent accommodations Apply to  
KER, RAWSON & CO.  
Singapore, 9th July 1845.

## NOTICE.

I being absolutely requisite to detain the FIRE QUEEN for the purpose of cleansing her Boilers and to afford time for the necessary overhaul; the departure of this vessel is postponed till the day of the arrival of the "Precursor," when she will actively start.

J. MACKEY & CO.  
Calcutta, 6th June, 1845.

## EASTERN STEAM COMPANY.

FOR CALCUTTA TOUCHING AT MALACCA AND PINANG.

THE FIRE QUEEN will leave at day-break on the Mornings of the 25th July and 1st September next. For apply to

THOS. O. CRANE,  
Agent.  
1845.

## FOR LONDON.

The *Acacia* 254 Tons Captain HOWE.

Bark "Holellyn" 240 Tons Register Captain T. Y. For Freight of Meas or passage apply to  
KER, RAWSON CO.  
15th July, 1845.

## FOR BATAVIA.

THE well known Brig *Britannia* Captain ROBERTS, will sail for the above port. For freight or passage, apply to  
APCAR AND STEPHENS.  
Singapore, July 15th, 1845.

## TO BE LET.

SEVERAL spacious and dry Godowns conveniently situated in Commercial-Square. Apply to the Printer of this paper.  
Singapore, 15th July, 1845.

## SINGAPORE DISPENSARY.

IN consequence of the Establishment of a Government Hospital, the undersigned have (in the mean time) given up the Private Hospital attached to the above Dispensary. OWNERS AND MASTERS OF VESSELS, are respectfully informed that they, their Passengers and Crew, can be attended at any hour of the day, or night, for which purpose Mr. Little is Resident on the Premises, Commercial-Square.

MEDICAL ADVICE can be afforded at all hours, while the Dispensary is open for the sale of Medicines, and the answering of Prescriptions from 9 A. M. to 5 P. M. daily.

MEDICINE CHESTS are fitted up with the requisite Medicines, and directions for a tropical climate; while particular Medicines with their directions can be supplied those visiting countries subject to peculiar Endemics.

M. J. MARTIN, } Surgeon.  
R. LITTLE, }

Commercial-Square, Singapore.

## FOR SALE.

A Few boxes of fresh Japan Rice. CURSETJEE & CO.  
Singapore, 28th May, 1845.

## NOTICE.

IS HEREBY GIVEN, that SYED ABDULL RAHMAN BIN ABIGULLA BIN SAHAL, who during the last five years managed the business of Syed ABOUBAKER MUSHOOR of Singapore, being about to quit the Settlement for Arabia, requests that all persons having claims against or who are indebted to the said SYED ABDULL RAHMAN BIN ABIGULLA BIN SAHAL will settle with him within three months from this date.

A Comfortable and conveniently situated House in High-Street, suitable for a family; with out-houses complete. Apply to the Printer of this Paper.  
Singapore, 15th July, 1845.

## FOR SALE.

AN Excellent BILLIARD TABLE with Cues, bridges, apparatus for Lamps, Marker Stand, &c., complete. Apply to the Printer of the Straits Times.  
Singapore, July 15th, 1845.

## FOR SALE.

TWO Guzerat Mitten Coats with three Kids; all in excellent condition. Apply to the Printer of this paper.  
Singapore, July 15th 1845.

## FOR SALE.

AT THE SHOP OF  
CURSETJEE & CO

Adjoining the Singapore Dispensary, Commercial-Square. The following Valuable & CHOICE SELECTION of British, French and China Goods.

China Figured and Plain SILKS and SATINS for Ladies' DRESSES; Gape, Cashmere Shawls and Scarfs; BALZARINE and MUSLIN Dresses; Ladies' Silk Stockings, Gloves, Mitts, Bonnet and Waist-Ribbons &c. Gents Silk plain and coloured Socks and Gloves, Waist pieces, Black Neck-chiefs, Silk and Satin Stocks, Neck-Ribbon, Braces and Silk Handkerchiefs, Grass Cloth and Grass Cloth Handkerchiefs, ENGLISH BLUE CLOTH CAPS, Children's Fancy Do. AND WATER PROOF COATS.

Gold and Silver WATCHES, Gold and Silver Watch GUARD CHAINS, Gold Rings, Brooches, Breast Pins, Earrings, Buckles, Lockets, and Gold and Silver Pencil cases, &c.

JAPAN-WARE consisting of Tables, teapots, Stools, Writing Desks, Segar cases, Screens, China Lacquered Work boxes, Teapots, Tea Caddies, Tea Trays, Sugar Boxes, Backgammon Boards, Ivory Chess and Backgammon men, Silver and

Ivory Card Cases, Silver and Feather Fans, Inlaid Bombay Work Boxes, Watch Stands, Card Cases, Cribbage Boards, Paper Cutters, &c. &c.

STATIONARY comprising Letter and Note Paper, Drawing Pencils, Blank OFFICE, MEMORANDUM and LOG BOOKS, Penknives and Quills, Steel Pens, Patent Ink Stands and Paper Holders, Black, Blue and Red Ink, Sealing Wax, Portfolios and Travelling Cases.

## BOOKS ON VARIOUS SUBJECTS.

PERFUMERY, consisting of different lots of Scents for the Toilet, as Lavender Water and Eau de Cologne.

Rowland's Kalydor, Odonto, Genuine Macassar Oil, Alsanic extract, Essence of Tyre, Brown Windsor and Toilet Soap, Pomatum, Hair's Grease, cold Cream, Circassian ditto, Shaving Soap, Lip Salve, Hair Powder, Powder Boxes and Puffs, Razors and Strops, Hair Tooth and Nail Brushes, Dressing and Pocket Combs &c. &c.

HOFFMAN'S JAMS and JELLIES, Tart Fruits, Sauces, Pickles, Vinegar, Olive and Salad Oil, Sardines, &c. &c.

French and English BRANDY, Sherry and Port Wines, Claret, Sweet Liquors, Gin, Jamaica Rum, Singapore Bottled Beer, &c. &c.

CURSETJEE & CO.

Singapore, July 15th 1845.



## HOLLOWAY'S PILLS

244, Strand, near Temple Bar, London. PROFESSOR HOLLOWAY attends daily at the Establishment from 9 till half-past 12 in the Morning, and from 7 till 9 in the Evening, for the purpose of dispensing Advice GRATIS.

THIS INESTIMABLE MEDICINE being composed entirely of Medicinal Herbs, is free from any mercurial, or other deleterious substance. Innocuous to the tenderest infant, or to the weakest constitution, and equally prompt and sure in eradicating disease from the most robust frame, it is perfectly safe in its operations and effects, while it searches out and removes Complaints of every character, and in every stage, however long-standing or deeply-rooted.

OF THE TROUBLES cured by its agency, peruse the following, and you will have been restored to HEALTH AND STRENGTH, after every other means failed.

THE MOST AFFLICTED need not resign himself up to despair, but let him make a fair Trial of the MIGHTY POWERS of this astonishing Medicine, and he will soon be restored to the blessings of health.

It should not be lost in taking this remedy

for any of the following Diseases:—  
Ages Female irregularities Retention of the urine  
Asthma Fevers of all kinds Sore Throat  
Bilious complaints Piles Scrofula, or King's Evil  
Diarrhoea on the Pits Gout Stone and Gravel  
Shin Head-ach The Dolorous  
Bowel complaints Indigestion Tumours  
Colics Jaundice Ulcers  
Constipation of the Bowels Liver-complaints Wounds of all kinds  
Consumption Lambsago Weakness, from Piles  
Debility Piles what-ever cause, &c. &c.  
Dropsy Rheumatism  
Dysentery  
Erysipelas

THESE truly invaluable Medicines can be obtained at the establishment of Professor HOLLOWAY, 244, near Temple Bar, London, and of most respectable Vendors of Medicines throughout the CIVILIZED WORLD, at the following prices: 1s 1d, 2s 9d., 11s., 22s., and 33s. each Box and Post. There is a considerable saving by taking the larger size.

N.B.—Directions for the Guidance of Patients in every Disorder are affixed to each Box or Pot. IMMENSE DEMAND FOR HOLLOWAY'S PILLS IN THE EAST INDIES.

Extracts of a Letter dated 20th of September, 1843, from Messrs. S. FERDINANDS and SON, (Agents for the Sale of Holloway's Medicines, in the Island of Ceylon) these Gentlemen state:—  
"All Classes of People here are desirous to purchase your WONDERFUL MEDICINES, and we regret that we have now scarcely any left to meet the IMMENSE DEMANDS that are daily made upon us for them. We enclose you a testimonial from J. Davidson, Esq., the Superintendent of Lord Elphinstone's Sugar Estate, at Calcutta, Ceylon; and we can, if necessary, send you abundant other proofs, not only from the middling classes, but also from the opulent and influential here, many of whom have derived immense benefit from the use of your invaluable medicine."

Copy of a Letter from J. DAVIDSON, Esq., which is the same alluded to in the extracts of the Letter above.

Calcutta, 7th August, 1844.

My dear Sir,—Mrs DAVIDSON has received so much benefit from HOLLOWAY'S PILLS, that I am induced to trouble you for supply—viz an Eleven Shilling Box.

Yours truly,

J. DAVIDSON.

THE EARL OF ALDBOROUGH and HOLLOWAY'S PILLS—AN ASTOUNDING CURE BY THIS MIRACULOUS MEDICINE, AFTER EVERY OTHER MEANS HAD FAILED—See extract of his lordship's letter, dated "Villa Messina, Leghorn, the 21st February, 1845, To Professor Holloway.—Sir, I beg to acquaint you that your pills have effected a cure of a disorder in my liver and stomach which all the most eminent of the faculty at home, and all over the continent, had not been able to effect; nay, and even the waters of Carlsbad or Mammianbad. (Signed) Aldborough."

## HOLLOWAY'S OINTMENT

EXTRAORDINARY CURE. OF A CASE ABANDONED BY GUY'S, THE METROPOLITAN, KING'S COLLEGE, AND CHARING CROSS HOSPITALS. A TAIL, LONDON. THIS AFFIDAVIT WAS SWORN TO BEFORE THE LORD MAYOR OF LONDON.

WILLIAM BROOKE of No. 2, Union Street, Southwark, London, Messenger, maketh Oath that he (this deponent) was afflicted with FURUNCULUS RUNNING ULCERS on his left Arm, and Ulcerated Sores and Wounds on both Legs, for which the deponent was admitted an out-door patient at the METROPOLITAN HOSPITAL, in April, 1841, where he continued nearly Four Weeks. Unable to receive a Cure there.

THE DEPONENT sought relief at the three following Hospitals.—KING'S COLLEGE HOSPITAL, in May, for Five Weeks, at GUY'S HOSPITAL, in July, for Six Weeks, and at CHARGING CROSS HOSPITAL at the end August, for some weeks more; which the deponent left, in a far worse condition than that in which he had quitted GUY'S when SIR BRANSBY COOPER, and other medical officers of the Establishment, had told the deponent "that the only chance of saving his life was to Lose his Arm."

THE DEPONENT; thereupon, called on Dr BRIGHT, chief Physician of Guy's who, on viewing the deponent's condition, kindly and liberally said, "I am utterly at a loss what to do for you, but here is a half sovereign, go to Mr Holloway, and try what effect his Pills and Ointment will have, as I have frequently witnessed the Wonderful Effects they have in Dependent Cases! You can let us see you again."

THIS UNPREJUDICED advice was followed by the deponent, and a PERFECT CURE was EFFECTED IN THREE WEEKS, by the use of Holloway's Pills and Ointment, after THREE HOSPITALS had failed! When Dr BRIGHT was shown, by the deponent, the result of this advice and charity, he said—"I am both astonished and delighted! for I thought, that if ever I saw you again, it would be without your Arm—I can only compare this Cure to a Charm!"

Sworn at the Mansion House of the City of London, this 8th day of March, 1842.

WM. BROOKE,

Before me JON. PRICE, Mayor. This extraordinary Ointment will cure the most Dangerous Wounds and Ulcers, Bad Legs, Bad Breasts, Sore Nipples, Sore Throats, Chiefo-foots, Yaws and Cocco-Bay, &c. &c. HOLLOWAY'S PILLS.

JULY 15, 1845: THE FIRST ISSUE OF THE STRAITS TIMES  
THE 8-PAGE INAUGURAL EDITION







[illegible]



Presented by

THE STRAITS TIMES  
**1845**  
SINCE  
CELEBRATING 170 YEARS

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MEDIA & FREEDOM  
By K SHANMUGAM



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# TIMES CAPSULE

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*Our Treasured Island Through The Years*



SINGAPORE RIVER



ORCHARD ROAD



TOA PAYOH



KATONG



JURONG



BOTANIC GARDENS



TIMELINE  
*ST's milestones*

CREDITS





**Warren Fernandez**  
Editor  
The Straits Times

**L**ooking back, it is perhaps hard for readers today to imagine The Straits Times as newspaper that appeared just once a week, every Tuesday.

The 8-page newspaper, which carried business notices, market reports, general news and a lot of advertisements – was largely put together by its staff of one, the editor.

An English journalist, Robert Carr Woods, then just 29, arrived in Singapore in 1845 after a stint in Bombay, and talked his way into the job.

He convinced Catchik Moses, an Armenian businessman who had done a friend in financial distress a favour and purchased a printing press off him without a clear idea of what to do with it, that there was wisdom in starting a newspaper to serve the island's growing business community.

So, the first edition of The Straits Times and the Singapore Journal of Commerce hit the streets on 15th July, 1845, with Woods as its first editor.

How's that for an unlikely beginning?

The paper would continue to be produced in this way



from the newsroom in 7 Commercial Square – now known as Raffles Place – until 1858, when it became a morning daily, renamed the Singapore Daily Times. But in 1883, this was abandoned and the paper reverted to being called The Straits Times.



ST continues to reach out to the community in new ways, like this run organised in 2014. ST PHOTO: STEPHANIE YEOW

Now, fast forward through the years: from the introduction of home deliveries by boys on red bicycles in 1896, to the purchase of Morris Minor vans in a push to circulate in Malaya in 1931, to widen the paper's reach. Then came the war years in the 1940s, when the paper's facilities were taken over and used to produce the Shonan Times and the Syonan Shimbun by Japanese propagandists. But just days after the war ended in 1945, The Straits Times was back on the newstands. By some stroke of good

fortune, retreating Japanese officers handed the paper's facilities, albeit in a sorry state, over to local journalists.

Confrontation with the incoming People's Action Party leadership in 1959, would see the paper's leadership taking



off to Kuala Lumpur, where they believed they would have more room to operate.

Later, Separation of Malaysia and Singapore would see a split in the newspaper's operations in 1972, with The Straits Times in Singapore and the New Straits Times in Malaysia.

And by the 1980s, The Straits Times had come to reflect the rapidly developing city-state it served, reporting on the major economic and social changes taking place in the Republic, which was firmly plugged into the world economy.

The 1990s would see the paper continue to widen its reach among the English-speaking audience in Singapore, as well as expand its overseas network of correspondents, as it staked its claim to covering Asia more extensively than any other newspaper.

More recently, the newsroom has once again undergone a transformation, as it shifted decidedly away from its print-centred mode of operations to become a multimedia newsroom. This means working round the clock, and across platforms to deliver the news to readers, anytime, anywhere and any way they chose to read it.

Your familiar ST news is now available in print, on our website and apps, on smart phones and tablets, and also comes in the form of videos, email newsletters, social media feeds, and even on the radio. Instead of interacting with our readers once a day in the morning, we now have multiple points of contact with them through the day, constantly updating them on the news as it happens.

This process of adapting to change has been the leitmotif of the ST story. Through its 170 year history, the paper has survived major political upheavals that gave rise to changes of nationality, political regime and leadership, as well as war,



economic depression and foreign occupation, and rode wave upon wave of technological change – from the introduction of the telegraph, telephone, television and now the internet – by being ready to constantly evolve and innovate to stay in sync with the spirit of the times.

Most importantly, ST recognised the need to stay closely connected to the society it served, reflecting and respecting its values and social conventions, and always attune to the changing political and social landscape that it had to operate in. This is a critical role that all good newspapers seek to play, as every society needs a proper sense of place and self – where it has come from, what its challenges are, where it is going, and why.

Over the years, The Straits Times, it is fair to say, has been instrumental in helping to foster this Singapore soul, by giving voice to it, being a mirror to it, reflecting and sharing in its tragedies and triumphs.

This was a role that ST saw for itself right from the start. After all, the paper had declared in a front page editorial in its very first edition: “The arrangements made by the Proprietor will, it is confidently expected, ensure for The Straits Times a wide circulation, especially among the mercantile Community, whilst the principles on which the publication will be conducted are those which will ever identify The Straits Times with the general interests of the Settlement.”

Today, 170 years on, we remain as committed to those principles, ever aware that our fortunes are inextricably linked to that of Singapore.

And, we remain sanguine about our prospects for the future, despite the major disruptions taking place in the



media industry around the world. You might say we have seen as much before, and survived to tell the story.

Which is why, when we recently embarked on a major revamp of all our products to mark our 170th year, we did so with a simple promise to our readers: New look, new ideas, same Singapore soul.

This e-book aims to capture the dramatic moments in the Singapore story, as told in the pages and photos of The Straits Times over the years.

It is intended as a companion to the exhibition on the same subject, titled Singapore STories: Then. Now. Tomorrow, organised by The Straits Times and the ArtsScience Museum, which will run from July 17 to Oct 4, at the Marina Bay Sands.

I hope you will enjoy reading it, as well as viewing the exhibition, and will find these a fitting tribute in this special year of twin celebrations – Singapore's Golden Jubilee of Independence and ST's 170th anniversary.

Thank you for supporting The Straits Times, and please, keep on reading. 





Journalists pore over first drafts  
of history at The Straits Times  
newsroom on December 7, 1955.  
ST PHOTO: HAN HAI FONG



# FIRST DRAFT

History, by definition, is remote, like a distant ship on the edge of a converging horizon. It condenses reality by painting it in very broad strokes, one eddy in the river of time.



**Bhagyashree  
Garekar**  
Deputy Foreign  
Editor

If approached through the pages of a newspaper, however, history comes alive. The amorphous past takes firm shape to hover in the present, so real that you can almost touch it. An old newspaper can transport you back in time, the



journey triggered by a quaint phrase in a report about the Great Depression in the 1930s or the mere mention of a place-name, a favourite haunt long gone.

You can almost smell the sea breeze at Scandal Point, where well-to-do Europeans in top hats and tight corsets gathered to share gossip in the 1800s – if you can imagine a low embankment wall at the Padang that Sir Stamford Raffles ordered built to fortify the defences of the island.



The Straits Times office in Anson Road, in 1954. ST PHOTO: N J COTTERELL

The Straits Times can transmit the mundane reality of everyday existence in the 19th or early 20th century to us, the readers, effortlessly. It can do this because newspaper accounts do not just paint a “picture” of reality. They do better: they encase reality by dint of detail and sheer volume.

A few factors allow this to happen: First, newspapers do not set out to be historical, so they are untrammelled by the “burden of import”, nor do they adopt a narrative voice, both of which can distort the depiction of reality. They fulfil a straightforward human need for information. They report.





Hawkers in the streets of Chinatown seem to be oblivious they are obstructing traffic in this picture taken on January 16, 1958. ST PHOTO: HAN HAI FONG



Singapore's wayside breadwinners were celebrated in picture spread on June 27, 1937.

Second, a newspaper is deeply human and, by extension, readily approachable. It details human experience, momentous and mundane, with equal rigour. In 1901, The Straits Times reported that an unnamed hawker had been fined \$2 for slapping a woman on the face. In 1952, it reported that the “Duke of Kent danced a quick-step with 18-year-old Mabel Lee Soo Bee at a school social”. Both stories were written in the same spare tone. In fact, the story on the royal visit took pains to set the context. “These socials are a regular part of school life in Singapore and last night’s dance was not specially put on for the Duke.”



Finally, as readers, we are moved by the same things as our ancestors 170 years ago. If, today, we like to read that American actress Dakota Johnson wore an Yves Saint Laurent dress, diamonds and a Bally to the Oscars, in 1895, readers of The Straits Times were treated to the Sultan's Ball, held at the Singapore palace of the Johor royalty. A report went into the entrees served: Findon haddock mayonnaise, chicken and beetroot mayonnaise, Aspic pate de foie gras and pigeon and egg pie.



After all, technology has expanded the means to affect human experience, not its scope. In the 1920s, The Straits Times, which clearly saw the economic gloom coming, pushed for state spending, a version of the stimulus of 2008. Editor George Seabridge (left) did not lose his perspective even in the midst of the Great Depression. “To talk

of Malaya going back to jungle and Singapore becoming a fishing village is ludicrous,” he wrote in 1932 in an editorial, Too Much Gloom. He pushed the colonial government to act, to seize an “opportunity for statesmanship”.

To me, the Maria Hertogh (right) story has special resonance. You may remember that 13-year-old girl, peeping








The eldest grand-daughter of Maria Hertogh, Miss Sasha Van Gastel (left), gets tips on wearing a scarf from Maria's niece Rokayah Yusof (right). PHOTO: BERITA HARIAN METRO

from behind her ‘mother’ in a black-and-white photograph in your secondary school history textbook. You probably also recall that the custody battle for Maria sparked riots in Singapore that led to 18 deaths 65 years ago. But you may not have heard of Madam Rokayah Yusof, from Kemaman kampung in Malaysia’s Terengganu state, who carefully files all the newspaper clippings she can get about Maria, whom she remembers by her Malay name, Aunty Nadra. Assisting reporters who knock at her door with questions is her way of making sense of the tragedy. “The story is not complete yet,” she told us in an interview. “There are still a lot of details that are missing.”

Newspapers have been called the first draft of history. I suppose they perform that function, but they are so much more. They are portable, foldable repositories of living history. 

# THE STRAITS TIMES STORY







A headline brings on a smile at ST's production department in this picture taken on December 7, 1955.  
ST PHOTO: HAN HAI FONG



Students of Bowen Secondary scan the copies of The Straits Times in this 1996 photograph. ST PHOTO: LAU FOOK KONG

In the middle of the 19th century, the office of The Straits Times editor resembled a war room, a primitive stock exchange and a bustling bazaar – all rolled into one. A stream of visitors from around the world, some fresh off ships, passed through it unhindered.

They carried a precious cargo: the latest news, spoken in a breathtaking array of unfamiliar accents. That made the office, at No. 7, Commercial Square, which later came





to be known as Raffles Place (above), the most happening place in town.

“It was a large room, 60 feet by 40 feet (18m by 12m), and contained more than 100 files of papers from all parts of the globe, for the room was really the newspaper file room of the editor of The Straits Times. It was also well supplied with prices current, maps, etc, and was the centre of the commercial part of the town.

“Officers of ships of war, commanders of merchant vessels and passengers who arrived by the many vessels constantly passing through the harbour, were admitted free of charge and from them the local inhabitants got much news, with the result that it was the most popular resort of the place.”

This account of The Straits Times newsroom was left behind by Roland St John Braddell, a prominent lawyer and co-editor of a historical publication, *One Hundred Years Of Singapore*.

Braddell was writing about a period just three decades

after Sir Stamford Raffles founded Singapore in 1819. The new settlement drew droves of merchants, coolies and other fortune-seekers from around the world.

Soon, the first newspaper rolled off the press. No, not The Straits Times, but the Singapore Chronicle, a gazette started in 1824 by John Crawford, the Resident of Singapore who ruled the island on behalf of the British East India Company.

The Chronicle folded in 1837, walloped by the Singapore Free Press, a weekly set up in 1835 and backed by influential

## ST EDITORS

In its 170 years, The Straits Times has been helmed by more than two dozen editors, some of whom are featured here. They set the direction and tone of news coverage and influenced public opinion. In doing so, they also left behind an imprint that lingers in newsroom traditions and even street names.

### ROBERT CARR WOODS

The Straits Times first editor arrived in Singapore from Bombay in 1845 at age 29. Known for his flamboyant manner, he was the force behind the public campaign for transferring control of the Straits Settlements from India to London. It was realised in 1867. An avid gardener, he promoted the planting of trees along roads and helped beautify sites like the grounds of St Andrew's Cathedral. Woodsville Close is named after his former home.

### ARNOT REID (right)

The first Fleet Street journalist in Singapore, he was only 25 when appointed editor in 1888. He believed a newspaper's main function was to report the news rather than influence how the government should be run. Under him, The Straits Times reported in full the proceedings of legislative and municipal councils and became a newspaper of record.







### **ALEXANDER WILLIAM STILL**

The Straits Times became known as the “Thunderer of the East” under Still, who fearlessly criticised big businesses to get them to improve conditions

for workers in the rubber and plantation industries. His forthright commentaries involved The Straits Times in several commercial libel suits. But they also boosted circulation, advertising revenue and the newspaper’s reputation. His name lives on in Still Road, which connects Changi Road to East Coast Road.



### **GEORGE WILLIAM SEABRIDGE**

He urged the colonial government to spend surpluses to help retain jobs and people’s purchasing power as the Great Depression of the 1930s gripped Singapore. To walk

the talk, he expanded The Straits Times operations, built a new office and bought state-of-the-art printing machinery plus a fleet of Morris Minor vans to deliver the newspaper upcountry. He hired the first local journalists, including future editors Leslie Hoffman and T.S. Khoo.



### **LESLIE HOFFMAN**

The Straits Times’ first Asian editor-in-chief, he was age 41 when appointed in 1956. He had a war of words with People’s Action Party leader Lee Kuan Yew over the coverage of the 1959 legislative assembly election. Under

his leadership, The Straits Times’ headquarters was moved from Singapore to Malaya, where it stayed for 14 years.



### **LEE SIEW YEE**

Appointed editor-in-chief in 1970 at age 51, he stayed on in Kuala Lumpur to head The New Straits Times when the paper split in 1972 into two separate papers for Singapore and Malaysia.

The first reporter sent on an overseas assignment, he reported in exquisite prose the 1949 victory in London of the underdog Malayan team in the Thomas Cup badminton tournament.



### **KHOO TENG SOON**

Better known as T.S. Khoo, he was one of Asia's best designers of newspaper pages. He had a knack for picking the most interesting stories and turning text, design, headlines and pictures into a highly readable

page in seconds. It earned him the title: The Fastest Pen In The East. Appointed group editor in 1972, he once said his decision to publish a photo of Maria Hertogh was a mistake. Racial riots had erupted in 1950 following the custody battle between Maria's biological and adoptive parents.



### **PETER LIM HENG LOONG**

He introduced the 'What it should have been' column, which publicly acknowledged and corrected errors in the newspaper. He is also credited with popularising the use of graphics in

story-telling. Mr Lim, who became editor-in chief in 1978 at age 40, introduced the annual performance appraisal system for staff as well as in-house and overseas training opportunities.

### **CHEONG YIP SENG**

He expanded the coverage of national politics, setting up a political desk in the early 1980s. His belief that "easy reading is damn hard writing" changed journalistic writing in the newspaper.



Appointed editor in 1979, at age 35, he became editor-in-chief in 1987.

He implemented an editorial policy that affirmed the need to foster national identity and a Singaporean point of view in reporting stories.



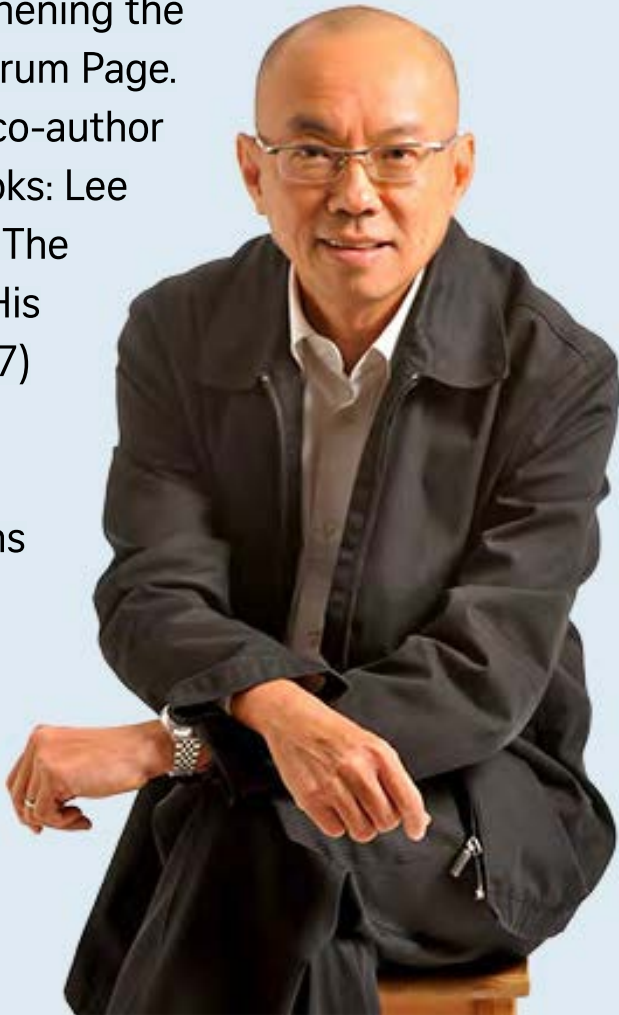
### **LESLIE FONG**

Appointed editor in 1987 at age 37, he ended the practice of publishing anonymous letters from readers. He also banned smoking in the newsroom, making The Straits Times among the first newspapers in the world to do so. His term saw the launch of several initiatives like The Straits Times website and The Straits Times School Pocket Money Fund to help poor children with school expenses.



## HAN FOOK KWANG

He was named The Straits Times' editor in 2002 at age 49. A former senior public servant who joined the paper in 1989, he introduced its weekly Insight section of political features and commentary. He was also instrumental in strengthening the paper's Forum Page. He is the co-author of two books: Lee Kuan Yew: The Man And His Ideas (1997) and Lee Kuan Yew: Hard Truths To Keep Singapore Going (2011).



## PATRICK DANIEL

When Mr Daniel took charge as current editor-in-chief in 2007 at age 52, print media across the world were facing huge challenges from online media. Apart from leading The Straits Times' multimedia strategies, he streamlined newsroom processes and restructured the newspaper division into a media group comprising both print and digital operations, as well as business adjacencies such as radio, book publishing and financial data. A former editor of The Business Times, he also oversees the group's Malay and Tamil newspapers.



## WARREN FERNANDEZ

Since becoming editor in 2012 at age 45, Mr Fernandez has turned The Straits Times' newsroom into a 24/7, multimedia operation, ready for the digital age of smartphones, tablets and social media. To deepen the paper's ties with the community, he organised forums on issues like education and foreign affairs, as well as concerts and the ST Run. He led the first ST redesign across print, website and mobile products.

men such as Singapore's first lawyer William Napier. It was joined in 1842 by the short-lived Straits Messenger, which made a splash with what was then a novel offering: foreign news culled from British newspapers and overseas journals.

The Straits Times made its appearance in 1845, its parentage not nearly as illustrious as that of the formidable Singapore Free Press.

By most accounts, it was an accidental baby and there was no reason to suspect it would be the newspaper to outlast them all.

In the years to come, at least a dozen other newspapers would unfurl their banners. The Straits Times is the only paper to have published uninterrupted for 170 years – except during the Japanese Occupation of Singapore from 1942 to 1945.

## FOUNDERS AND KEEPERS



The founders of The Straits Times have proved difficult to pin down. Not a lot is known about Marterus Thaddeus Apar, the Armenian merchant who imported a printing press from England with the intention of...well, his intentions also remain unknown. Did he, as Charles Buckley suggests in his *Anecdotal History Of Singapore*, harbour ambitions to take on the well-entrenched Singapore Free Press? Or, more likely, was he going to carry on the Armenian tradition of printing books and journals to advocate the community's cause?

Whatever his motive, Apar went bankrupt before the press arrived. Catchick Moses (left), a fellow Armenian



merchant, supposedly bought over the equipment as a favour to Apcar.

Records show he hired Robert Carr Woods, a 29-year-old Englishman who arrived in Singapore in 1845 claiming to have worked as a journalist in Bombay. “Moses had a printing press needing a purpose, and Woods needed a job,” writes historian CM Turnbull in *Dateline Singapore*.

In sum, through a series of quirky incidents, an act of kindness, a big dose of salesmanship and possibly a bigger leap of faith was born *The Straits Times* and *Singapore Journal of Commerce*.

The *Times* of London was then already 60 years old, the *Times* of India was seven while the *New York Times* would be born six years later.

## NUTMEG ON TANGLIN

Singapore’s population then was about 50,000 of which only about 300 read the English newspapers. Trade

was the economy’s mainstay, as it is today. But unlike now, the wheels on which commerce turned spun s-l-o-w-l-y. Goods, people and news – in the form of overseas newspapers and journals, letters and chatter – arrived on ships that took several months to sail from Europe and weeks from India and China.

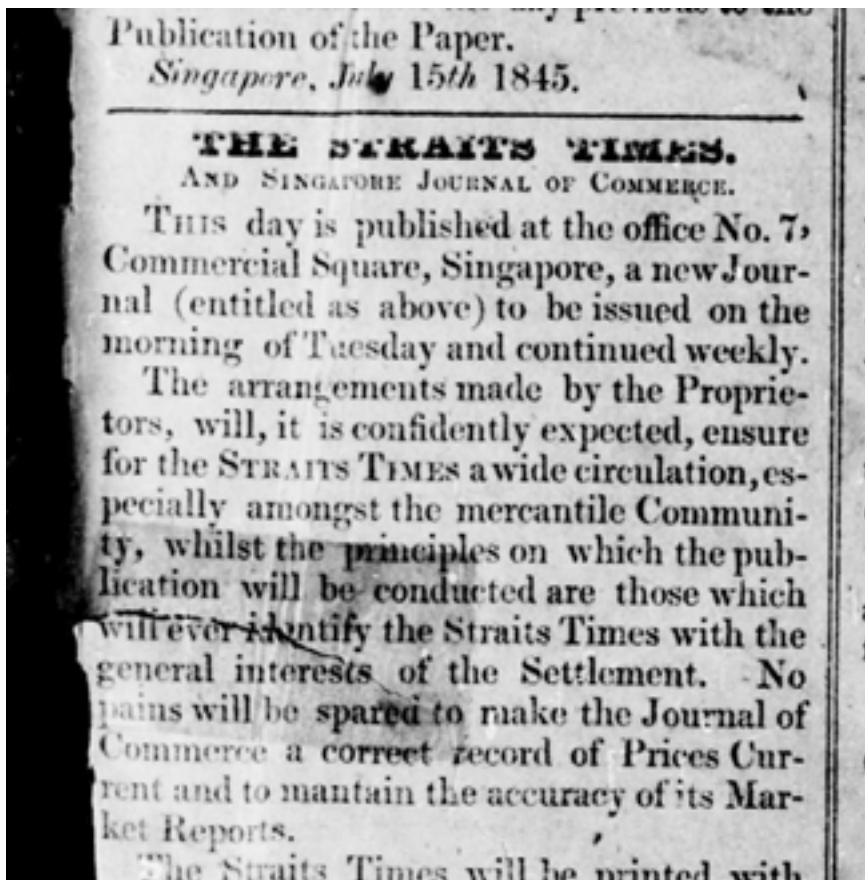
Life revolved around the Singapore River, with offices, shops



An aerial view of Boat Quay on October 5, 1953. In the middle of the 19th century, life revolved around the Singapore River. ST PHOTO: CHEW BOON CHIN

and godowns clustered, bazaar-like, on its banks. Tigers stalked at the edge of town and gangs of thieves roamed the streets. Poverty was rife.

In its first issue on July 15, 1845, The Straits Times boldly said it was confident of wide circulation, especially among the merchants and traders. Its price was one Java rupee. The monthly subscription was four East India Company rupees or 1 ¾ Spanish dollars, the currencies of the time that would be later supplanted by the Straits dollar.



The issue pledged (left) to the reader that “the principles on which the publication will be conducted are those which will ever identify The Straits Times with the general interests of the Settlement”.

These were lofty ambitions for a newspaper rolling off a hand-operated press in a godown. It would sell fewer than 200 copies in its first 50 years.

But it did not hesitate to list subscription and advertisement agents in a dozen cities around the

world – Hong Kong, Macau, Manila, Batavia (in Jakarta), Malacca, Penang, Calcutta, Madras, Bombay, Paris, London and Liverpool.

## WHAT, NO HEADLINES?

The first issue with eight pages hardly resembles the present-day Straits Times. Its Page 1 had no news, just



advertisements and notices.

News reports ran on the inside pages, with no headlines. The stories began at the top of the first column, snaked all the way down to the bottom and then on to the top of the next column. There were no photographs. Although photography had been invented nearly two decades earlier, pictures were rarely used in newspapers until the 1920s.

The first news item, which appeared on Page 2, read more like a rushed aside: “We understand the Admiral is expected

to arrive here today or tomorrow, as also that His Excellency intends to make Singapore the Head Quarters in future instead of Penang.”

For the first 13 years, the newspaper was published once or twice a week. It became an afternoon daily under the title of Singapore Daily Times (left) in 1858, before reverting to The Straits Times in 1883. It would become a morning paper after World War II.



# IMPACT JOURNALISM

Back at the steamy riverside godown, less than a year after its founding, Mr Moses had lost faith that The Straits Times would ever make money. After writing off his losses, he handed the reins to Mr Woods, who also found it hard to make ends meet.

The newspaper would pass on to a succession of owners/editors until 1900, when The Straits Times became a private limited company, with a paid-up capital of \$100,000.

The Straits Times' imprint in shaping the events of the day was unmistakable. In a 10-year campaign, it argued forcefully for the transfer of Singapore from British India to direct colonial rule from London.

When Singapore became a crown colony in 1867, the newspaper took some credit for it.

An event of even greater significance would follow shortly: the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869. The island's importance as a trade hub grew, unleashing a wave of prosperity. The newspaper benefited also from the laying of the telegraph cable from London to Bombay and on to Madras and Singapore. With the cable, it was possible to subscribe to Reuters news agency and it allowed the newspaper to serve fresh world news instead of months-old fare. The world drew a lot closer to Singapore.

The Straits Times noted the glow that surrounded Singapore and wrote in 1874: "It is very hard to be without a grievance, and we confess we are somewhat in this condition here at the present time."



# BOOM, BUST AND APPEAL

In the early 20th century, as Singapore was transformed from a makeshift settlement with an uncertain future into a bustling cosmopolitan city where East and West could profitably tryst, The Straits Times found its own sweet spot.

The newspaper had come to regard itself as Singapore's paper of record and hungered to become the leading newspaper of the region. At first, the answer seemed to lie in becoming the "Thunderer of the East", in the way The Times of London, with its imperious editorials, was the original "Thunderer".

The Straits Times earned that nickname under the passionate editorship of Alexander William Still, an experienced British editor hired in 1908. Malaya was then at the height of the rubber boom and Still took great pains to study the economics of the region's most valuable commodity.

His fears that a bust was round the corner proved right and he pushed the government and the industry to rally around policies that would combat the slump. When World War I broke out in 1914, he led The Straits Times in efforts to raise money and recruit volunteers for forces overseas.

Still's opinion came to be valued, and The Straits Times sold on the strength of his name. Billboards posted around town advertised his editorials which were hotly debated in clubs and over dinner tables. Sometimes, his outspoken comments tangled The Straits Times in commercial libel suits which the newspaper either lost or settled out of court.

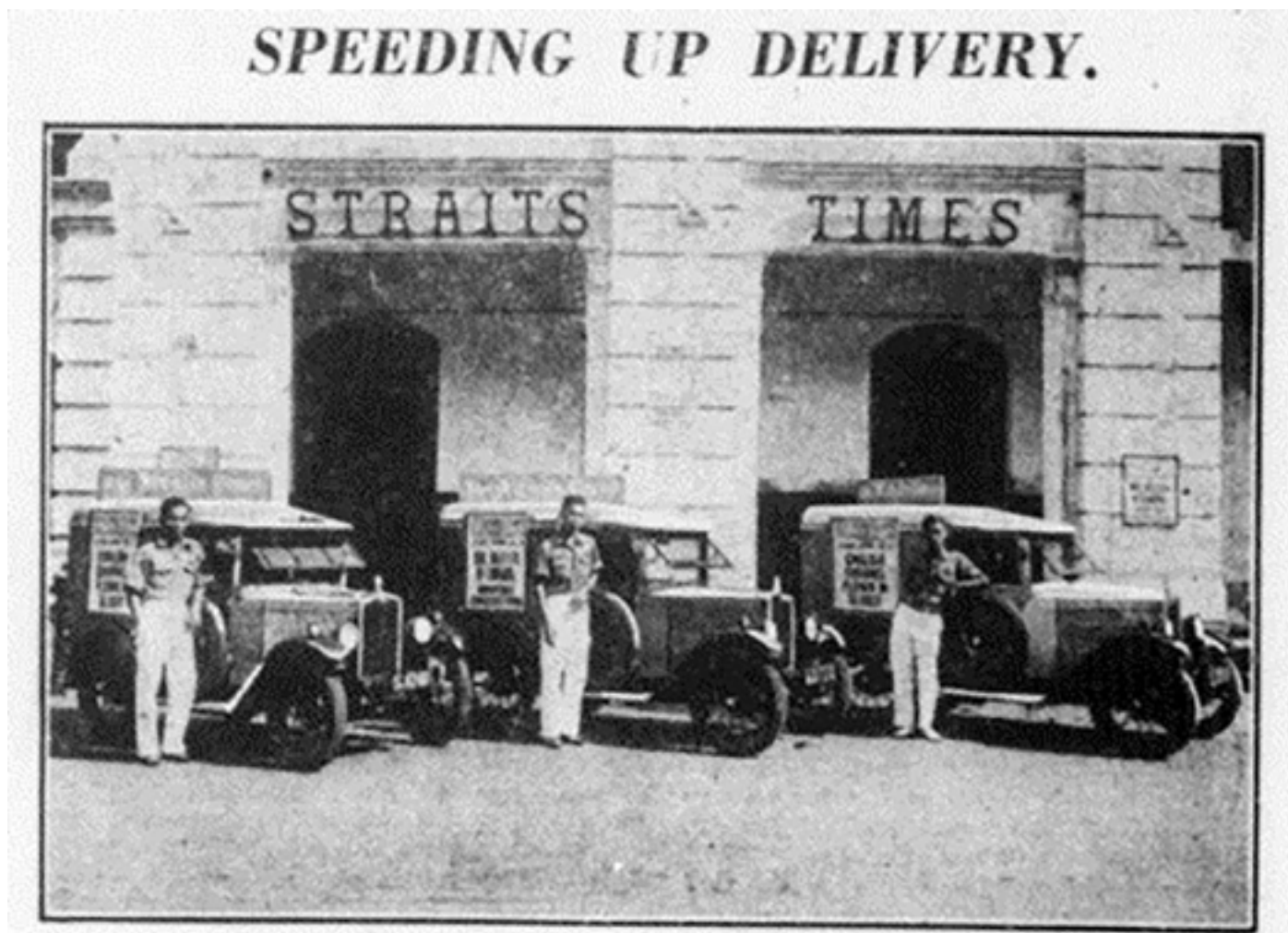
One estimate was that these suits cost the newspaper about \$30,000. But they also boosted circulation, advertising

revenue and the paper's reputation for forthright comment.

When the Great Depression of 1930s brought the rubber-and-tin exporting economy to a near-standstill, The Straits Times kept its head while others were losing theirs, further cementing its credibility.

It urged companies to fight defeatism – to extend, not shrink, their activities. It called on the government to spend its surpluses, resist cutting public expenditure and avoid retrenchments to speed up recovery.

To set an example, editor George Seabridge expanded and modernised the office and the printing press and bought a fleet of Morris Minor vans to deliver the paper



Malaya should spend its way out of the slump, ST advocated during the Great Depression. It walked the talk, buying a fleet of Morris Minor vans, seen in this July 2, 1931 picture, to deliver the paper upcountry. ST FILE PHOTO

supcountry. The move kept morale high and the investment in modernisation paid off handsomely for years to come.

By 1933, The Straits Times had worn down and absorbed its longtime rival, Singapore Free Press. Only one competitor was left – the Malaya Tribune, which billed itself the “son of





**Soldiers from the Malay Regiment, which fought against the invading Japanese forces during the World War II.** PHOTO: NATIONAL ARCHIVES OF SINGAPORE

the soil” and newspaper of Singapore’s Asian communities. But in 1938, The Straits Times soared ahead of the Tribune with one masterstroke – it halved the paper’s price to 5 cents. Its circulation almost doubled to 15,000 in a year, 2,000 more than the Tribune’s.

## WORLD WAR II

Luck was clearly with The Straits Times during the war. For one, it was not bombed. Its closest rival Malaya Tribune was – its premises were left smoking from a direct hit from a Japanese warplane in February 1942, a blow from which it could never really recover. The Straits Times continued to print right until the day the British surrendered Singapore to the Japanese army on February 15, 1942. Within a few days, the Japanese brought out their own English-language newspaper, the Shonan



## JAPAN'S POSITION IMPREGNABLE

## Effect Of Fall Of Singapore

Gen. Shunroku Hata Issues  
Verbal Statement

GEN. Shigenobu Hata, Commander in Chief, Japanese Forces in China, in a verbal statement at 3:30 a.m. Wednesday, said that with the fall of Nanking, Japan is now strongly established in an inarguable position to conduct the current war. Both Britain and the United States can no longer wage an offensive war against Japan in the South-west Pacific.

## British Reverses In Malaya

THE series of British successes in Malaya is due to a variety of political factors in that colony, of which the London Times writes: "The British Government believed it to be wise to open up the frontiers of Malaya to the influx of Chinese population, even at the expense of the war. A corresponding credit to the British Government is due for its astute utilization of British bureaucracy. The native elite in Malaya was always a factor in the British success."

## British Aircraft Carrier Damaged

**A** BRITISH aircraft carrier limo-  
ned into the Gulf of Caribbea  
for repairs yesterday, according to  
information received here.

Five ships have been torpedoed  
by Axis submarines in the West  
Indies, says a report from  
London on Wednesday.

## AMERICANS DARK DAYS

## REDS SMASHED BY GERMANS

## BATAVIA APPEALS TO AUSTRALIA

WITH the Japanese attack on the Dutch East Indies last December from the land, sea and air, Singapore has appealed to Australia for assistance. A United Press dispatch from Sydney reveals the Australian Parliament was today summoned to discuss ways and means to satisfy the Malayan request. The

## Australia Further Isolated

**A**USTRALIANS will be far other isolated from the United States, Canberra announced today the suspension of radio telephone service will cause serious talk with effect from Feb. 21. The Department of the Post, Master-General says that the step has been taken to avoid any possible conflict for reasons of security. It is pointed out that the Australian radio telephone service is other countries has a ready been suspended.

## Enemy Destroyer Sunk Yesterday

**A** FEW STARRY Goshawks were sighted to the east of Shikine Island. One was seen while a second received several hits. Two starlings and two sparrows were also sighted, of which one was taken. A second sighting is reported that Japanese Airman succeeded in shooting down a starling on a starry plane over Iwate. It dated the past night days 10 Feb. 2 to Feb. 15.

Japanese naval units have captured a fleet of Japanese warships off the coast of the Pacific occupied city of Pusan.

The Great Broadcasting Corporation, carrying a Balaia Chronicle, states that Japanese warships sailed Kagawa W.

## ENEMY HANGAR DESTROYED

WHE United States War Department disclosed that the air attack on American positions in the Bataan Peninsula was going to intensify.

From the Bataan front, A reported that despite a fierce barrage of the enemy's anti-aircraft guns, Japanese bombers swooped down and heavily damaged the American positions. The Japanese destroyed our energy plant and the air base. It was revealed Wednesday.

U.S. NATIONALS FLEE  
DUTCH EAST INDIES  
A BATAVIA, 1945

Only 189 Americans remain in the Dutch East Indies, says Salans' report.

## REDS SMASHED BY GERMANS

**A** result of the threat to Communist forces in the central sector of the Eastern Front, another powerful corps of the Red forces has been created with heavy tanks. The Germans captured many prisoners and various war materials.

## PUBLIC NOTICE

The Nippon Authority of Palau Nibonan declares the following persons to report for duty.

1. Workmen and Engineers of Gas, Electric, Water-works and those connected with Broadcasting. These should report for duty at the Nippon Area Administration Office at the Municipal Building, Nagaoka, immediately.
2. The officials are requested to clean the streets and compounds near their houses.
3. Quarantine will be observed as usual.

## THE SHONAN TIMES

FEBRUARY 26, 1909 A T

To Our Friends—The  
People Of Male

In this fortress of Singapore (Ethosian) and the Federated Malay States, all arms and military objectives are under the control of the Nippon troops.

The Peace, which is the powerful organ for the organization of arms, comes under domination of the Nippon troops. By the visit of Chief Nippon Commander

It is the wish of the Commander that the revolution the people here shall be served, and that they shall

by good fortune and may  
live with the restoration  
peaceful conditions.

The policy of injustice,  
dishonesty and crime  
shall disappear automatic-  
ally as the smoke of the  
problem is fast dissipating,  
and there shall arise in  
place the norm of the  
Order which will manifest  
itself. This must be believed  
the people who should take  
steps to establish an un-  
derstanding of this New Order  
those who believe in rain  
or snow from the ceiling  
hindering the growth of  
New Order. The **NEW**  
willows from here is wait-  
ing around the way in

vicinity of the Malay Peninsula and the borders of Siam (Shan). The people, therefore, should be on their guard.

You can pay for and  
 chance in the words of These  
 the Nippon Army and Navy  
 have lost their lives in battle.  
 They have sacrificed their  
 in laying the foundations of  
 New Order in East Asia.

**ADVERTISEMENTS**  
 Personal or business advertisements will be accepted in the office of The Shunan Times.

Mrs. Irene Fettes has announced that she will be married to Mr. J. B. Fettes on the 15th of the month.

Mr. and Mrs. J. O. Mathison  
like "Clara" among (Mr.  
mathison). Anyone kno  
of her whereabouts please  
call Ray Ferro, 1111 1/2 St.

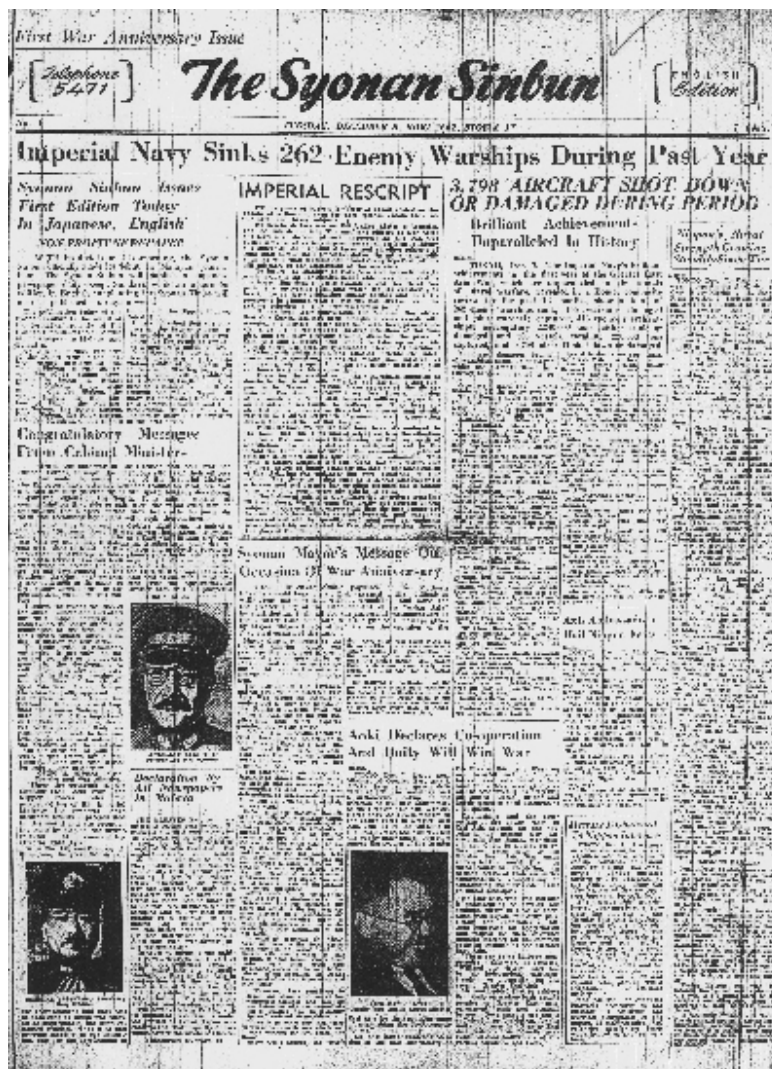
Will Chung Hap Kee lost his  
in 1941 or any one knowing of  
whereabouts please contact  
with Chung Hap Kee, c/o  
Shenoi Street

one knowing of her whereabouts please communicate with Michael, The Ethiopian Times, or

Will Mr. Brink of Miami Ave. or anyone knowing his whereabouts please communicate with P. E. Jones, c/o "Witness" The Starman.

Tina Hagan would like to see  
800 Serials. Address 21, 1

Found.



Times (left), and later the Syonan Shinbun (right), from the premises of The Straits Times.

The second stroke of good fortune occurred after the war came to an abrupt halt following the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Two Japanese war correspondents from Domei News Agency turned up at the Changi camp, asking to meet The Straits Times editors interned there. They had come to hand over press equipment and access to the Reuters news service so The Straits Times could resume printing.

Arson and rioting was taking place all over Singapore. But The Straits Times' Cecil Street premises emerged unscathed, thanks to staffers who put themselves in peril. War-hardened journalists, technicians and mechanics





overcame many challenges – the rotary press was damaged, no gas was available to work the linotype machines – to get the press rolling.

The third lucky stroke was when Lord Louis Mountbatten, the Supreme Allied Commander of South East Asia, praised the first post-war issue of The Straits Times and told its journalists to carry on the good work. His words shielded the paper from the British Military Administration's tight control of newsprint. As

a result, The Straits Times was able to appear on September 7, 1945, just five days after the British re-occupied Singapore.

## AFTER THE WAR

The Straits Times emerged from the war with a larger sense of itself, proclaiming a new identity on its masthead: “Malaya’s Leading Newspaper”. The front page no longer carried just advertisements but major news items. Partly,



ST PHOTO: HAN HAI FONG



ST PHOTO: HAN HAI FONG

because the authorities had banned advertisements at a time when newsprint was scarce but also because there was little for business to advertise in the war-shattered economy. And, beginning the tradition that continues today, it began to be published in the morning instead of the afternoon. .

At the same time, there was a deep hunger for news as nationalism grew in Asia and European imperialism dwindled in power.

The politically-charged times drove the hunger for news as never before. ST's coverage reflected the rise of Asian nationalism and the clock ticking on European imperialism. Circulation, advertising revenues and profits boomed. The Straits Times was once again on the top of things but the ground was shifting.

## SELF-RULE

The shift came in 1959, literally and figuratively. The Straits Times moved its headquarters from Singapore to Kuala Lumpur, partly because it saw itself as a pan-Malayan newspaper and Kuala Lumpur, the Federation's capital, was a logical choice. A more immediate reason was an open clash between its editor-in-chief Leslie Hoffman (top, left) and the leader of the People's Action Party (PAP), Mr Lee Kuan Yew (left). The Straits Times had begun to peel off its pro-British identity. Its front-page headline after the



Japanese surrendered declared: “Singapore is British again!”. Not for long, editor George Peet foresaw.

The newspaper’s changing mindset became evident in 1947 when the Government proposed a controversial move: the introduction of income tax. The Straits Times, an ally of business since its founding days, did not oppose the tax, which it believed was necessary for post-war reconstruction.

Another defining moment was the Suez crisis. The local British community accused The Straits Times of betrayal when it broke ranks with the colonial establishment and opposed Britain’s invasion of Egypt in 1956.

In local politics, The Straits Times viewed the PAP as dangerously left-leaning, while Mr Lee thought the newspaper lacked political judgment.

He found fault with its coverage of the 1959 Legislative Assembly general election, especially a report that addressed the sensitive issue of merger between Singapore and Malaya. Mr Lee warned: “Any newspaper that tries to sour up or strain relations between the Federation and Singapore will go in for subversion.”

Mr Hoffman saw this as a serious threat to press freedom in Singapore and took the case to the International Press Institute. Its representative visited Singapore and concluded that the incident had been overblown by both sides.

By 1961, The Straits Times (left)



found much to admire about Mr Lee's economic development policies and his ability to handle the communists in his own party. It gave support to his government.

The paper also backed the PAP's goal of a merger between Singapore and Malaya. A merger would pave the way for it to realise its dream of becoming the national newspaper of a unified, independent nation.

The merger in 1963, however, unravelled as racial tensions and political differences rocked Malaysia. The Straits Times made many pleas for level-headedness. On Aug 8, 1965, it warned: "What is at stake is the survival of Malaysia itself as a nation, an interest of vital concern to every citizen of this country. A frightful miscalculation can bring ruin to all."

The next day, Singapore's exit from Malaysia was announced (left).



## A PAPER FOR TWO

For The Straits Times, as for almost all of Singapore, the split was a shock and a matter of sorrow. The Straits Times was a Malaysian-registered company headquartered in Kuala Lumpur. But its financial base was in Singapore. The situation was especially troubling to the Singapore staff who had no say in decisions taken in Kuala Lumpur. It endured until 1972, when the Malaysian government forced the company to split its operations and form the New Straits Times to serve Malaysia. The Straits Times returned home to Singapore, after a 14-year stay in Kuala Lumpur.



# A PAPER FOR SINGAPORE

Every newly independent nation grapples with nation building. The curve for newly-independent Singapore was steeper – a Singaporean identity had to be conceived and constructed from scratch. The journey proved an arduous climb for The Straits Times too.

In 1977, The Straits Times drew up an editorial policy that would explicitly promote national development, a move prompted by government expectations that the national newspaper should influence its readers to good effect, to contribute to raising living standards and be a quality paper that can expertly analyse the world for Singaporeans. The newspaper set itself four objectives: “to inform, to educate, to activate and to entertain”. To activate, a new concept for The Straits Times, meant “explaining, questioning and, where necessary, criticising government policies and other developments of public interest”.

But relations with the Government continued to be rocky, hitting a low in 1981 when Mr J.B. Jeyaretnam, leader of the opposition Workers’ Party, won the Anson constituency in a by-election. He became the first opposition member in Parliament in 13 years. The Government blamed The Straits Times’ election coverage for the loss, particularly a report of an impending hike in bus fares.

Anticipating a government intervention in its operations, The Straits Times management sought a meeting with Mr Lee. It led to both sides agreeing that a government nominee, approved by the company, would become executive chairman of The Straits Times Press board.



**Nathan, I am giving you The Straits Times. It has 140 years of history. It's like a bowl of china. You break it, I can piece it together, but it will never be the same. Try not to.**



ST PHOTO: NG SOR LUAN

The post was held by Mr S R Nathan (left), a top civil servant who would later become the President of Singapore. The day before he took the job, Mr Lee had a message for him: Mr Nathan's entry into The Straits Times in 1982 was met with suspicion. He was seen as the censor-in-chief. But he cast himself as a bridge-builder who would not wade into the newspaper's day-to-day operations but stay focussed on his task, which was to help the editors understand what the Government was trying to do. No china was broken.



Reporters scramble to speak to the relatives of passengers on board the missing Malaysia Airlines Flight MH370 in Kuala Lumpur on March 19, 2014.

ST PHOTO: NEO XIAOBIN

## INTERNET AGE

The Straits Times took its first step in cyberspace in 1995, the year it celebrated its 150th anniversary. The move was one year ahead of the New York Times and at least four years before The Times of London.

As social media became popular, the paper harnessed it to give news quickly and extensively.

When Malaysia Airlines flight MH370 disappeared mid-flight in 2014, for example, The Straits Times deployed nearly 40 reporters in 12 cities to provide live news updates across all platforms, including interviews with aviation officials, experts and distraught kin. By March 9, 2015, a year later,



the paper had published almost 600 reports on the missing plane.

With technology and reading habits ever-changing, The Straits Times began a series of projects to meet its readers wherever they chose to tune in. Stomp (Straits Times Online Mobile Print), an interactive portal for readers to share views and stories, was launched in 2006. The Straits Times' online video news channel, RazorTV, was launched in 2008. In the following year, its iPhone application was released. And in 2013, The Straits Times news began to be heard on SPH radio stations. This year, it will be available on smart watches.



The Straits Times website (left) and mobile apps have about eight million unique visitors and 100 million page views a month. On Facebook, The Straits Times has more than 550,000 “likes” and on Twitter, more than 471,000 followers.



Students take a tour of The Straits Times newsroom as part of the annual Straits Times Media Club camp in May 2013. This is meant to expose secondary school students to journalism.

ST PHOTO: NEO XIAOBIN

Today, the editor's glass-walled cabin commands a view of the news hub, where The Straits Times' multimedia operations are anchored, but the mission is ever closer to the spirit of its pioneering day in the 1850s, when the newspaper was all things to all people. **ST**



# It all began in a riverside godown...

## 1845

The Straits Times is published and distributed from the office of Singapore's pioneering businessman Aristarkies Sarkies at No.7 Commercial Square, now Raffles Place. Mr Sarkies was the uncle of The Straits Times founder Catchick Moses.





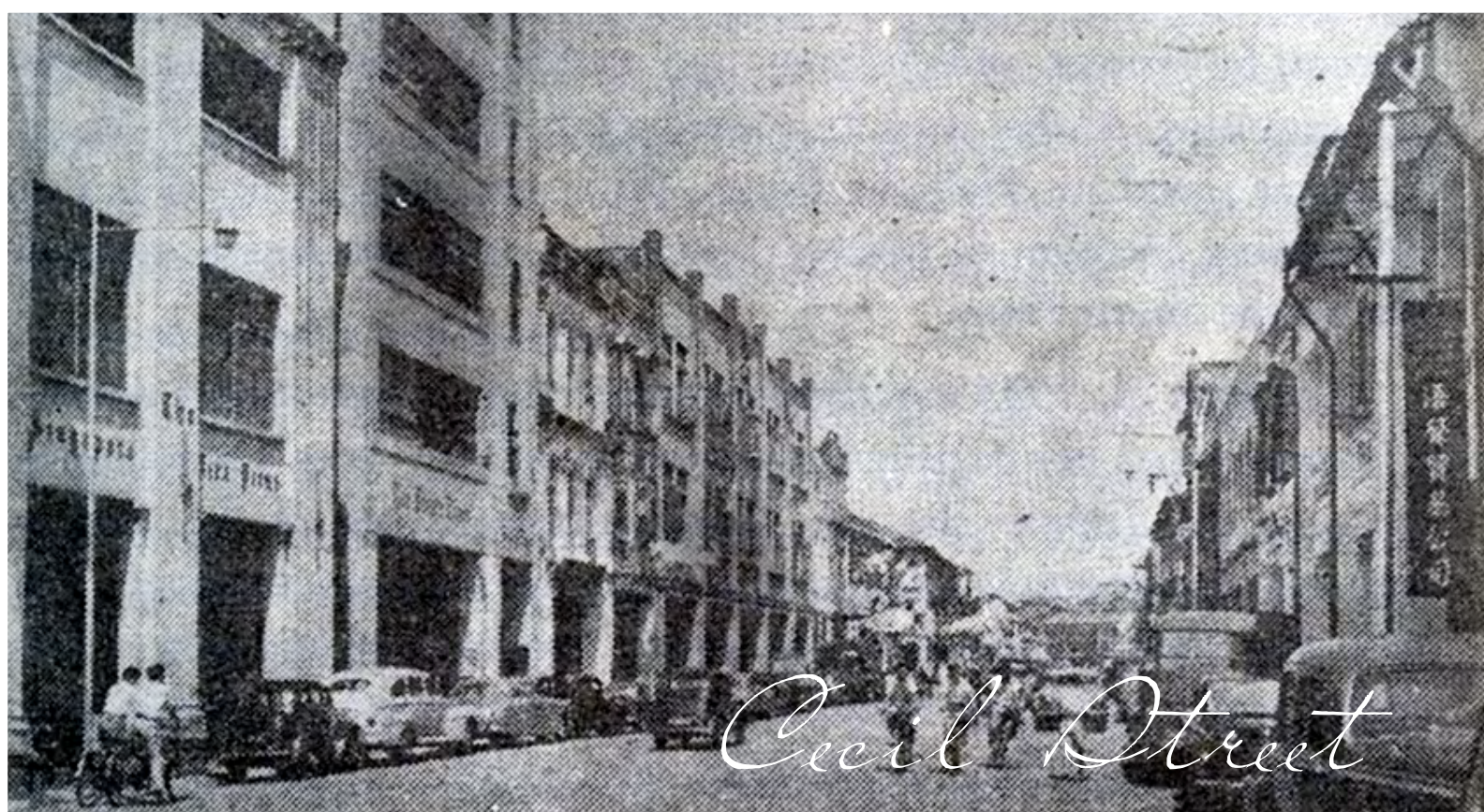
# 1895

The paper moves to spacious rented offices in Finlayson Green.



# 1901

After it is incorporated as a limited company, The Straits Times buys custom-built premises in Cecil Street at an auction, paying \$3 per square foot. The office and printing plant are moved to the new place in August 1903.





# 1930

The Straits Times acquires regional presence, opening an office in Kuala Lumpur.



# 1931

Work begins on constructing new premises in Cecil Street. The new building, completed in 1933, was a state-of-the-art, steel-framed, four-storey building.



# 1958

Having outgrown the Cecil Street and Anson Road premises in 1955, The Straits Times moves to

Times House, at the junction of River Valley and Kim Seng roads.

The air-conditioned, two-storey news complex cost \$991,332 to build. It housed The Straits Times, The Sunday Times, The Business Times, the former New Nation, The New Paper and its Sunday edition as well as Malay newspapers Berita Harian and Berita Minggu.







The headquarters of The Straits Times is moved from Singapore to Kuala Lumpur in 1959 because the working environment is seen as more stable in Malaysia than Singapore, which is swaying to the left politically. The headquarters is in Robson House in Pudu Road.





# 1973

The Straits Times returns to Singapore after the paper splits, with New Straits Times started for Malaysia in 1972.



# 1986

New SPH headquarters at News Centre in Genting Lane is opened.





# 1998

SPH pays \$40 million for a property at 1000 Toa Payoh North to house all non-printing operations. In February 2002, The Straits Times staff moves in. Times House is sold in 2004. It is demolished and The Cosmopolitan condominium built on the site in 2008.





PAGE ONES FROM  
**1800**

THE  
STRAITS  
TIMES  
launched its  
first issue on  
July 15, 1845,  
with no news  
articles on its  
front page – only  
advertisements  
and shipping  
notices.  
That trend, also  
seen in other  
newspapers  
of the day,  
continued  
throughout the  
19th century.



JANUARY 1846







# TIMES CAPSULE

The river of life. From gossip to adventure, its waters have nourished life on the island. Warehouse, squatters and hawkers were once common sights, a far cry from the clean streets, shopping malls, and high-end dining areas of today.

## Singapore River, 1936



The riverside was a place for new immigrants to get the latest news and stories about their hometown. At a price of five cents in 1949, then 10 to 20 cents in the 1950s, storytellers entertained the illiterate masses with intriguing tales and famous legends. However, falling attendance and river redevelopment in the 1970s displaced the storytellers. Pubs and restaurants took their place in providing recreation for a new generation of educated executives and tourists. PHOTO: NATIONAL

ARCHIVES OF SINGAPORE



# Singapore River, 1953



The Singapore River hosted activities of all sorts. Warehouses, squatters and unlicensed hawkers were common sights. An electric telegraph building of “ornamental character” came up in 1859; a market that was meant to be “one of the cleanest markets in the world” opened in 1861; and the first two Chinese schools in Singapore, Cui Ying School and Chong Wen Ge, were at the mouth of the river before the area was reclaimed. Editorials in *The Straits Times* frequently called attention to the crowded banks and overwhelmed waterways, as seen in this October 1953 view of Boat Quay. ST PHOTO: CHEW BOON CHIN

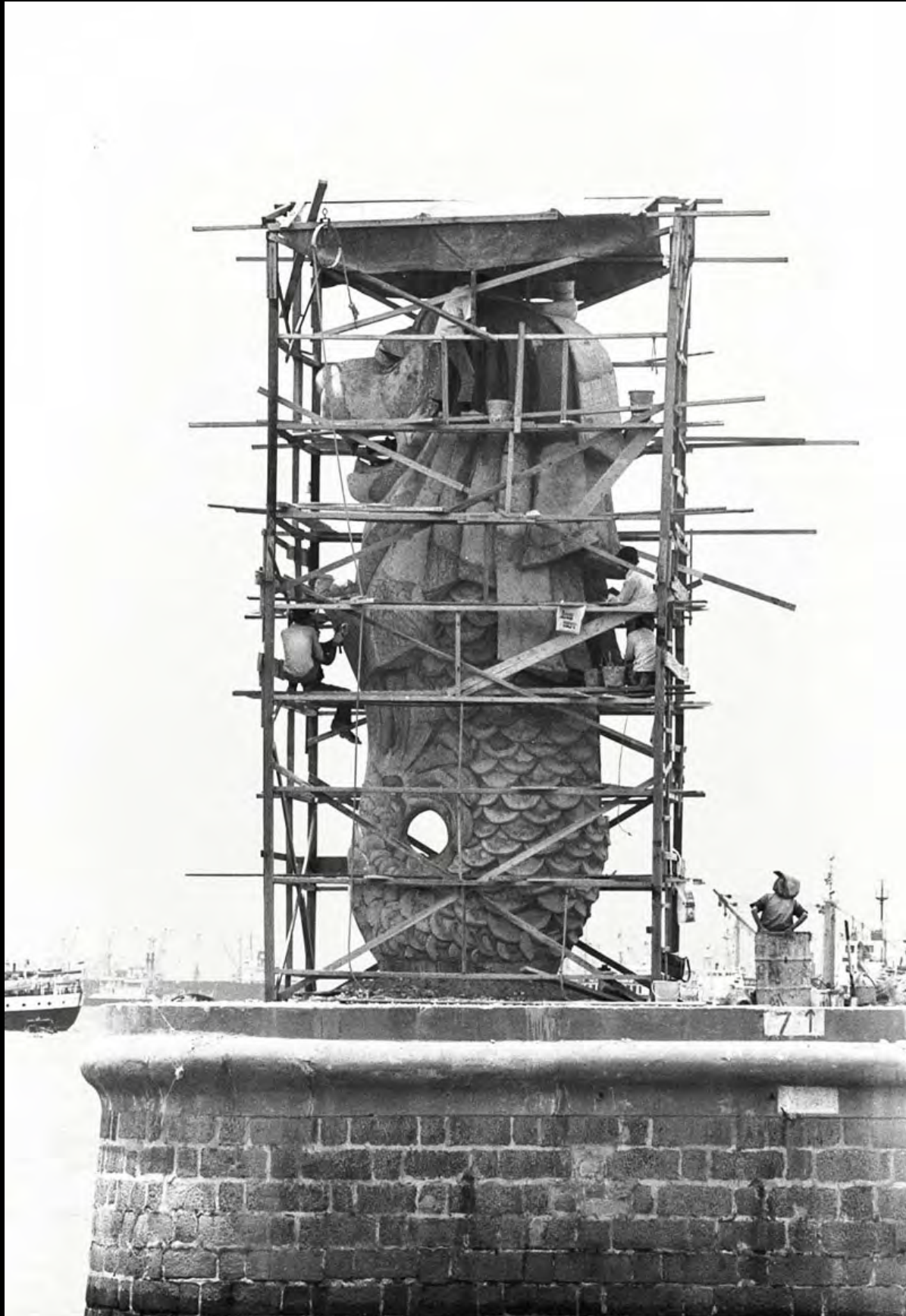


## Singapore River, 1971



In 1971, The Straits Times ran a story about a bunch of street urchins who would dive more than 9m off the top of Anderson and Cavenagh Bridges into the river, “missing sometimes by inches a fleet of bumboats in the murky waters”. Calling themselves the Riverside Mates, these boys risked their lives not for tips from tourists, but for the sheer thrill of it. When the Marine Police officers patrolled, they hid – only to return minutes later to resume diving and splashing. ST PHOTO: MAK KIAN SENG

# Singapore River, 1972



The mythical Merlion sprang to life at the mouth of the river in 1972. But it was soon overshadowed by its new neighbour, the Esplanade Bridge. On its 30th birthday, it moved to its current home next to the waterfront development One Fullerton. ST PHOTO: JUNID JUANI



# Singapore River, 1987



The calm of a sunny afternoon seemed to reflect then Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew's mood as he and Mrs Lee went on a 25-minute boat ride with Environment Minister Dr Ahmad Mattar, his wife and officials around the Singapore River. The once polluted river including Kallang Basin and Marina Bay had undergone a clean-up project undertaken by 11 ministries and statutory boards.

ST PHOTO: WONG KWAI CHOW



Photograph taken of North Boat Quay in the 1980s when the place was vacated and awaiting redevelopment. After it was redeveloped, it became known as Clarke Quay. ST PHOTO: LIM SIN THAI



# Singapore River, 2007



The river continues to be the focus of flagship projects. In the early 2000s, The Straits Times hosted its million dollar duck races at the waterfront to raise funds for local charities. Benefactors donated funds by sponsoring a rubber duck, which took part in a race down the river. In 2001, the first duck that floated past the finishing line won \$10,000 for its sponsor. ST PHOTO: HOW HWEE YOUNG



# Singapore River, 2015

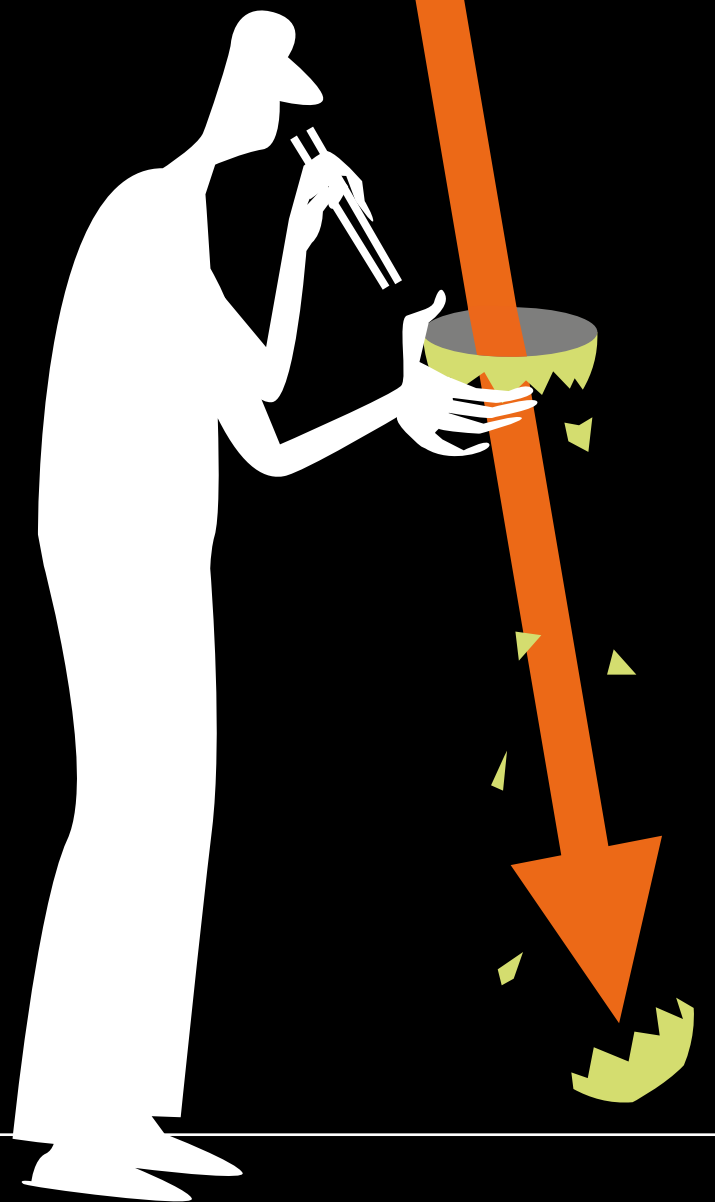


Early traders called the river the “belly of the carp” because of its shape and because the carp symbolises prosperity. The Singapore River lit up for a weekend in April 2015 with a display of its history, as part of the National Heritage Board’s Singapore HeritageFest. ST PHOTO: ALPHONSUS CHERN



# HARD TIMES

News commentary reflects the  
panic when the Wall Street was  
roiled by the 2008 recession.







Coolies unloading goods from barges  
at Boat Quay on August 1, 1956.  
ST PHOTO: HAN HAI FONG



Women wait for their turn at a jobs fair held at Singapore Management University on September 23, 2009. ST PHOTO: NG SOR LUAN

We do not know their names or ages, what they looked like or what paths their lives took to reach that point. Just the bare details of their hardship were sketched out in advertisements that began appearing in The Straits Times as the Great Depression smothered the world in its dark embrace in the 1930s.

As the Western economies came to a standstill, demand dried up for Malaya's bestsellers – rubber and tin – which were shipped out of Singapore's port, the seventh-largest in



the world then. As plantations, traders and shipping firms went bankrupt, managers and workers were laid off in the thousands. Optimism became the scarcest commodity of all.

Beginning in July 1930, The Straits Times set aside free space for blue-collar and white-collar workers to advertise their skills. Listed in a column, according to their race, these advertisements appeared daily for almost a year.

“European planter. Fourteen years’ experience, last three years as manager. Fluent Tamil and Malay. Willing to take up any job. Excellent references.

“Chinese. Straits-born Hokkien. Thoroughly competent book-keeper and typist with knowledge of correspondence. Speaks fluent English, Malay and several Chinese dialects. Former employer gone into liquidation. Will accept any appointment, anywhere, at moderate salary.”

The idea of publishing such advertisements was sparked by one man’s cry of despair in a letter to The Straits Times.

“It is difficult to know how to assist these particularly helpless victims of the slump,” The Straits Times said in a column called Notes Of The Day on July 8, 1930. The column, which ran from Monday to Saturday from 1928 until World War II broke out in 1939, featured musings on local happenings.

The column noted: “Vacancies are few indeed, but in order that no chance shall be missed, we are willing to place a certain amount of space daily at the disposal of men, European or Asiatic, who have been thrown out of work in consequence of the general depression.”

The move was in keeping with the sentiment with which The Straits Times was founded in 1845. On Page 1 of its very

first issue, it promised readers that “the principles on which the publication will be conducted are those which will ever identify The Straits Times with the general interests of the Settlement.” Singapore was then part of the British-ruled Straits Settlements, which included Penang and Malacca.

Five “victims of the slump” stepped forward and were featured in the first burst of advertisements. Eleven months later, the advertisements took up nearly a whole page. Almost 100 men were listed on May 6, 1931, after which the column was discontinued because the newspaper thought employers were not making full use of it.

It is hard to tell how effective the campaign was, though there is evidence of at least some impact. In May 1931, The Straits Times said 250 men had taken up its offer of free ads. The dossiers of 100 men were still at the newspaper’s office, having not attracted any employers. Perhaps some of the 150 others did find jobs.

The 1930s were times of acute distress, to a degree unseen till then or since. The Straits Times interspersed its reports on the bleak economic scene with personal stories of loss and hardship.

“Malaya has suffered a serious setback in the prices of its chief commodities, and though no one likes the word ‘slump’, it has to be admitted we are in the midst of acute trade depression,” The Straits Times wrote on Oct 1, 1927, warning of rude shocks ahead.

Six years later, the crash was a reality no one could ignore.

On June 6, 1930, The Straits Times tore off the blinkers: “From time to time, we are warned that if the slump continues, thousands of coolies will be faced with starvation, but always hitherto we have been left with the impression





The busy junction of Trengganu and Smith streets in Chinatown in 1910. Coolies were the backbone of Singapore's economy, engaged mainly in hard physical labour. Rickshaws thronged the streets. PHOTO: NATIONAL ARCHIVES OF SINGAPORE

that the trouble is not yet; it is merely something that may develop and we would be wise to prepare in advance to meet a possible crisis. Actually, there is ample and tragic evidence available of the terrible consequences of existing unemployment among the coolie class.”

The reference to the “coolie class” sounds insulting today. The Straits Times was, after all, part of the colonial structure. Yet, in a notable way, the newspaper was ahead of the government, taking a humanitarian, not simply colonial, view of affairs.

The defeatist attitudes which were delaying recovery were criticised in an editorial titled Too Much Gloom on Nov 21, 1932. “To ignore the very real difficulties that have arisen in the past two years would be to invite disaster; to go to the other extreme, however – to talk of Malaya going back to jungle and Singapore becoming a fishing village – is ludicrous. Yet that extreme view does exist and it is a view

which should be fought vigorously because the dissemination of it tends to discourage enterprise.”

The Straits Times, instead, consistently advocated a policy – seen most recently in the global financial crisis of 2008 – that urged the economic pump be primed with more spending.

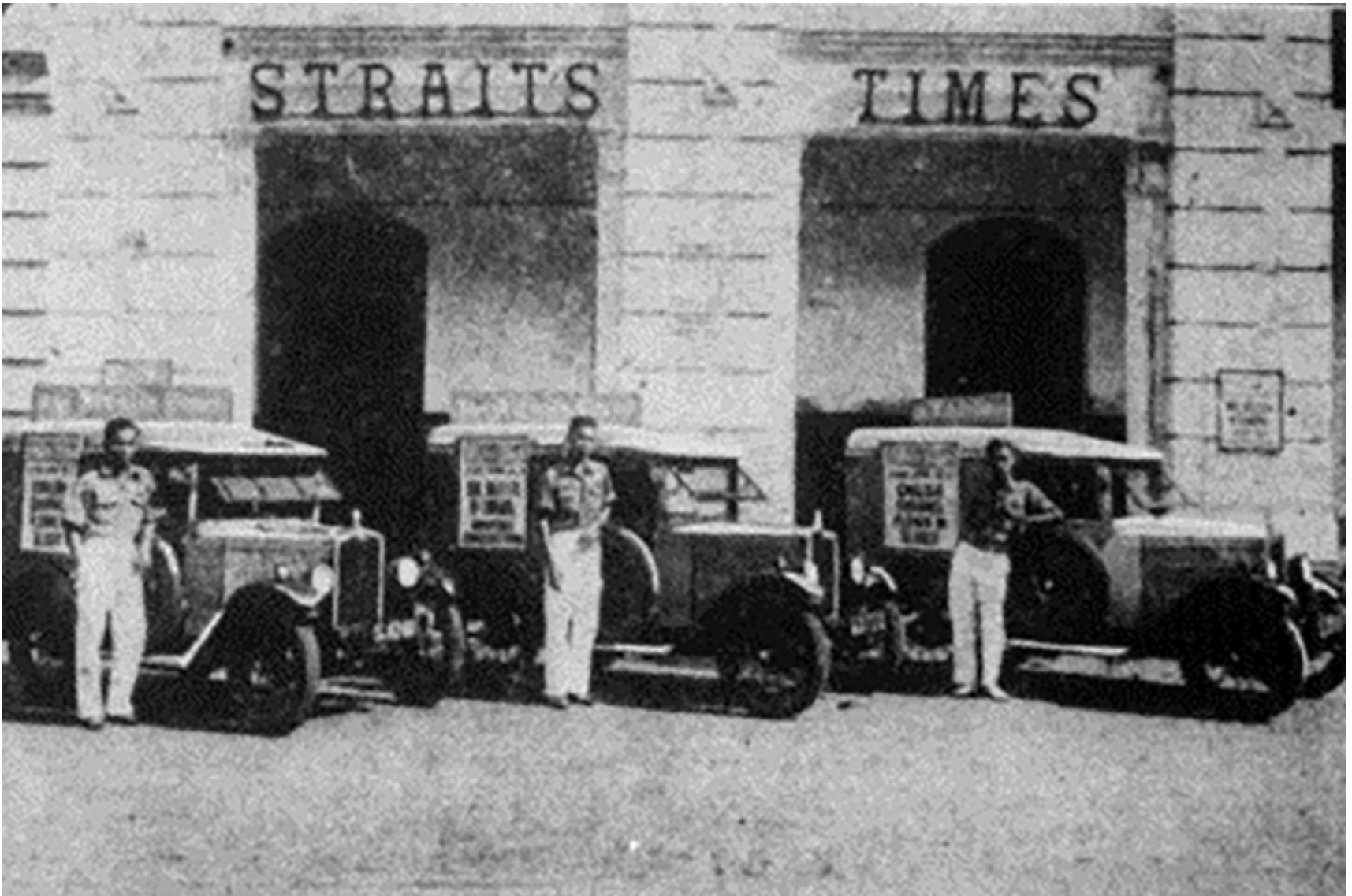
It walked the talk. In an advertisement sub-titled Advancing Through The Slump, the newspaper announced its new office building and state-of-the-art rotary press on Oct 10, 1933.

It added: “Because times are bad, there is no reason for loss of confidence in the country’s future, and gloom and fear will get one nowhere.”

As other companies cut cost, The Straits Times bought a fleet of Morris Minor delivery vans (below) to deliver copies



ST's editor during the Great Depression, Mr George Seabridge, believed increased spending was an antidote to the slump.



ST FILE PHOTO



upcountry and launched the first Sunday paper in Malaya to great success.



**A family of seven living in a pillbox in Sennett Estate in May 1957.**  
ST PHOTO: LOW YEW KONG

For Singapore, the Great Depression was not just an economic event. It led for the first time to immigration controls, supported by The Straits Times, which clamped down on the inflow of men from China but let in women and children.

The result was manifest within years. Singapore transformed from a migrant society into a truly immigrant one. It led to another profound change – the emergence of a truly

resident society for the first time. The male labourer who could be housed dormitory-style in Chinatown could no longer be the way forward. In time, policies were pursued to stop the growth of slums and drive investments into housing.

## 2008 RECESSION

When the sub-prime crisis in the United States triggered a global financial meltdown in 2008, trade-oriented Singapore was the first East Asian economy to slip into a recession.



Women exchange coupons for free drinks in this May 2009 photo. Bar owners say ladies' nights draw crowds during a recession as office-goers cut back on clubbing and other discretionary spending. ST FILE PHOTO

“I wake up each morning to more bad news in the United States and go to work amid a furious sell-down in Singapore and the rest of Asia,” wrote The Straits Times business editor on Oct 11, 2008.

“Everything I learnt in school and since I started work is being turned on its head. What is clear to me is that we will emerge from the crisis with many paradigms shifted.

“Heavy-handed regulation will come back into fashion. Even the time-cherished merits of globalisation will be called into question.”

As it did during the Great Depression in the 1930s, The Straits Times kept its focus on the road to recovery. It urged companies to rethink laying off workers, arguing that preparing for the post-recession demand would place businesses in a better position for the future.

“The crisis will not be short-lived, but it will in time subside,” said The Straits Times editorial on Oct 11, 2008. “So while cost-cutting is going to be necessary, companies need



Munch House Chicken Rice in Ang Mo Kio advertises its recession-time offer. Its chicken rice costs only \$1.50. ST PHOTO: GWENDOLYN NG



to appreciate that any over-reaction might well handicap them when the demand picks up again.”

The newspaper also supported tapping into Singapore’s reserves to temporarily finance government programmes to minimise layoffs. In a Jan 23, 2009 editorial, The Straits Times praised the 2009 Budget, particularly for its “strong element of social responsibility” as the “key to navigating the recession safely is that paid employment does not collapse”.

The wider anxieties thrown up by the recession also made headlines. Losses made by Singapore’s investment company Temasek Holdings sparked a public



Turbulence: When it happened I was shocked (The Sunday Times, October 19, 2008, Page 8).

ST FILE PHOTO

outcry and a call for them to be more open about their major investment decisions.

In an analysis published on Nov 1, 2008, The Straits Times observed that the worst financial crisis in living memory had precipitated new political implications: increased citizen activism, shaken trust in established institutions and calls for stronger employment and social safety nets.

There was also heightened doubt about the risks involved in high-profile and capital-intensive projects such as the integrated resorts, which were prone to global volatility



**Marina Bay Sands integrated resort looms large in this picture taken in December 2009.**


ST PHOTO: NG SOR LUAN

and regional competition while being dependent on foreign capital and skills. Against these downsides, there was also a renewed appreciation for the Government's prudent and conservative yet compassionate fiscal



policies, like safeguards preventing excessive speculation in financial and property markets and jobs schemes designed to encourage employers to retain their workers. By mid-2009, another scary economic episode in Singapore's history had been successfully navigated.

If there are any lasting lessons to draw from grappling with a downturn as steep as the 2008 recession or as deep as the 1930s Great Depression, the most useful one is probably that there is no inoculation available.

Economists and governments continue to chase their version of the holy grail – how to create solid, steady growth, with no booms and no busts. It remains elusive. The Straits Times, meanwhile, will continue to do what it has been doing: spotting trends, cultivating broad economic literacy among readers, always urging and acting with the continued success of Singapore and its people at heart. 



# THE WAR YEARS







This photo taken in 1942 shows a thatched house on fire after a Japanese air raid. PHOTO: ARGUS NEWSPAPER COLLECTION OF PHOTOGRAPHS, STATE LIBRARY OF VICTORIA; <http://handle.slv.vic.gov.au/10381/68777>





The Kranji War Cemetery in Woodlands Road, the final resting place of those who perished in the battle fields during World War II.

ST PHOTO: LYDIA VASKO

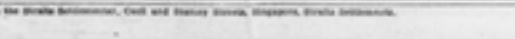
**F**riday, Jan 30, 1942: Greta Garbo's Mata Hari was showing at Singapore's first air-conditioned cinema, the Alhambra in Beach Road. At the Raffles Hotel, there was a dinner and dance, lasting till midnight.

The advice for those intending to drive on that day cut to the chase: "Keep windows open to reduce flying glass. By day, keep moving until you see pedestrians,



World War II had broken out in the Pacific and Britain's

Very little of the ominous signs of disaster, however, showed on Page 1



of Malaya's largest-selling newspaper. The Straits Times splashed not the latest battlefront news, but advertisements. This had been the newspaper's standard practice for nearly 100 years, since its founding in 1845.

Excusable or not, that Friday, the advertisements

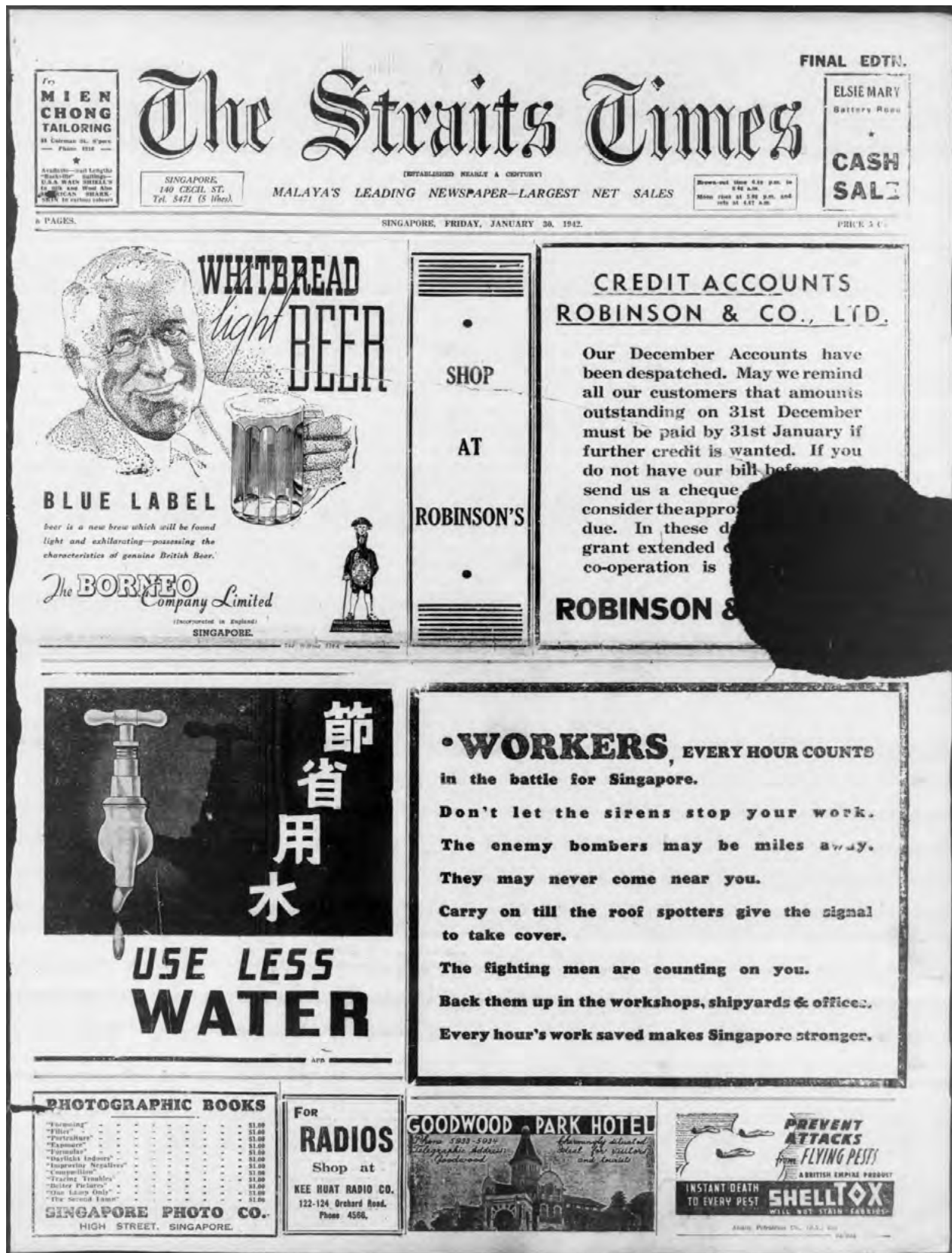
(left) were for Whitbread Light Beer, Robinson's department store and Goodwood Park Hotel.

The sole reminder of war on Page 1 was a short notice addressing workers: "Don't let sirens stop your work. The enemy bombers may be miles away."

If you turned the page, the Alhambra and Raffles advertisements would catch your eye.

A war-boostered economy could underwrite such promises of gaiety

without much difficulty. But the incongruity could not be carried far. But the merry advertisements sat oddly





## TIMELINE

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### 1941

**Dec 8**

At 3am, Japan begins its conquest of Malaya by bombing Singapore

**Dec 10**

Japanese bombers sink two battleships off the coast of Kuantan. The HMS Prince of Wales and HMS Repulse were sent to defend Singapore.

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### 1942

**Jan 28**

British military officer Arthur Percival, who is in charge of the Malaya Command, orders troops to withdraw from Malaya to Singapore by Jan 31.

**Jan 31**

Johor Causeway dynamited

**Feb 15**

Britain surrenders Singapore to Japan; the last issue of The Straits Times is published.

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### 1945

**Sept 5**

Allied troops land in Singapore after World War II ends.

**Sept 7**

The Straits Times resumes publication.

**Sept 12**

Japan surrenders officially, bringing the Occupation to an end.

next to an appeal for men and women between the ages of 17 and 55 to go to the Medical College to “Give Your Blood to Save an Air Raid Victim”.

Only on Page 4 – in the eighth paragraph of a report headlined BATTLE OF JOHORE, did readers learn that an air raid two days earlier had killed 105 people and injured 243 in Singapore. Although a curfew had been imposed across the island on this day, the news was delivered only on Page 6, next to a short item that cautioned against believing in rumours of riots between the Malays and Chinese in Johor Baru.

A far longer report highlighted the remarkable record of a Royal Air Force Hurricane fighter pilot who in a week had shot down a Japanese bomber over Singapore skies, destroyed two enemy aircraft, tackled three other bombers and silenced three rear-gunners.

It was the 880th day of the war, The Straits Times kept count and displayed it in a line above its editorial.

A day later, on Jan 31, 1942, the Causeway was blown up. Singapore came under siege.



The rear guard of the defending British forces in Malaya withdrew to Singapore and the Causeway was blown up on January 31, 1942.

PHOTO: AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

About a week later, Japanese soldiers would swim ashore. And in a fortnight, Britain's Lieutenant-General Arthur Percival (left), helming the Malaya Command, would wave the white flag and surrender Singapore to Japan.



The many battles lost, the widespread destruction and the steadily mounting casualties were deliberately muted in The Straits Times to keep panic low and morale high as the situation grew increasingly desperate. Wartime newspapers everywhere followed that policy.



**This 1942 photo shows workmen clearing rubble after a Japanese air raid.** PHOTO: ARGUS NEWSPAPER COLLECTION OF PHOTOGRAPHS, STATE LIBRARY OF VICTORIA; <http://handle.slv.vic.gov.au/10381/68777>

The first Japanese air strikes on Singapore in the early hours of Dec 8, 1941, for instance, saw bombs falling on Chinatown, Raffles Place and the Seletar and Tengah airfields, killing 61 people and injuring 133. The Straits Times, in its edition that very afternoon (it would become a morning newspaper after the War) saw it as a duty to quote





**Japanese Imperial army soldiers cycle from Malaya to Singapore during their invasion of the country during World War II.** PHOTO: IMPERIAL WAR MUSEUM



**A photograph of soldiers from the Malay Regiment who fought against the invading Japanese forces.** PHOTO: NATIONAL ARCHIVES OF SINGAPORE

official reports and said: “Slight damage was done and there were a few casualties”. The “excellent work” of the volunteers who cleared debris and sent the casualties to hospital was applauded.

The newspaper kept morale up in other ways too. It regularly asked readers to help with civil defence duties and its staff took on those roles too. It also raised \$6 million through

a war fund which, among others, helped buy bombers that were used against the Nazis. The triumphs of these “war fund aircraft” were told in dispatches from Europe.

On Feb 13, the day Yamashita moved his headquarters to the Ford Motor Factory in Bukit Timah, The Straits Times reported that the Japanese “have suffered huge casualties in Singapore”. The newspaper had by then been reduced to a single news-sheet. Some staffers had been mobilised for active duty in the war and others juggled their jobs with civil



defence duties. Still, the paper appeared each day, thin and grim as any wartime survivor.

On Feb 15, the day a bomb attack on Collyer Quay caused chaos and left trails of burning cars, The Straits Times put out its last pre-war issue with the headline: "Strong

Jap pressure (left); defence strongly maintained". The Japanese Occupation of Singapore had begun. At least seven Straits Times staffers died during the War, among them chief reporter Ivan Palmer who was killed while serving with the Australian air-force in the Middle East.

Five days later, the Japanese were putting out their own English-language newspaper from The Straits Times premises, employing several of its former technicians and recruiting some local journalists. Deriving its title





# THE SHONAN TIMES

No. 1.

FEBRUARY 20,

SHOWA 17.

5 cents.

## JAPAN'S POSITION IMPREGNABLE

### Effect Of Fall Of Singapore

Gen. Shunroku Hata Issues Verbal Statement

GEN. Shunroku Hata, Commander-in-Chief, Japanese Forces in China, in a verbal statement at 3:30 p.m. Wednesday, said that with the fall of Singapore, Japan is now strongly established in an impregnable position to conduct the current war. Both Britain and the United States can no longer wage an offensive war against Japan in the South-west Pacific.

### British Reverses In Malaya Political Blunder In Colonies

Stockholm. THREE series of British reverses in Malaya is due to a British political blunder in her colonies. The London Times Wednesday said the British Government's interest only to the opinion of its members in Malaya, and the Asiatic population remained only as spectators of the war. A correspondent reveals that the fall of Singapore is another indication of British ineffectiveness. The natives in Malaya have always had an intense anti-British feeling.

### British Aircraft Carrier Damaged

Labon. A BRITISH aircraft carrier limped into the Gulf of Cebu after repairs yesterday, according to information received here. Five ships have been torpedoed by Axis submarines in the Dutch West Indies, says a report from London on Wednesday.

### AMERICANS' DARK DAYS

Bureau Aires. Senator Tom Connolly, chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, told the Upper House that the Americans were having dark days in East Asia, and warned that there were still darker days ahead. He asked the nation to be prepared to meet hardships, adding that the nature of the war in East Asia demanded close co-operation between the U.S. Army and Navy commands but not necessarily with the United Command.

### BATAVIA APPEALS TO AUSTRALIA

Berna, Switzerland. WITH the Japanese attack on the Dutch East Indies increasing from the land, sea and air, Batavia has appealed to Australia for immediate aid, a United Press dispatch from Sydney reveals. The Australian Parliament was to-day summoned to discuss ways and means to satisfy the Batavia request, the

Joint action by Britain, America, Australia, India, China, and the Dutch East Indies has now collapsed to its very foundations. The Chungking regime, which has so far continued its resistance in concert with the Anglo-American powers, has been deprived of important bases and can no longer be able to keep up its resistance. By sending its troops into Burma, the Chungking regime shows it attaches much importance to the Burma Road, but this road is destined to be completely cut off in the near future. It is now high time for Chungking to cease its meaningless resistance. If this resistance continues, the Chungking regime will be completely wiped out. Japanese operations in central Shanxi Province in China, which is aimed at the annihilation of the remnants of the Chinese troops there, have reached its climax. After capturing Yuchuan, Japanese units are steadily pushing their cordon around the enemy.

Following the fall of Singapore, Japanese forces have captured two small surrounding islands—Balei and Bandoe. On tanks have been seized by the Japanese. Japanese naval air forces are busy over the approaches to Shonan Island. Large formations of naval bombers and pursuit planes conducted increased reconnaissance for enemy vessels.

### REDS SMASHED BY GERMANS

Berlin. AS a result of the thrust by German forces in the central sector of the Eastern Front, another powerful corps of the Red forces has been smashed with heavy losses. The Germans captured many prisoners and much war material.

### PUBLIC NOTICE

The Nippon Authority of Police Shonan draft following persons to report for duty.  
1. Workers and Engineers of Gas, Electric, works and those connected with Broadways. They should report for duty at the Nippon Administration Office at the Municipal Building, Singapore, immediately.  
2. The civilians are requested to clean the and compounds near their houses.  
3. Blackened will be observed as usual.

THE ADMINISTRATION BUREAU  
JAPANESE IMPERIAL POLICE

### Australia Further Isolated

Saigon. AUSTRALIA will be further isolated from the United States. Canberra announced today the suspension of radio telephone service with these countries with effect from Feb. 21. The Department of the Post Master-General says that the step has been decided upon by the War Cabinet for reasons of security. It is pointed out that the Australian radio telephone service to other countries has already been suspended.

### Enemy Destroyer Sunk Yesterday

A FEW enemy destroyers were sighted to the south of Shonan Island. One was sunk while a second received several hits. Two enemy transports were also sighted, of which one was sunk. Meanwhile, it is reported that Japanese airmen accounted for 12 enemy planes over Java Sea during the past nine days from Feb. 3 to Feb. 17.

### ENEMY HANG DESTROYED

THE British Broadland position, quoting a Reuters dispatch, stated that warplanes raided Koepa today.

### U.S. NATIONALS DUTCH EAST INDIES

A large number of U.S. nationals have been taken from the Dutch East Indies in the past few weeks. Only 100 Americans, the Dutch East Indies report.

THE SHONAN TIMES

FEBRUARY 20, SHOWA 17.

### OUR FIRST ISSUE

To Our Friends—The People Of Malaya

In this fortress of Singapore (Shonan) and the Peninsula of Malaya, all arms and military objectives are under the control of the Nippon troops.

The Press, which is the most powerful organ for the expression of views, comes under the domination of the Nippon troops. By the wish of the Chief Nippon Commander, we are issuing the Shonan Times.

It is the wish of the Commander that the civilization of the people here shall be preserved, and that they shall enjoy good fortune and happiness with the restoration of peaceful conditions.

The policy of justice, righteousness and cunning shall disappear automatically, just as the smoke of the burning fortress is fast disappearing, and there shall arise in its place the green of the New Order which will manifest itself.

### First War Anniversary Issue

[Telephone 5471] **The Syonan Sinbun** [English Edition]

No. 1 TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 20, SHOWA 17

### Imperial Navy Sinks 262 Enemy Warships During Past Year

Syonan Sinbun Issues First Edition Today In Japanese, English NON-PROFIT NEWSPAPER

WITH its first issue this morning, the Syonan Sinbun officially made its debut in Malaya. The Syonan Sinbun will publish a Japanese newspaper daily except Sundays, while an afternoon edition in English, supplementing the Syonan Times will also be published six days a week.

The publication today of the Syonan Sinbun is the result of the completion of the work of the Japanese Government in Malaya. The Japanese Government has decided to publish a newspaper in Malaya to inform the people of the progress of the war and to promote the Japanese cause. The Syonan Sinbun will be published in Japanese and English, and will be a non-profit newspaper.

### Congratulatory Messages From Cabinet Ministers

THE Japanese Cabinet has today sent congratulatory messages to the Japanese Government in Malaya. The messages were sent by the Prime Minister, the Foreign Minister, the War Minister, the Navy Minister, the Education Minister, the Health Minister, the Agriculture Minister, the Commerce Minister, the Finance Minister, the Justice Minister, the Labour Minister, the Social Welfare Minister, the Religious Affairs Minister, the Colonial Affairs Minister, and the Privy Council.

### Syonan Mayor's Message On Occasion Of War Anniversary

THE Mayor of Syonan has today sent a message to the Japanese Government in Malaya on the occasion of the first anniversary of the Japanese Government in Malaya. The message was sent by the Mayor, and was a congratulatory message to the Japanese Government.

### Aoki Declares Co-operation And Unity Will Win War

THE Japanese Minister of War, Aoki, has today declared that co-operation and unity will win the war. Aoki said that the Japanese Government in Malaya will co-operate with the Japanese Government in Japan, and that the Japanese Government in Malaya will be united with the Japanese Government in Japan.

### Declaration By All Newspapers In Malaya

ALL the newspapers in Malaya have today issued a declaration of support for the Japanese Government in Malaya. The declaration was issued by the Japanese Government in Malaya, and was a statement of support for the Japanese Government.

### Message Dispatched To Nippon Embassy

A message has today been dispatched to the Nippon Embassy in Malaya. The message was sent by the Japanese Government in Malaya, and was a congratulatory message to the Japanese Government.

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### IMPERIAL RESCRIPT

BY the grace of heaven, Emperor of Japan, seated on the Throne of a line extending for more than 2,000 years, in the first year of the Great East Asia War, which is unprecedented in the history of naval warfare, revealed in a Daimo computer review for the past 12 months, since a total of 262 enemy warships sunk, 155 warships damaged and 3,798 aircraft shot down, 2,510,000 tons of shipping, aggregating 2,510,000 tons, captured, and 501 vessels, totalling 220,000 tons, captured, and 3,798 aircraft shot down or damaged.

### 3,798 AIRCRAFT SHOT DOWN OR DAMAGED DURING PERIOD

Brilliant Achievements Unparalleled In History

THE Japanese Imperial Navy has today announced that it has sunk 262 enemy warships during the past year. The Japanese Imperial Navy has also announced that it has shot down 3,798 enemy aircraft and damaged 155 enemy warships.

### Axis Ambassadors Had Nippon Feasts

THE Japanese Government has today announced that it has given a feast to the Axis Ambassadors in Malaya. The feast was given by the Japanese Government in Malaya, and was a congratulatory feast to the Axis Ambassadors.

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from the name the Japanese gave to Singapore, Syonan or Light of the South, it was called The Shonan Times (left), later replaced by The Syonan Shimbun (below).

When the war ended, many journalists dashed to the newspaper's office in Cecil Street to fend off looters. And after repairing the badly

**The Syonan Sinbun** [English Edition]  
TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 20, SHOWA 17  
Imperial Navy Sinks 262 Enemy Warships During Past Year  
3,798 AIRCRAFT SHOT DOWN OR DAMAGED DURING PERIOD  
Brilliant Achievements Unparalleled In History  
Nippon's Naval Strength Growing Steadily Since War  
Syonan Mayor's Message On Occasion Of War Anniversary  
Aoki Declares Co-operation And Unity Will Win War  
Message Dispatched To Nippon Embassy  
Axis Ambassadors Had Nippon Feasts  
Declaration By All Newspapers In Malaya  
Public Notice  
The Nippon Authority of Police Shonan draft following persons to report for duty.  
1. Workers and Engineers of Gas, Electric, works and those connected with Broadways. They should report for duty at the Nippon Administration Office at the Municipal Building, Singapore, immediately.  
2. The civilians are requested to clean the and compounds near their houses.  
3. Blackened will be observed as usual.  
THE ADMINISTRATION BUREAU  
JAPANESE IMPERIAL POLICE





Lord Louis Mountbatten, the Supreme Allied Commander of South-east Asia Command, accepts the surrender of the Japanese Southern Army from General Seishiro Itagaki in Singapore on September 12, 1945. With that the occupation officially ended. PHOTO: NATIONAL ARCHIVES OF SINGAPORE

damaged printing press, they brought out the first post war edition of the newspaper on Sept 7, 1945, (next page, left) just two days after allied troops landed in Singapore.

The Straits Times was back in business (next page, right). But it was a different newspaper. Most noticeably, Page 1 no longer carried just advertisements, but major news. Newsprint was scarce, for one thing, so advertisements were banned. In any case, there was little to advertise in the ravaged economy. In another break from tradition, The Straits Times began to be published in the morning.

The biggest transformation, however, was in its outlook. The age of the empires had ended and The Straits Times





offered glimpses of Asia's comeback. In the newsroom, the evolving power balance was reflected in the paper's Malayanisation policy – doors were opened for Asians, not just the Europeans, to enter senior editorial positions. It mirrored the larger shifts taking place in Singapore society, as the levers of power and commerce changed hands after WW II. The Alhambra cinema, where Greta Garbo's Mata Hari played before Singapore fell to the Japanese, was acquired by the ambitious Shaw Brothers in the 1950s. It was eventually demolished to make way for the Shaw Towers in 1974. **ST**

# RISKING DEATH TO GET THE NEWS

**News was scarce during the Japanese Occupation of Singapore, from 1942 to 1945.** Families who tuned in to the radio for news from the BBC risked being tortured or killed if found out by the Japanese.



War survivor Chew Chin Hin (left) recalls his father and six friends taking the chance – but not without precautions.

At least two of the group members would stand watch outside the Akyab Road home of their friend, while the rest huddled round the radio.

The strategy kept them safe because, unknown to them, the Japanese were watching their every move, recalled Dr Chew, 84, emeritus consultant at Tan Tock Seng Hospital. He was then 11.

“One day, the men standing guard spotted a man climbing a coconut tree with a pair of binoculars to see what was going on inside the house. One of those on guard quietly went inside and told the rest to conceal the radio.”

His father Benjamin Chew, also a physician, was a good pianist. “He started playing the piano and the others gathered round and sang,” recounted Dr Chew, whose family lived in a bungalow in Jalan Tan Tock Seng during the Occupation. Following the scare, the men stopped listening to the radio for a few weeks. “If they had been caught, that would mean the torture chamber at the YMCA,” Dr Chew said. The much-feared Kempeitai, or Japanese military police, were headquartered at the YMCA in Orchard Road, where interrogations and torture were carried out.

For families without a radio, information came by way of chatter at markets or from friends, neighbours and even strangers.



“Even when meeting someone you knew slightly, you would ask what’s going on.

And when a stranger talked, you’d listen,” recalled Mr Wong Hiong Boon (left), 86, a retired art teacher who lives in a Housing Board flat in Ang Mo Kio. A 13-year-old boy then, he and his family lived in his

aunt’s attap house on stilts in Lowland Road, where Kovan MRT



station now stands.

Most people did not read the Japanese newspapers, including The Syonan Shimbun, as the reports were viewed as propaganda.



Ms Pearlyn Verge's (left) family, however, found them a useful ploy for showing their allegiance to Japan. "We bought the paper and put it on the table, making it look like we were reading it," says Ms Verge, 85, who lived in a Telok Kurau bungalow during the war years.

Newspapers returned to being a reliable source of information after the Japanese surrendered in 1945, but many families could not afford them.

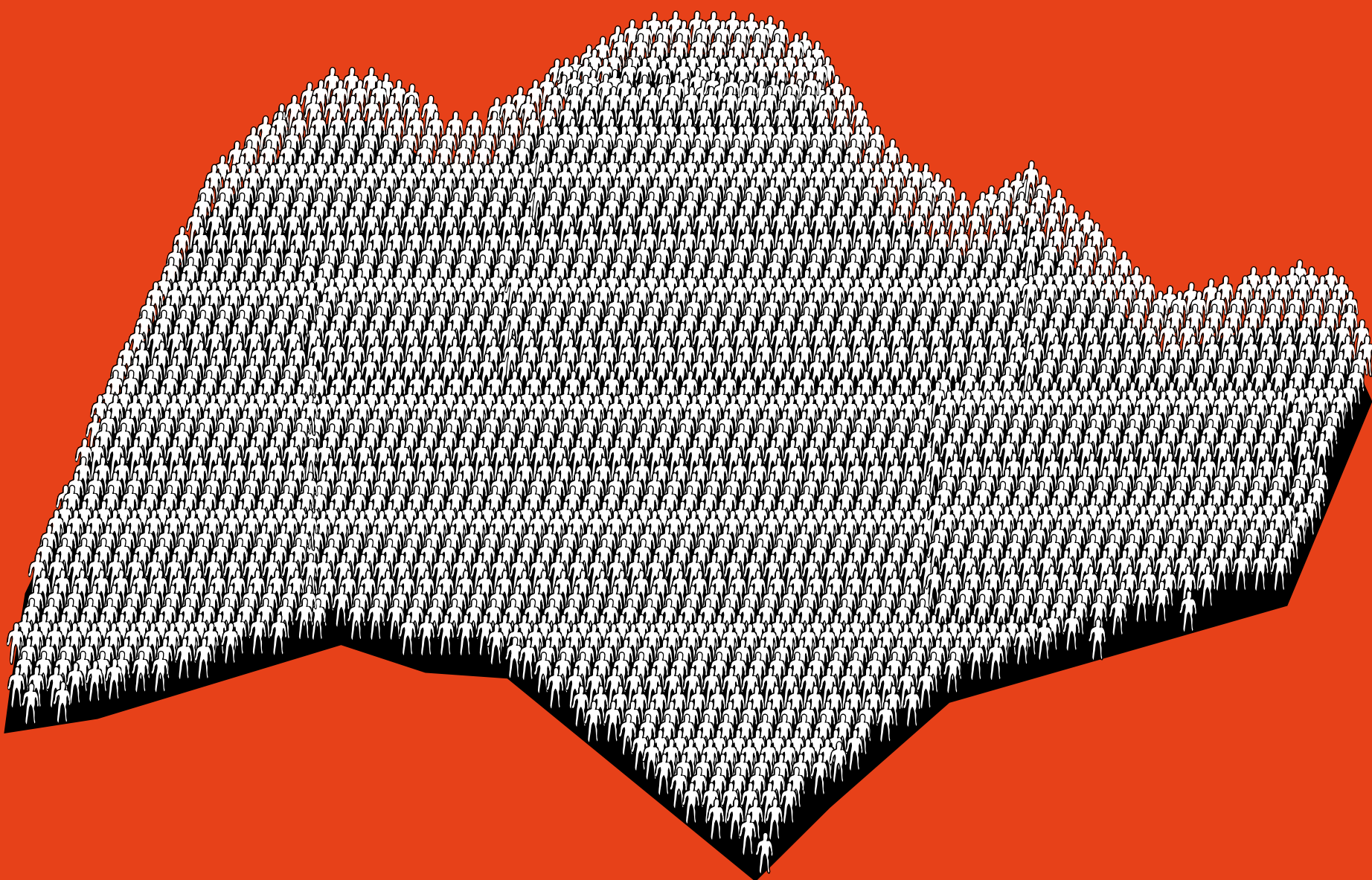


Retired army major Foong Fook Kay (left), 81, said that as a young boy, he got the news from a co-tenant who occasionally bought a daily newspaper. Their families lived in makeshift rooms in a Neil Road flat.

Like everyone, his education was interrupted by the war and it was only at age 17, when he returned to school, that he picked up his first newspaper.

For Ms Verge, the habit of reading The Straits Times began at age 16: "Until today, I swear by its news."

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INDEPENDENCE  
DAY





Thousands took part in the National Day Parade in front of the City Hall on August 9, 1966. The parade marched along St Andrew's Road and then proceeded along a route which included North Bridge, South Bridge and Tanjong Pagar Roads. A week of celebrations marked the first anniversary of Singapore's independence. ST FILE PHOTO





The crowd waves scarves with Singapore colours at the 47th National Day celebrations held at The Float@Marina Bay in 2012.

ST PHOTO: JASON QUAH

It came like a thunderclap in the very first hour of trading, when jittery traders on a hair trigger are looking for direction – when no news is good news. The sudden, dramatic announcement of Singapore’s exit from Malaysia set off a bout of nervous selling at the Singapore stock exchange.

That much was no surprise.

The surprise lay in the speed of the turnaround: By afternoon, the market was already “mildly optimistic” and significant buying was seen. By evening, hundreds of



It was a different world a few pages later. The economics writers might as well have been reporting on a different country. A new wave of confidence had deposited the priceless gem of optimism on the

**2/16**



exchange. They coined a name for it: the independence boom. And it was building.

By Day 2, the “buying wave” had made it to Page 1.

“Twice during the day, it was necessary for officials to

suspend trading to allow brokers’ clerks to clear the avalanche of contracts,” said the report headlined “Exchange booms on Singapore’s independence”.

The rally was something of a spectacle, riveting because of the contrast thrown up by other dramatic events in the public eye like Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew’s press conference, which was called three hours after the separation became a

reality. Mr Lee showed steely resignation as the cherished merger with Malaysia came undone. Yet, he could not stop the tears when he declared: “What has happened has happened. But be firm and calm.”

The stock exchange, set up in 1930, held not only firm and calm, but also displayed signs of exuberance. In the days that followed, it effectively became the first Singaporean institution to embrace the new fledgling state and declare its economic viability. It did that in the most resounding way possible: through the interplay of free market forces.

“A larger crowd than has been seen for a very long time packed the Singapore public gallery to watch exchange clerks desperately trying to keep bids, offers and business



**At his press conference on the day Singapore’s separation with Malaysia was announced, Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew called on people to remain firm and calm. ST PHOTO: ALI YUSOFF**



done up to date on the board,” reported The Straits Times on Aug 11, 1965.

“Brokers’ clerks shouted themselves hoarse and, at about 11am, several brokers’ representatives in the trading room

found it necessary to call on their offices for reinforcements.

“Turnover reached a level not experienced since the boom days of 1963.”

One obvious reason was Mr Lee’s unambiguous statement, during his press conference, that Singapore will trade with anyone, capitalist or communist, friend or foe. “We are prepared to trade with anybody. Including Russia, China and

even Indonesia. If they want to trade with us – just trade,” he was reported as saying.

Indonesia’s violent Konfrontasi policy against Malaysia had brought bilateral trade with Singapore to a standstill.

Survival was the core theme of Mr Lee’s press conference as everything about independent Singapore was open to doubt.

Would the newborn nation hold up against far larger, more powerful neighbours whose intentions were guardedly indifferent at best and hostile at worst? Was a multi-ethnic, multi-cultural nation viable when communal riots had only recently receded from the headlines? And, most importantly, what kind of future could a resource-poor island, without drinking water of its own and cut loose from a hinterland it



The Singapore Stock Exchange. ST PHOTO: LIM YAOHUI

depended on for trade, aspire to?

The question was addressed plainly by Mr Lee. Malaysia, he said, had assured him that economic cooperation would continue. He also did not let the raw emotion of the separation divert him from policy, focusing on details to a degree that could only have encouraged the markets.

He abolished Malaysia's "turnover tax" and declared that the Bank of China, which played an important role in Singapore's trade with China, could continue to operate. The bank had been ordered closed by Malaysia. He also wanted restrictions on the sale of Singapore-made tyres in Malaysia to be lifted. "I don't want to rush these things... but there must be a quid pro quo," he said.

It also helped that the market knew Mr Lee, who became Singapore's first prime minister in 1959, as a pragmatist. It had no doubt that he meant business.

But perhaps the most important reason for the optimism was the promise of stability that the finality of separation offered. The political uncertainty of the preceding months had come to an end.

Outside the bourse, there was a national sense of a fait accompli. An Aug 11 editorial noted that the dominant mood in the two countries was of "grief and regret, merging into an awareness that... there exists no practical alternative". In tacit acknowledgement of the politically volatile situation, owing to the presence of opposition groups such as the Barisan Socialis, the paper lashed out at groups that expressed elation over the failure of merger for their "thoroughly short-sighted reasons".

Such groups included pro-communist parties as well as "minor opposition parties" which were accused of spewing

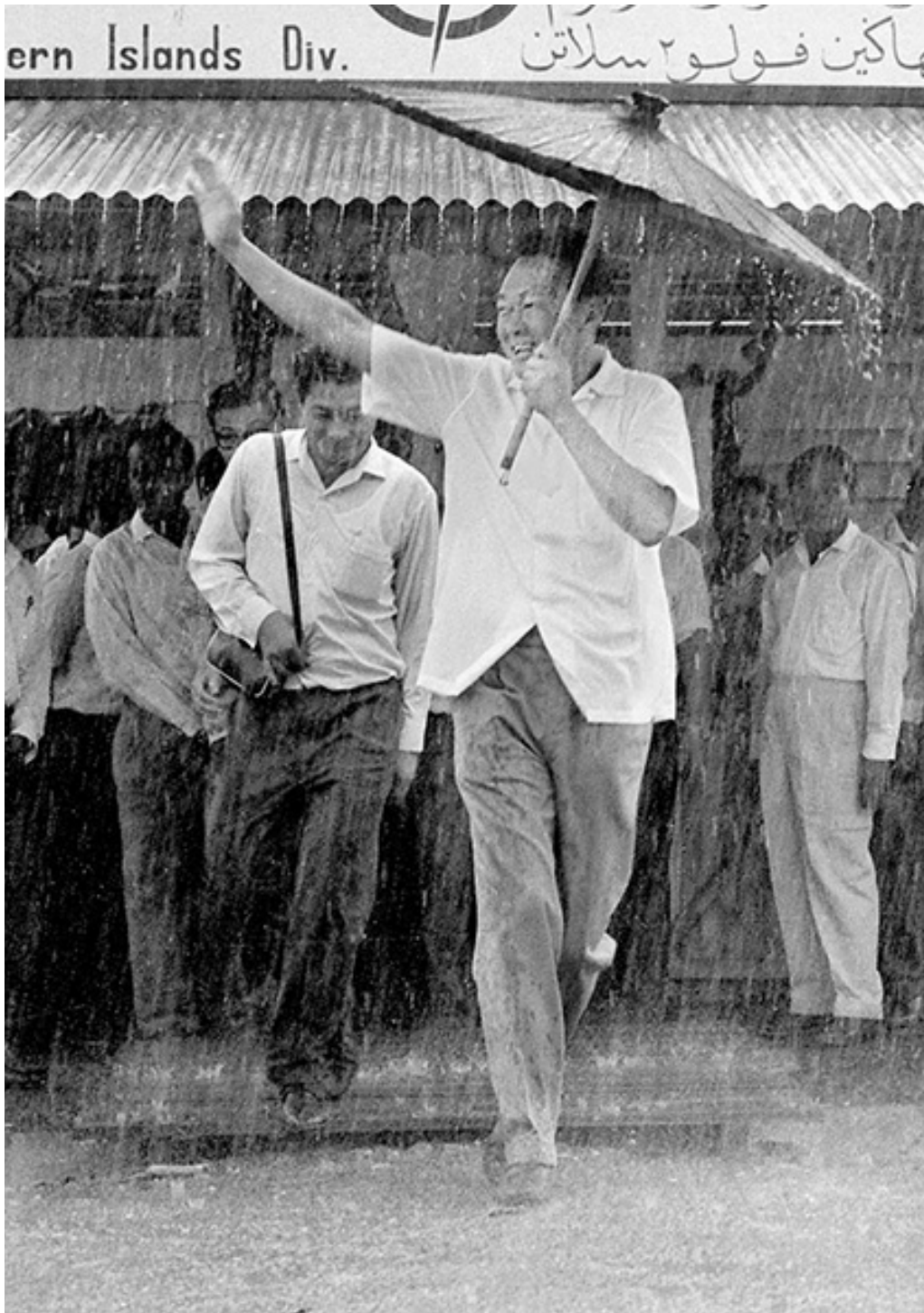


The new reality was perhaps best exemplified by Ms

“Now, what am I?”

**6/16**





Mr Lee steps into the rain at the opening of a new People Action Party branch at Pulau Bukom Kechil, part of the Southern Islands, on April 3, 1966. ST FILE PHOTO

## SURVIVAL TO PROSPERITY

At Singapore's first National Day in 1966, Mr Lee warned Singaporeans not to take what they had for granted, stressing the need for the country to remain a "robust and rugged society" even as he predicted an "easier year ahead".

On the second anniversary, the same mood of vigilance and wariness amid affirmation of national progress and unity pervaded the National Day celebrations. But stirrings of national identity began to emerge. While decorations illustrated Singapore's vision of a "rugged society", greater

emphasis was placed on local identity.

By 1970, Singapore seemed to have turned a corner as emphasis was placed on economic progress rather than mere survival.

Mr Lee, at a National Day dinner, observed that in 1965 the problem was one of survival. "Now, it is the problem of continued prosperity which requires greater security."





The National Day Parade in front of the City Hall on August 9, 1966. It included representatives from the army, navy, police, youth groups, cultural societies, service organisations and schools.

ST FILE PHOTO

At Singapore's 10th anniversary in 1975, he hailed the decade as "probably the most spectacular" since Singapore came under British colonial rule.

The country's gross domestic product had risen threefold. The city looked transformed, with new buildings, roads, flyovers, homes and factories.

But the Government warned citizens against being lulled into a sense of complacency. In his characteristically blunt manner, Mr Lee expressed concern over the indifference of the younger generation in mastering a job.

"If you want to do your children good, make sure they don't lose the work ethic." 

# THE WEEK BEFORE SEPARATION

A reconstruction of events which turned a rebel state into a reluctant republic. By **LESLIE FONG**.  
Illustrations by **JOSE TENCE RUIZ**.

# D

AWN broke at 6.35 am on August 9, 1965. In a rented room on the first floor of an old shophouse in Cambridge Road, radio and television producer Foong Choon Hon was tossing and turning in his sleep, which had not come easily. It had been like that for weeks. Like most other politically attuned Singaporeans, he had followed with increasing trepidation the very public and very bitter quarrel between Singapore and Malaysian leaders over the

kind of Malaysia they wanted. Singapore was fighting for a Malaysia for all races; Umno, the senior partner in the Alliance government, perceived that as a threat to Malay dominance. Such had been the acrimony that some Malaysian politicians were calling openly for the arrest of all the Singapore leaders. With memories of the communal riots in 1963 and 1964 still fresh, the question that had gnawed at Mr Foong and so many others was: Where was it going to lead Singapore?

The answer came in a way he could not have imagined even in his wildest dream. Suddenly, the bedside telephone installed at official expense rang. He woke with a start. The voice at the other end identified himself as Teo, personal assistant to the Prime Minister. Mr Foong was to present himself at

the PMO in City Hall by 8 am.

Being so summoned was not exactly new to the broadcaster, whose deep, mellifluous voice and impeccable pronunciation of Mandarin had, by that time, made him a household name with Chinese listeners. He had been doubling as translator for Mr Lee Kuan Yew. Still, he thought to himself, it was a little early to be called.

As he hurried onto the streets, he noted the overcast sky and paused, wondering if he should go back for an umbrella. Deciding against that, he hailed a taxi, his only means of transport to this day as he has never learnt to drive. The fare was \$1.80. Considering that he was to have a ringside seat at the making of history, it was cheap.

On arrival, he was handed a document to translate into Chinese. It was a

proclamation, signed by Mr Lee as Prime Minister, that Singapore would become "forever a sovereign democratic and independent nation, founded upon the principles of liberty and justice and ever seeking the welfare and happiness of her people in a more just and equal society". Mr Foong was dumbfounded. Though everyone knew that tension between Kuala Lumpur and Singapore had been rising, no one had thought a separation possible. It was so...so...unexpected! Though he had, as a current affairs producer, handled some big stories before, he knew for sure that this would be the most dramatic ever to come his way, the biggie to end all biggies.

Yet on catching his breath, the 37-year-old bachelor's first thought was to ring his brother, with whom



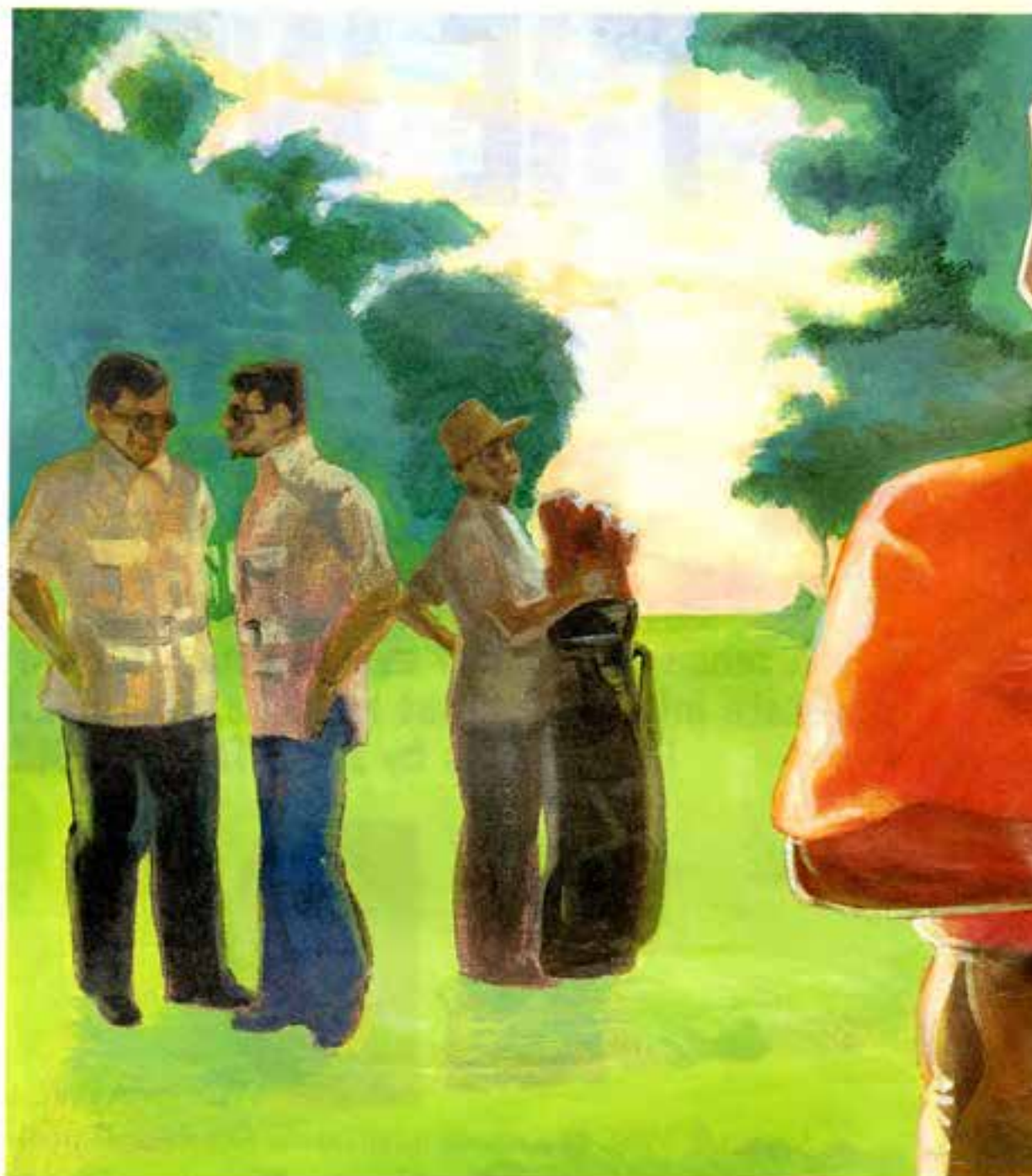
he was sharing the room, to say he was not likely to be home in time for dinner — such was the well-chronicled propensity of most people for thinking the most seemingly mundane things even at the height of a crisis. “But all telephone lines were disconnected, and all doors locked,” he recalls. “So I just got down to work.” He was held incommunicado so there could be no leaking of this shattering piece of news before 10 am, when it would be broadcast to the world.

Mr Foong, who has since retired from government service and is now a senior journalist with Shin Min Daily News, was not the only one to have found himself in that strange position at the time. Some 20 Government Printing Office employees had been locked in from the night before to produce thousands of copies of the Gazette notice containing the proclamation. Absolute secrecy was absolutely necessary, and absolute secrecy was indeed maintained — right till the end. Only those who needed to know were told beforehand, and these were kept to the barest minimum.

Thus even Mr George Bogaars, at the time 38 and Director of Special Branch, did not know until virtually the 11th hour. He had had an inkling that something was in the air ever since Mr Lee had asked him a few days before what Singapore would require if it had to be responsible for its own internal security and defence. But it was just a hunch, no more. Mr Lee had spoken to him in general terms. “It was a very tightly kept secret,” says Mr Bogaars in his taped recollections for the Oral History Department. “I didn’t even get the impression that it was going to be a separation or a split. I just got the impression that a higher degree of autonomy would be given to us on the internal security side.”

So it was with much heightened expectation that he and some 20 other very senior officials, mostly permanent secretaries, gathered at the Government Guest House in the Istana grounds that Aug 9 morning. They had been summoned by Cabinet Secretary Wong Chooi Sen to an important briefing by the Prime Minister. That was all they were told, recalls Mr Bogaars, adding that while he could, at best, guess that something drastic was going to be announced, he got the distinct impression even then that Mr Stanley Stewart, Head of the Singapore Civil Service, already knew. Having arrived early, the officials had some time to kill.

So they found themselves engaging in desultory conversation as anxiety slowly gripped them, much like an invisible



hand at the throat. Presently, the Prime Minister came and told them. He stayed only long enough to give them a broad outline of what was going to happen. And then off he went.

Mr Bogaars recalls: “It was like a cocktail reception, we were standing around. My first reaction was, thank God, it’s over. I no longer have two bosses, I could report directly to the PM, no more the Tunku.”

In Kuala Lumpur, Mr Sim Kee Boon, Singapore’s representative and one of three deputy chairmen in the Tariff Advisory Commission, learnt of his country’s independence only from his secretary, who had heard it on the news. He was then a month short of 36 and into his second year in the commission chasing after that elusive common market for all Malaysian states.

What he later found rather ironic, he now recalls, was this. One day, he was busy harmonising tariffs among all Malaysia’s territories. And the next, he was out, recalled to Singapore as Permanent Secretary of the Finance Ministry — only to return to KL within a week to negotiate, from the other side of the table, the tariffs Singapore was

obliged to levy on certain Malaysian goods. But this was only one of the many, many adjustments, in outlook and behaviour, Singapore and Singaporeans had to make as a result of independence.

## THE FIRST SIGNS OF TROUBLE

When separation as just a seed of an idea was first sown in the mind of the then Malaysian Prime Minister, Tunku Abdul Rahman, is something historians will doubtless argue about. He himself thinks it had come to him when he was in a plane on the way to Sabah and Sarawak but cannot recall the date. Singapore’s former Law Minister, Mr Eddie Barker, now 69 and chairman of the Singapore Stock Exchange as well as the Bukit Turf Club, thinks the turning point was the debate on the Malaysian King’s Address in the Federal Parliament on May 27 that year.

Mr Lee was on his feet, speaking in

Malay on what Malaysia meant to him and his PAP colleagues and on Malay rights. “He spoke for about half an hour,” recalls Mr Barker, who was also in the House as one of 12 Singapore MPs. “There must have been about 500 or so in the House and in the gallery, but you could hear a pin drop. I think if they could have cheered, they would have.” Looking back, he thinks that was the moment when the Tunku, and his colleagues, felt it was better to have Singapore and Mr Lee out.

There followed a flurry of decisions and meetings in June and July, all noted in official records as well as *Struggle for Success*, Mr John Drysdale’s book on Singapore in the 1950s and 60s. In gist, the key developments were: first, the Tunku decided, when recuperating from shingles in a London hospital after attending the Commonwealth Prime Ministers’ Conference there in June, that a parting of ways was the only course. He had, as he said later, weighed the pros and cons of evicting Singapore. He had thought from A to Z and then from Z to A, he said. His “balance sheet” ran into several foolscap pages.





Tunku Abdul Rahman first told Dr Goh Keng Swee of his decision to kick Singapore out of Malaysia at a golf course.

Second, having so decided, he instructed his 43-year-old deputy, Tun Abdul Razak, to sound out other senior Malaysian ministers as well as lay the necessary groundwork.

Third, Tun Razak's parallel talks with Singapore leaders to seek an accommodation, even as preparations for a split were being made, came to naught. This, in effect, meant that Singapore's fate was sealed. By the first week of August, the die was cast.

The Tunku returned from London on Aug 5, three days before his 62nd birthday, and after conferring with Tun Razak and a small group of Malaysian ministers, decided to proceed. Tan Sri Khir Johari, at that time head of Umno in Singapore, says the decision — "the best-kept secret ever" — was known to only four persons: the Tunku, Tun Razak, Home Affairs Minister Dato (Dr) Ismail bin Dato Abdul Rahman and himself. "Tun Tan Siew Sin, Finance Minister at the time, came into the picture only later. We had to confine it to a very, very few." He adds:

"It was for the good of Singapore and for the good of our country. We meant no evil towards anybody."

Tan Sri Khir, 67, now a businessman, thinks the Tunku had more or less made up his mind even before he went to Britain. "We used to have informal discussions with the Tunku in his house, and he did sound out the three of us."

Though both the 1965 Singapore Yearbook and *Struggle for Success* have Aug 6 down as the day Dr Goh Keng Swee, then 46 and Singapore's Finance Minister, was officially told that Singapore must leave Malaysia, Tun Razak, in his earlier talks with Messrs Goh and Lee, must have let on enough for them not to be taken totally by surprise. Thus Mr Barker remembers being asked by Mr Lee at the end of July to draft a separation agreement.

The two had agreed that to prevent any leakage, the then Law Minister had best do it himself, involving no official, not even a stenographer. The only person he could call on for secretarial help was the Cabinet Secretary, Mr Wong, whose office was just next to Mr Barker's in City Hall.

And so Mr Barker went to work, preparing not only the draft agreement but also other legal documents dealing with matters consequent on a formal separation, such as the division of assets. He told no one, not even his wife. "When you work on a matter like this, you don't tell anybody," he says.

## AN ULTIMATUM IS DELIVERED

According to the Tunku, he broke the news to Dr Goh on the golf course. He cannot now remember when they spoke but believes it was in the afternoon. But this he does remember: "He respected my decision." Mr Barker's recollection is that he, Dr Goh and Mr Lee were scheduled to meet in KL that day. He had flown to the Malaysian capital that morning, while Dr Goh had taken the night train from Singapore on Aug 5 evening. Mr Lee was in the Cameron Highlands at the time.

Once the Tunku and his senior col-

leagues had made it clear they intended to go through with the split, there was much work to be done, the most important of which was to settle the terms of the separation. Dr Goh and Mr Barker represented Singapore in the negotiations. On the Malaysian side were Tun Razak, Dr Ismail and Attorney General Kadir Yusof. They first met in the late afternoon before adjourning to Sri Taman, Tun Razak's Lake Gardens home. Mr Barker had brought along his draft agreement, which Tun Razak and his colleagues read carefully, seeking clarification here and there. The two sides kept at it until Dr Goh said he wanted a break to return to Singapore House, a two-storey bungalow in the heart of KL which served as official residence for Singapore ministers when they were there. He was hungry. But Tun Razak told him not to bother.

"I'll give you dinner," he said. In fact, as Mr Barker recalls, Tun Razak added in jest: "I've told the policemen outside not to let you and Eddie go until I give permission." After dinner, they were joined by Tun Tan, the Finance Minister, and Mr V.T. Sambanthan, Minister for Works. ■



►► Posts and Telecommunications, who represented, respectively, the Malaysian Chinese Association and the Malaysian Indian Congress, Umino's partners in the Alliance government.

The negotiations went smoothly. Only a few amendments and insertions were made. The six of them — Dr Goh and Mr Barker for Singapore and Tun Razak, Dr Ismail, Tun Tan and Mr Sambanthan for Malaysia — signed the agreement just after midnight.

## A MIDNIGHT TYPIST IS SUMMONED

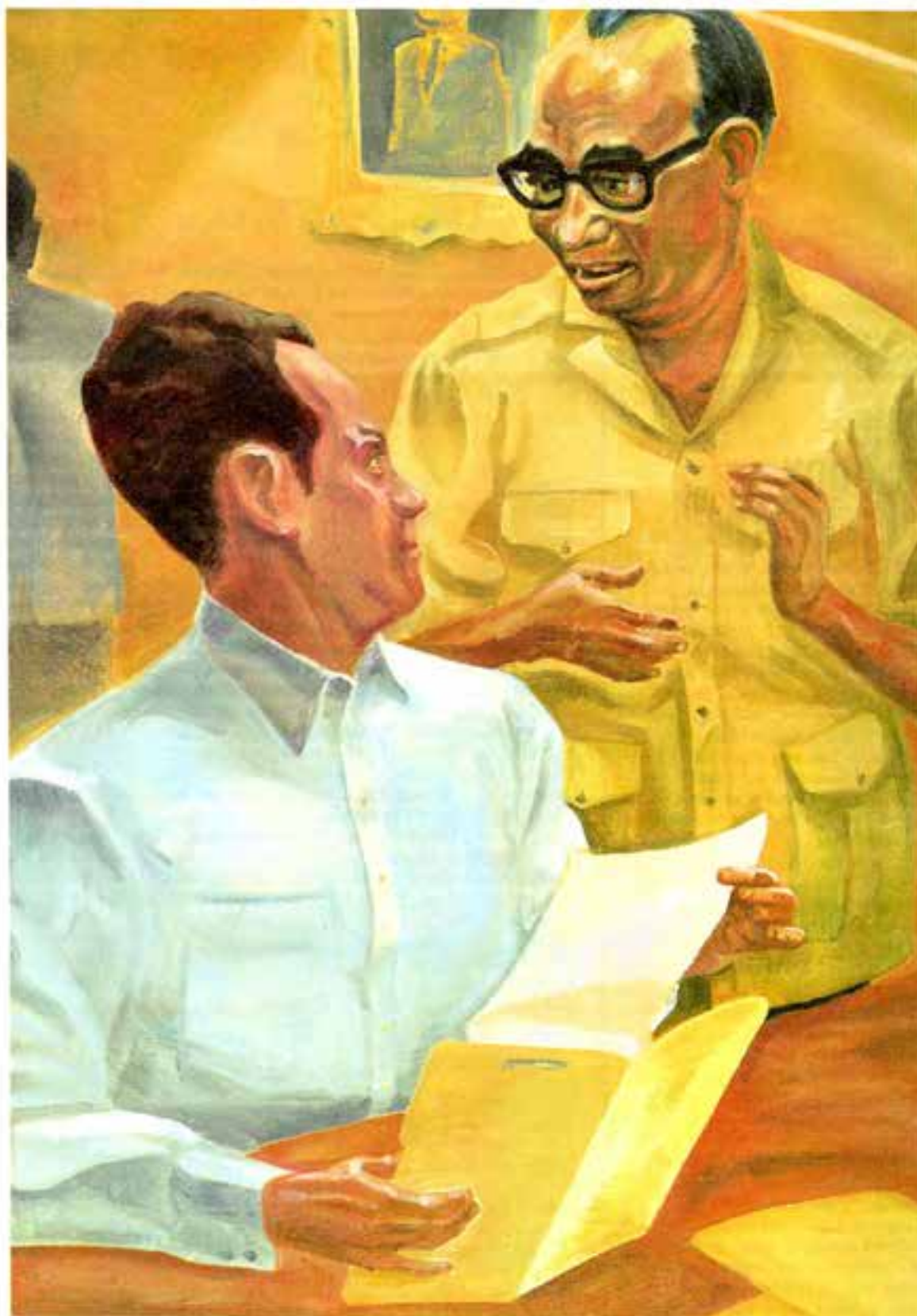
The final version, on Deputy Prime Minister's Office letterhead but with the word, Deputy, crossed out, was typed by Mr Teo Ban Hock, personal assistant to Mr Lee. He had to be summoned late in the night from Singapore House, to which he had returned from the Cameron Highlands together with the Prime Minister. A typist who had earlier been assigned the task had become so nervous he was making error after error.

Says Mr Barker: "To Ban Hock's credit, he did it in one go without making a single mistake." Mr Teo, 59, who retired from government service in November 1986 and is now a tennis coach, says he knew then that it was a very important occasion. But amid the excitement, the full import of those documents he was asked to type did not sink in. "I just typed away! I was more concerned with getting it right. I knew I couldn't afford to be nervous. I had to do it well."

When it came to signing, Tun Razak and his Malaysian colleagues were very swift about it. Mr Barker remembers: "When it came to my turn, I wanted to read the document again. Razak turned to me and said: 'Eddie, it's your draft, it's your chap who typed the final document, so what are you reading it for?' So I signed."

## THROUGH A MIST, DARKLY

In the meantime, Mr Lee, by then in KL, telephoned Deputy Prime Minister Toh Chin Chye and Culture Minister S. Rajaratnam in Singapore separately and asked them to drive up at once.



Tun Razak: 'Eddie, it's your draft, it's your chap who typed the final document, so what are you reading it for?' So Mr Barker signed it.

*Struggle for Success* quotes Dr Toh as having disclosed later that in that conversation, Mr Lee told him that an ultimatum had been given to Singapore — either it withdrew or the situation might run out of control.

But in his interview with *The Straits Times*, Dr Toh, who has since retired from politics and is now adviser to Steamers Maritime Holdings, cannot recall the Prime Minister being so explicit, just that he was to get to KL urgently. At that time, he was in a government bungalow in Goodwood Hill. So he telephoned for a car. By the time he, his driver and a bodyguard crossed the Causeway, it was already well past midnight. They drove

through a thick mist.

Dr Toh recalls: "My driver nearly ended up in a ditch because the car did not have any yellow fog light. So we had to go very slowly... Still, we arrived at Singapore House quite early, half past six, maybe." The moment he stepped into the bungalow, he was met by Mr Lee and told the news. Dr Toh remembers being shocked — it had not crossed his mind even then that the Tunku and his senior colleagues would resort to such "drastic surgery".

The next thing he knew, he was seated in the living room, jotting down the many thoughts and questions crisscrossing his mind. Uppermost was the thought that a Singapore out of Malay-

sia would mean letting down all those who had supported the PAP's cause.

Mr Rajaratnam's recollection is that all Mr Lee told him was that there was something very important they needed to discuss face to face. He, in turn, telephoned Social Affairs Minister Othman Wok, telling him they needed to dash up to KL. Mr Othman says Mr Rajaratnam told him then that he could not elaborate on the telephone, which got him worrying whether something had happened to Mr Lee. It was a terrifying thought.

He recalls: "I became very apprehensive. I kept wondering: What's happening? What's happening? I asked Raja: 'We go by train or what?' Raja ►►



➤ said: "You drive." So early in the morning, I drove up to his house and we set off, him, me and his bodyguard."

## THE BLOODY ALTERNATIVE

By the time Messrs Rajaratnam and Othman arrived at Singapore House, it was already past eight in the morning on Saturday, Aug 7. Mr Barker had taken the first flight home. While Mr Othman parked his car, Mr Rajaratnam strode briskly inside, found Dr Toh scribbling away and was told the news. It hit him between the eyes. Both he and Dr Toh, who were born, respectively, in Seremban and Taiping, were unwilling to sign the agreement — so deeply had they held their belief in the concept of the two territories as one.

Looking back, Mr Rajaratnam puts it this way: "We were against it initially. We were quite prepared to take the risk of resisting separation. We felt very strongly, and eventually, the PM had to report to the Tunku that we were against it."

At about 12.30 pm, Mr Lee and Dr Goh drove to the Tunku's Residency, where the Malaysian Premier and some of his senior ministers had been waiting. Mr Lee wanted a word in private with the Tunku. According to the 1965 Yearbook, he argued for other solutions such as a looser federation.

As he later explained in a post-proclamation press conference: "I didn't believe that there was no other way. I believed then that I could still convince the Tunku that there were a number of other ways to reduce communal tension, such as a looser federation. After what he told me when we were alone, I realised there was no other way... I knew from what he said — and he has an intuition about these matters — that we would all be in for big communal trouble if Singapore, or if I and my colleagues, insisted on going on with Malaysia as it is."

Mr Lee also told the Tunku about how strongly Dr Toh and Mr Rajaratnam had resisted separation and suggested that the Malaysian Premier write Dr Toh a letter to explain. This the Tunku did, in his own hand. He wrote: "There is absolutely no way out. If I were strong enough and able to exercise complete control of the situation, I might perhaps have delayed action, but I am not, and so while I am able to counsel tolerance and patience, I think the amicable settlement of our differ-

Where were you that fateful day?



**Shelly Tiw Sing Kim, 52**  
Midwife  
Mount Elizabeth Hospital

I was in Kangkar Kerbau Hospital then and heard the news from my fellow midwives in the delivery room. Some of the nurses were crying. But I wasn't. I felt sad and a bit nervous, whether I had made the right choice to be a Singaporean. When I got home that night, my husband, Dawson, told me he had heard the news on the radio. We talked about it but decided not to do anything. Thinking back, I'm glad I made the right decision.



**Muhammad Ariff Ahmad, 65**  
Novelist

My first reaction was sheer disbelief. I was a lecturer with the Teachers' Training College then. What still lingers in my mind to this day is a scene at a Malay gathering some months before the separation. The late Haji Yaacob Mohamed, a PAP leader, was reassuring us even then that there was nothing in the Malaysian Constitution that said we could opt out and, therefore, being a part of Malaysia was a permanent arrangement, no matter how troublesome relations were. When the news came, my family and two other families were planning to travel in three cars to Malaysia to meet old friends. We went ahead because I still did not believe separation was possible. It was only when I reached Kota Bharu, where I met some former classmates discussing the topic animatedly, that it all sank in. I felt a sense of loss and sadness because people working in the same cause for Malay literature suddenly found themselves separated by a political divide. Looking back, I feel more comfortable now as a Singaporean and am glad we had chosen to stay here despite requests from friends and relatives to move to Malaysia.



**G. Kandasamy, 69**  
General secretary  
Amalgamated Union of Public Employees

I was working at AUPE's headquarters near Townner Road. When my colleagues and I heard the news, we were shocked. All of us were worried about the politics that would ensue and also whether there would be any violence. I had canvassed actively for Singapore's integration with Malaysia, so for me, the news was particularly shocking. I knew there was tension at the time with Malaysian leaders, but that it would lead to separation was something I could not imagine at all. One major fear I had was whether Singapore, being a mainly Chinese-populated place caught between a Malay-dominated Indonesia and Malaysia, would be allowed to be a truly independent country. A related fear was over racial cohesion — whether the pressures that might come about from the separation will affect the minority Malays and spark off racial riots.



**Fatty Weng, 69**  
Retired chef and restaurateur

It was business as usual on that day. I knew about the separation from my family members who had heard it on the afternoon news. Many of my customers were discussing the split. Generally, they seemed to agree that it was better for Singapore to be independent. I did not take part in the discussion. I was a businessman. I never liked to talk about politics. But personally, I thought Singapore could survive on its own because we had a good prime minister.



**Wee Cho Yaw, 61**  
Chairman  
United Overseas Bank

I was managing director then. When the news broke, my immediate reaction was sadness and concern. I felt sad because we had worked so hard for Malaysia and had tried so hard to make it work. To me, separation was admission of our failure. Overriding this sadness was concern for the future of Singapore. Our island state had no natural resources and had the further disadvantage of having a small population and, therefore, a small market. I must confess I was very pessimistic about Singapore's economic survival. Now, I am delighted that my initial fear has proven unfounded. Indeed we have prospered.



**Maurice de Vaz, 49**  
Pilot  
Singapore Airlines

I was on a return flight from KL to Singapore (as a first officer with MSA) in the late morning when news came. I remember discussing it with Captain Tommy Soong, now retired. Obviously the first thought was what would happen to the airline. We talked and talked, but, of course, we didn't have answers.

ences in this way is the only possible way out."

Given the strong hint that the situation would get out of control, resulting in bloodshed, Dr Toh and Mr Rajaratnam agreed reluctantly to put their signatures to the agreement. Explains Mr Rajaratnam, who was 50 at that time: "That was a very compelling argument because there had been bloodshed before... In the light of this, Dr Toh and I talked about it, and we realised we could be responsible for loss of lives and worse."

Dr Toh, then 43, responded to the Tunku in writing the next day, describing the decision as sad and a blow to him and his colleagues, who had re-

joined at the reunification of Singapore with Malaya in 1963.

But, he added in his letter, which was later made public, if expulsion was the price for peace, "then we must accept it, however agonising our inner feelings may be".

Agonising it indeed was for all who had believed in Malaysia, not least those PAP leaders who were born there. For instance, Mr Ong Pang Boon, then 36 and Singapore's Education Minister, was struck speechless for quite a while when a grim Dr Toh broke the news to him in Singapore House that afternoon. He had been in Kuala Lumpur that week helping to set up PAP branches. When he recovered

his voice, his first question was: "Is this the only way?" Dr Toh told him the alternative was bloodshed. Mr Ong, who has since retired from politics and is now an adviser to the Hong Leong group of companies, recalls: "It did take me some time to accept that it was better this way. The rational part of me accepted it but the emotional part took some time."

But he too signed. Mr Othman reacted differently. When he was shown the Tunku's letter, he held it in his hand and looked at it for a long time. He recalls that his feeling then was more one of relief — that the bickering was going to stop — than grief. But Mr Lee, he says, thought that as a ➤



► Malay, he would want to stay in Malaysia, which was why he pulled him to another room so they could talk privately. He recalls: "PM asked me: 'Othman, would you sign?' I said: 'Yes, I would, certainly, but I'm worried about the communists in Singapore.' He said: 'Don't worry. That's my problem, I'll handle it.' He assured me on that."

## ONE LAST-DITCH EFFORT

The next day, Aug 8, was a Sunday. But there was no rest for the Singapore team. Several of them — Dr Toh, Mr Rajaratnam and Mr Ong — felt they had to visit various states in Malaysia to explain to PAP grassroots leaders and supporters why separation could not be avoided.

Others, including Mr Lee, wanted to go back to Singapore, where there was much to put in motion. Mr Othman, who turned 41 that day, remembers the Prime Minister offering him a seat on a special Royal Malaysian Air Force flight laid on for the Singapore leaders.

He declined, explaining that as he had driven up, he needed to take his car back to Singapore. Mr Lee then asked him to break the news to Mr Rahim Ishak, another of the PAP's top Malay leaders. After that, Mr Othman was to visit the PAP's Malacca branches to help explain matters. And so he set out.

Sometime that morning, Mr Lee managed to see the Tunku again in a bid to save the situation. But the latter remained unpersuaded that a looser federation was a better option. So Mr Lee flew home and upon arrival in Singapore, called all available ministers to a meeting to discuss and decide what to do next. The remaining leaders who had not signed — National Development Minister Lim Kim San, Labour Minister Jek Yeun Thong and Health Minister Yong Nyuk Lin — also put their signatures to the separation agreement.

Among the selected few officials who needed to know and therefore attended the meeting was Police Commissioner John Le Cam. His task was to make preparations to ensure law and order — without alarming the public. There were a thousand and one details to take care of — from the creation of new ministries to printing the necessary Gazette notices — and all had to be done quickly, quietly.

## 'What will happen to 1 SIR?'

LIEUTENANT-GENERAL Winston Choo, Chief of Defence Force, remembers being taken aback by news of the separation even though he and other Singaporean officers then serving in the merged Malaysian Armed Forces had been aware of the strained political ties between Singapore and the Central Government. He was then a signals captain in the First Battalion, Singapore Infantry Regiment (1 SIR) which, though commanded by a Malaysian, had largely Singaporean officers and men.

It was a British company commander on secondment to 1 SIR who broke the news to them in their Ulu Pandan camp. "At that moment, the full implications did not strike us. We were too engrossed in our duties," he recalls. "It was only later when we heard and saw the Prime Minister's declaration of separation that its full significance sank in."

"Frankly, my immediate concern was what was going to happen to 1 SIR and what our position would be. I would say that this sentiment was shared by the Singaporean officers as well as the soldiers who were all regulars. Our immediate concerns were whether an emergency and civil unrest would arise, requiring military intervention, as had happened in the racial riots of 1963 and 1964. However, there was general calm in the unit. There was no tension between Malaysians and Singaporeans in the unit."

It was only later that the Singaporean officers pondered the



question of whether Singapore could survive as a nation on its own, their subsequent resolve very much influenced by what Singapore's political leaders said. Says General Choo: "I, for one, took the line that life must go on and that I would remain in Singapore and work towards its survival, security and success."

"As a 24-year-old who had spent all my working life up till then in the military, and being not particularly imbued with tremendous nationalistic ideals, that was the extent of my feelings regarding the future of Singapore. But it did not take long for nationalistic fervour to be roused in me when it became plain that the survival and well-being of our nation was at stake."

## 'I told Tunku to lay off'

MR HAROLD WILSON, British Prime Minister at the time, remembers well the August weekend when news of the separation came. There was, he recalls, great anxiety in Whitehall and urgent meetings were held with the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary, Mr Michael Stewart, and the Defence Secretary, Mr Denis Healey.

"We took the necessary decisions and made the dispositions that had to be made, sending very strong messages to both leaders to avoid any action that could lead to an outbreak of hostilities or, indeed, of internal subversion," he says. "We authorised talks to take place to review the Anglo-Malaysian defence agreement on a basis fair to all the parties concerned."

Lord Wilson of Brixault, 74, as he is now known after receiving a life peerage in 1983, further recalls how Mr Lee Kuan Yew later told him that the action taken by the British leader both before and after the separation had saved his life. This was in April 1966 and they were at Chequers, the British Premier's official country retreat. "With all that we were hearing in the summer of 1965, I believe this was no exaggeration," says Lord Wilson, who adds that they are friends to this day.

The former British Prime Minister first made public what Mr Lee had told him when he disclosed, in his 1971 memoirs, his reactions upon receiving word in 1965 that a coup against Mr Lee



and his colleagues might be possible. "I felt it necessary," he wrote, "to go so far as to let the Tunku know that if he were to take action of this kind, it would be unwise for him to show his face at the Commonwealth conference, since a large number of his colleagues, including myself, would feel that such action was totally opposed to all we believed in as a Commonwealth."

Sending his greetings and best wishes to Singapore, Lord Wilson says: "Since those distant days, I have watched the progress of Singapore and of your Prime Minister with great admiration, respect and affection."

## UK ENVOY GATECRASHES TUNKU'S PARTY

In KL, Malaysian leaders also took follow-up action. In anticipation of the separation to come, Tun Razak had, by late July, given notice of the Federal

Government's intention to convene a sitting of Parliament on Aug 9.

This was to enable the Tunku to move a bill, on a certificate of urgency, to amend the Constitution and so provide for Singapore's separation and independence. So there was much to coordinate and finalise.

In the course of the day, a special RMAF aircraft sent to Singapore to pick up the agreement bearing the signatures of the entire Singapore Cabinet

returned. The fact that all signed enabled Tun Razak to say later, in response to a suggestion that Singapore had been "ejected", that the Singapore ministers had agreed unanimously to the separation. Only when the signed agreement was back in KL were all the Chief Ministers and Menteri Besar told of the purpose of the parliamentary session. By 4 pm, all Rulers of States in the Federation were also informed. Amid all this, something un- ►►



expected happened. Lord Head, the British High Commissioner in KL, who was not to have been given any prior warning, stumbled on the secret over lunch with a Sabah dignitary. Startled, he went all over KL looking for the Tunku, not realising that the latter wanted precisely to avoid him. Finally, Lord Head had to gatecrash the Tunku's birthday party late in the night before he got to talk to the Malaysian Prime Minister.

The Tunku later said he had not wanted to tell the British in advance as he feared they would try to prevent the breakaway. The British Government's assessment then was that Singapore on its own could never survive, which was why it had endorsed the concept of Malaysia in the first place.

## MIDNIGHT RENDEZVOUS AT THE BEACH

Back in Singapore, a tired Othman Wok arrived in the late afternoon and went frantically in search of Mr Rahim Ishak. He found him only just before midnight. They went to a secluded spot near the beach in Bedok where an army camp now stands. There, Mr Othman, who was only a year older, broke the news to him. "This is it. I told him after I explained the situation. He took it well." They talked till nearly 2.30 in the morning. And then it was Malacca for Mr Othman.

While Mr Rahim was taking in the implications of what he had just heard, Mr Barker was talking to his elder brother, Mr Yusof Ishak, then Singapore's Yang di Pertuan Negara, at Changi Cottage, a government bungalow by the sea. The Law Minister had gone there on behalf of the Cabinet to brief him. He recalls: "He had gone to watch a sepak takraw game. I waited for him till 12.30 am. I presented him with a copy of the agreement. He took the news very well."

Clearly, the Yang di Pertuan Negara, who would turn 55 on Aug 12, had hidden his feelings well. His wife, Puan Noor Aishah, now 57, remembers that he became "very upset" after his "man-to-man talk with Eddie Barker". "When he told me what it was about, I was very shocked too," says the former First Lady.

While the couple pondered over the news, and Mr Othman drove his faithful dark grey Opel Rekord along the dark and winding roads of Johor, Mr Lim Bian Han, 70, and a crew of about

20 worked feverishly inside the locked Government Printing Office premises in Upper Serangoon Road. As Government Printer, which was his official title, his job was to have the Gazette notices typeset, printed and bound by dawn. An RMAF plane was waiting at the airport to rush copies to KL.

## LORD HEAD'S LAST-MINUTE INTERVENTION

And then it was morning, Aug 9. While Mr Foong was translating the proclamation into Chinese, with Mr Lee personally checking to ensure that the words captured all that they were intended to convey, Lord Head arrived at the Tunku's Residency in KL at 8.45 am. He pleaded with the Tunku to postpone the decision by one day,

but was told: "Nothing can change our decision."

At 9.30 am, Alliance MPs gathered in Parliament and were told the news. They were also asked to vote for the bill. As it turned out, 126 endorsed the amendment, none voted against. As agreed, all 12 Singaporean MPs were absent. Seventeen others, including Umno secretary general Syed Ja'afar Albar, did not turn up. The Malaysian Senate also approved the bill.

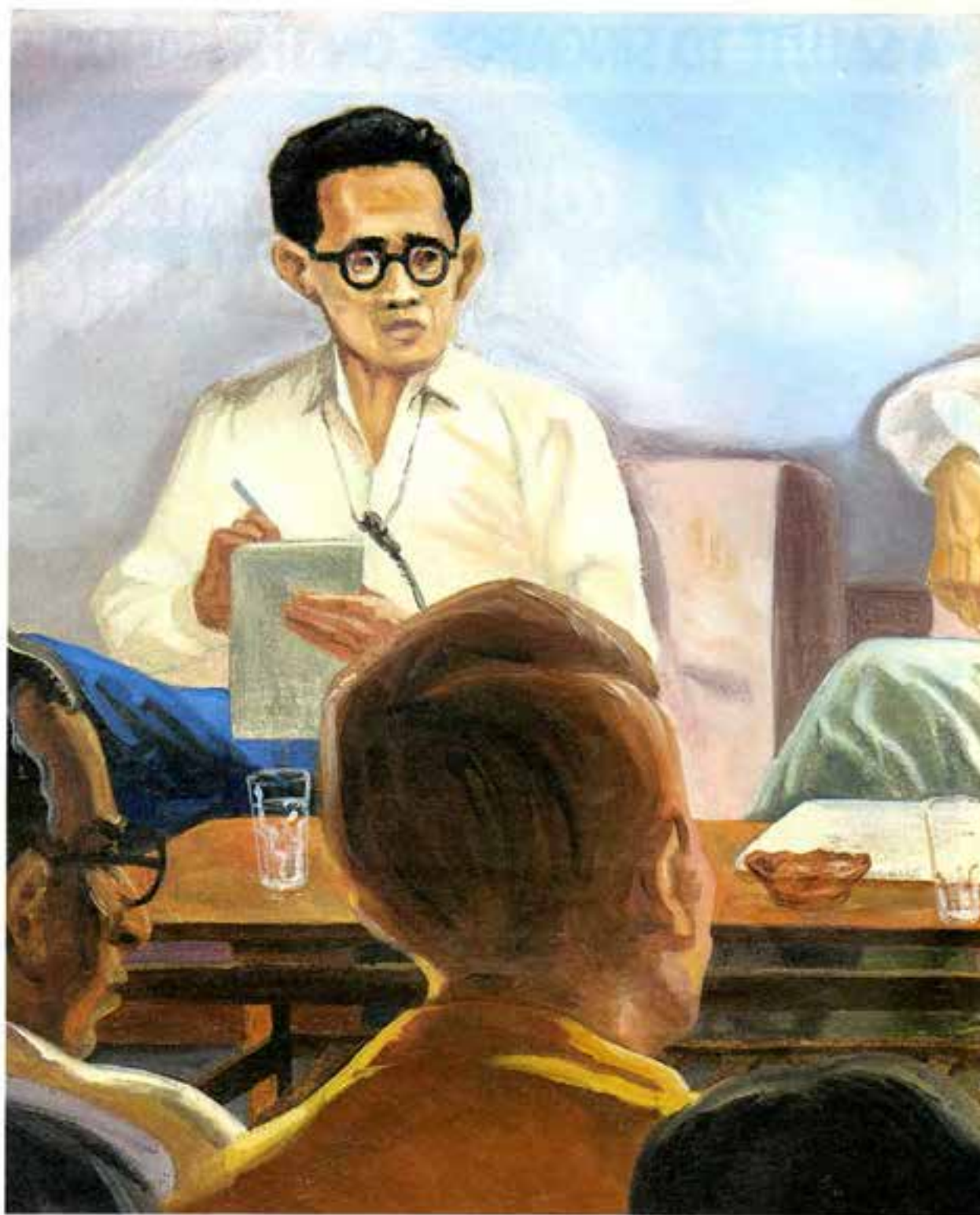
This was how the Tunku began his statement to the House of Representatives: "What I am about to announce to this House will no doubt come as a big surprise and shock to Members. In fact, to me and to many Members, it is the most painful and heartbreaking news I have had to break. I consider it a misfortune for me to have to make this announcement. In all the 10 years of my leadership of this House, I have never had a duty so unpleasant as this to perform. The announcement which

I am making concerns the separation of Singapore from the rest of the Federation."

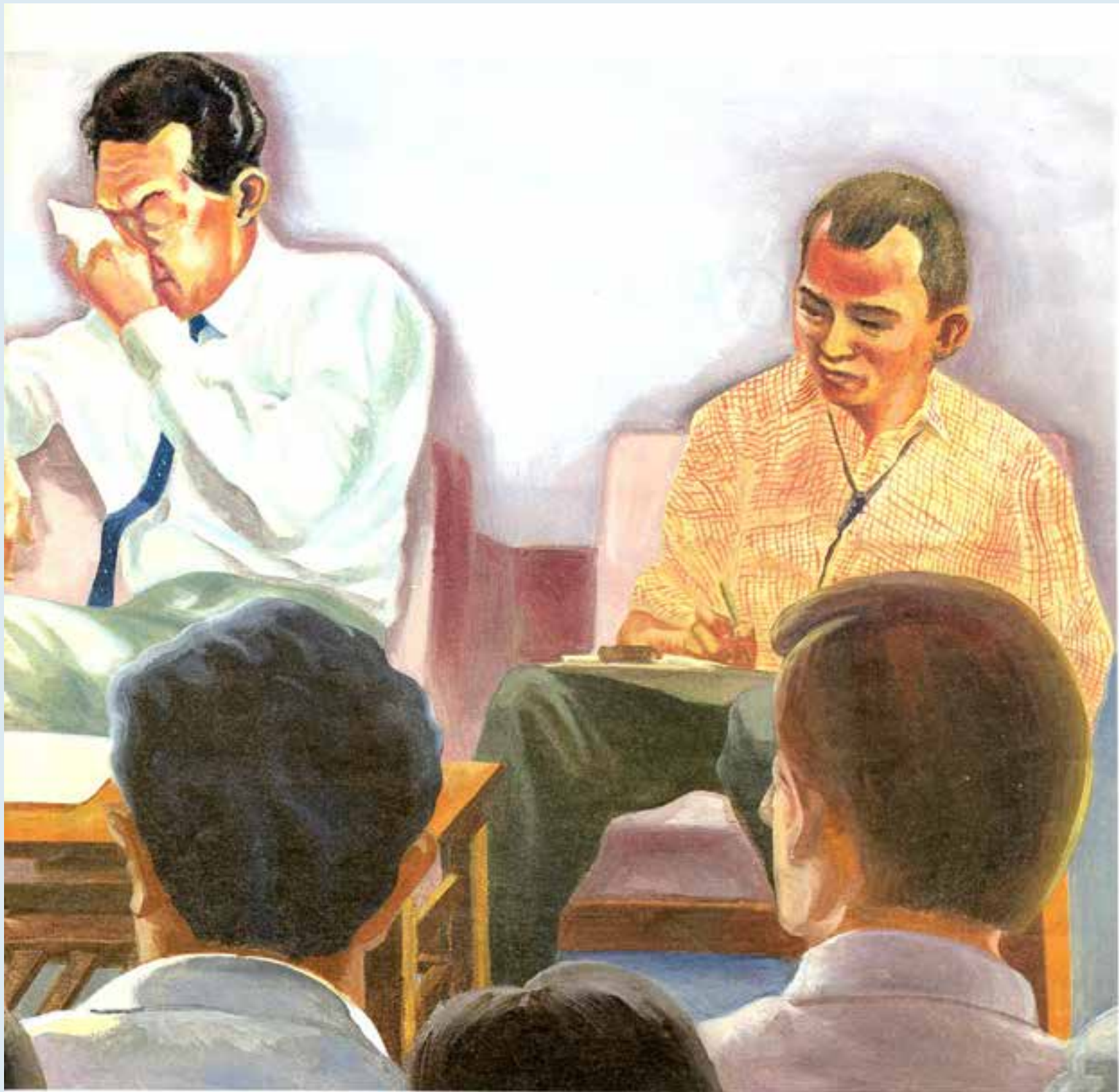
As he spoke, a letter dated Aug 7 went out from Dr Ismail, the Home Affairs Minister, to the Singapore Police Commissioner instructing him to take orders from Mr Lee from that day onwards. A similar letter also went out from the Tunku to Brigadier S.M. Alsagoff, Commander of the Singapore-based 4th Federal Infantry Brigade.

## SINGAPORE IS OUT OF MALAYSIA

In Singapore, Mr Lee, who had stayed up all night to supervise the despatching of coded messages to various heads of government explaining the situation, briefed the heads of all consulates in







At the historic press conference, a visibly distraught Lee Kuan Yew said: "What has happened has happened."

Singapore at 9 am in City Hall. Then, accompanied by Mr Foong, he left for the radio and TV studios in Caldecott Hill, to prepare for the announcement and the televised press conference afterwards. On the dot at 10, just as the division bell in the Malaysian Parliament sounded, Radio Singapura announced: "Singapore is out of Malaysia." The nation was stunned.

How Singaporeans subsequently rallied behind their leaders and worked hard to make a success of their country is history — and something all are proud of. But on that day, feelings were decidedly mixed. While some felt despondent, others let off firecrackers to celebrate. The stock exchange recorded its most active day of trading that year, with 646,900 shares changing hands. After a bout of nervous selling, the market recovered to end the

day on a "mildly optimistic" note. Traffic at the Causeway was normal.

Though some housewives began to stock up food and shops here and there closed for the day, the atmosphere, while tense, remained quiet. Coffee stalls did a roaring business. Many stayed open all night, catering to customers who wanted to talk about this turning point in their national life — or wait for the morning papers to hit the streets.

Mr Foong, the broadcaster, found himself at one such stall in Norfolk Road near his home, where he and some neighbourhood friends sat drinking *teh tarik* and talking about their future till 3 am. On the way there, he had stopped by a community centre in Cambridge Road, where a huge crowd had gathered to watch the evening news on TV. He saw himself on the screen, seated a little behind the Prime Minister, ready to translate for him at the packed press conference.

Hardly anyone in the crowd at the community centre recognised him. All eyes were on Mr Lee. They felt for him. It was not just what he said but, more importantly, how he said it. Looking back, many Singaporeans would point to that televised press conference as not only the climax of an unforgettable day but also the searing moment when the nation felt as one, huddled against an uncertain future.

And this was what the visibly distraught Prime Minister told his fellow Singaporeans: "What has happened has happened. But be firm and calm. We are going to have a multi-racial nation in Singapore. This is not a Malay nation, not a Chinese nation, nor an Indian nation. Everybody will have a place in Singapore."

With grim determination, Mr Lee vowed that his government would fight for Singapore's survival. In response to questions, he announced the abolition of the payroll tax and spoke about the

country's economic future. Asked to recount the events that led to the final break, he paused, then explained how he was initially unconvinced that there had to be a split, how a number of his colleagues had been passionately against separation, and how they had finally realised there was no other way.

With tears brimming and in a choked voice, he added: "Every time we look back to the moment we signed this document, it is for us a moment of anguish. For me it is a moment of anguish. All my life, my whole adult life, I have believed in merger and unity of the two territories. We are connected by geography, the economy and ties of kinship... It broke everything we stood for."

And then he wept.

● This reconstruction was based on published material and interviews conducted by Leslie Fong, Bertha Henton, Zuraidah Ibrahim, M. Nirmala, Sumir Goh and Salim Othman.



PAGE ONES FROM  
**1900**

## THE STRAITS TIMES

continued with the trend of having advertisements – not the news – on its front page until after World War II. News made Page 1 on some days, however. The Sunday edition, which debuted in 1931, often put up lively features on Page 1.

The image shows the front page of The Straits Times newspaper. At the top, the masthead reads "The Straits Times." in a large, ornate font. Below the masthead, it says "SINGAPORE, WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 28, 1921" and "PRICE 10 CENTS." On the left and right sides of the masthead, there are small illustrations of a bottle and a can, respectively, with text "SINGAPORE" and "SINGAPORE" below them. The main body of the page is dominated by a large illustration of a woman in a dress standing on a rocky shore, looking out at the sea. She is holding a small object in her hand. Below the illustration, the text reads "Your Best Pal, -A Kodak." in a bold, serif font. Underneath this, there is a paragraph of text: "A KODAK never goes back on you, although it tells a tale about you and your doings ever so often, and does it very eloquently at that. -It does even more than tell the tale, it gives the exact reasons, places and dates by means of the autographic feature, a thing no camera of any other make can do. And in half an hour or so you can learn to handle a KODAK. You really cannot do without a good pal like this, it is so pleasant to have one." Below this paragraph, it says "GET ONE NOW AT" in a small font. At the bottom, the text reads "Robinson & Co., Ltd." in a large, bold font, with "SINGAPORE." in a smaller font below it. The entire advertisement is enclosed in a rectangular border.

SEPTEMBER 28, 1921





FEBRUARY 20, 1973

JUNE 18, 1941

JUNE 5, 1935

FEBRUARY 19, 1959



# TIMES CAPSULE

A street named desire. Orchard Road has always shopped for change but the one constant nag has been traffic. In the 19th century, letters to ST would complain about the dangers on the road from – horse-riders.

## Orchard Road, 1950s



Today, shophouses are eclipsed by skyscrapers but they were once common in Orchard Road. This photo (left) taken on Sept 1, 1956, also captured the "traffic congestion" opposite MacDonald House. And the rush on the sidewalks (right) in 1949. ST FILE PHOTO AND ST PHOTO: LEE TUCK SOON



## Orchard Road, 1964



More than a century ago, fresh vegetables and fish were a common sight in Orchard Road's popular wet market. Here, Christmas shoppers can be seen at a market on Dec 23, 1964. The dirty, smelly market gave way to Orchard Point shopping centre in 1983. ST PHOTO: MAK KIAN SENG



## Orchard Road, 1970s



A decade of booming retail business led Cold Storage to open Singapore's first supermarket in Orchard Road in 1917. Located where Centrepoin shopping centre is today, Cold Storage, captured in this photo from Nov 27, 1970, sold frozen meats, poultry and dairy products from Australia (left). The boom led to traffic jams between the junctions of Clemenceau Avenue and Dhoby Ghaut, as seen in this March 4, 1974 photo (right). ST PHOTO: MAZLAN BADRON AND MAK KIAN SENG



## Orchard Road, 1972



A transformation took place every evening from 1966 to 1978, with the car park opposite Cold Storage Supermarket becoming a bustling Glutton's Square, as seen in this Aug 16, 1972, photo. With at least 80 hawkers thronging the place, two stalls would squeeze into each parking space. As nothing was provided, the stall owners brought their own water for washing and tables and chairs for customers. Glutton's Square was cleared in 1978 to make space for a park. In the late 2000s, the park gave way to Orchard Central. ST PHOTO: STEVEN LEE



# Orchard Road, 1959 & 1990



In 1958, rags-to-riches retailer C.K. Tang bought a row of terrace houses in Orchard Road to set up the House of Tang department store. Adored by many as a clever blend of old and new, the building's design was inspired by Mr Tang's travels to Beijing. It was demolished in 1982 but the familiar pagoda-style green roof and red columns were retained in the new building. ST PHOTO: WAN SENG YIP



Development and redevelopment were relentless. Shaw House, with its distinctive accordion-style windows, glass mosaic fins and Italian marble, was not spared. By 1990, the three-decade-old Lido Theatre was considered outdated and was demolished to make way for a new Shaw House – a \$400 million commercial, shopping and cinema complex. ST PHOTO: JACKY HO



# Orchard Road, 2014



With the arrival of new heartland malls such as Big Box and OneKM, tougher competition has driven change in the retail landscape. The Orchard Road Business Association started a monthly Pedestrian Night in October 2014 to inject vibrancy into the shopping belt. Parts of Orchard Road are closed to traffic from 6pm to 11pm on the first Saturday of the month. In its second edition on Nov 1, 2014, some 900 yoga enthusiasts stretched to the hip-hop beats of local musicians, including rapper Kevin Lester, at Yoga Beat. ST PHOTO: NG SOR LUAN





# THE SINGAPORE SWING





Duke of Kent (fourth from right) joins students in a Conga at a students' social held at Raffles Institution on October 10, 1952. ST FILE PHOTO



Danzation dancers from The Little Arts Academy (from left) Ong Yan Lin, Florence Oh and Foo Wen Hui putting the final touches to their make-up before their performance at the opening night of the concert held at the Sands Theatre in Marina Bay Sands on December 5, 2014.

ST PHOTO: NEO XIAOBIN



**As a rule, we have to be content with the pleasures of contemplation.**

– *The Straits Times*, Dec 2, 1908

**T**he “pleasures” of contemplation were, of course, sardonic euphemism for boredom in Singapore, which *The Straits Times* described in 1904 as “not the liveliest place in the world so far as amusements are concerned”.

The colonial quartet of theatre, social balls, horse racing and cricket were the popular pastimes. Their function, noted



The Straits Times on Sept 10, 1864, was to prevent “listless indolence” among the vanguards of the British Empire – young men who otherwise would have “grown prematurely old”.

Taking its role as the island’s arbiter of pleasure seriously, The Straits Times rigorously reviewed the rare tour by a theatre company.

By the early 1900s, Singapore had acquired the unsavoury reputation of being a haven for opium dens. In 1932, a rakish piece in The Sunday Times featured an article by a guest writer who chronicled his attempt to seek out the “dens of iniquity for which the city is notorious in Europe”. He could not find any, but his quest led him to the “Opium Monopolies Department”, where he was told he needed a licence to buy the narcotic. The point of the story seemed to be that Singapore’s disrepute was grossly exaggerated.

The Sunday Times, on June 24, 1956, mused about a national sport that required little exertion. “There are probably more good rumourists on this small plot of earth than anywhere else in the world,” said the writer. “In a land of high humidity, it has strong advantage over other sports in that it does not make you perspire, unless you happen to be the victim.”

There is broad truth to this claim. In the early days of the island’s history as a British possession, there was a special place on the seafront for the dissemination of gossip.

“Heard the latest about old X? Well it seems...”

“I say, No, really?”

Hi-ya!”

“Alamak!”

The venue for such exchanges was called Scandal Point and was marked as such on early maps. Though it ceased

to exist in 1851, it is believed to have been at the north-east corner of the Padang, where the Singapore Recreation Club now stands.

People exchanged gossip while sitting on an embankment wall with a gun turret. The low wall was built to fortify Singapore's defences, but was never used for its purpose.

Singapore's transformation from a backward "fishing village" to an entertainment hub throbbing with nightlife – without fostering a culture of reckless abandon or mindless revelry – can be traced in the pages of The Straits Times.

Shakespeare proclaimed that there were seven ages of man. If Singapore were a stage, there would be seven stages of enchantment. They are:



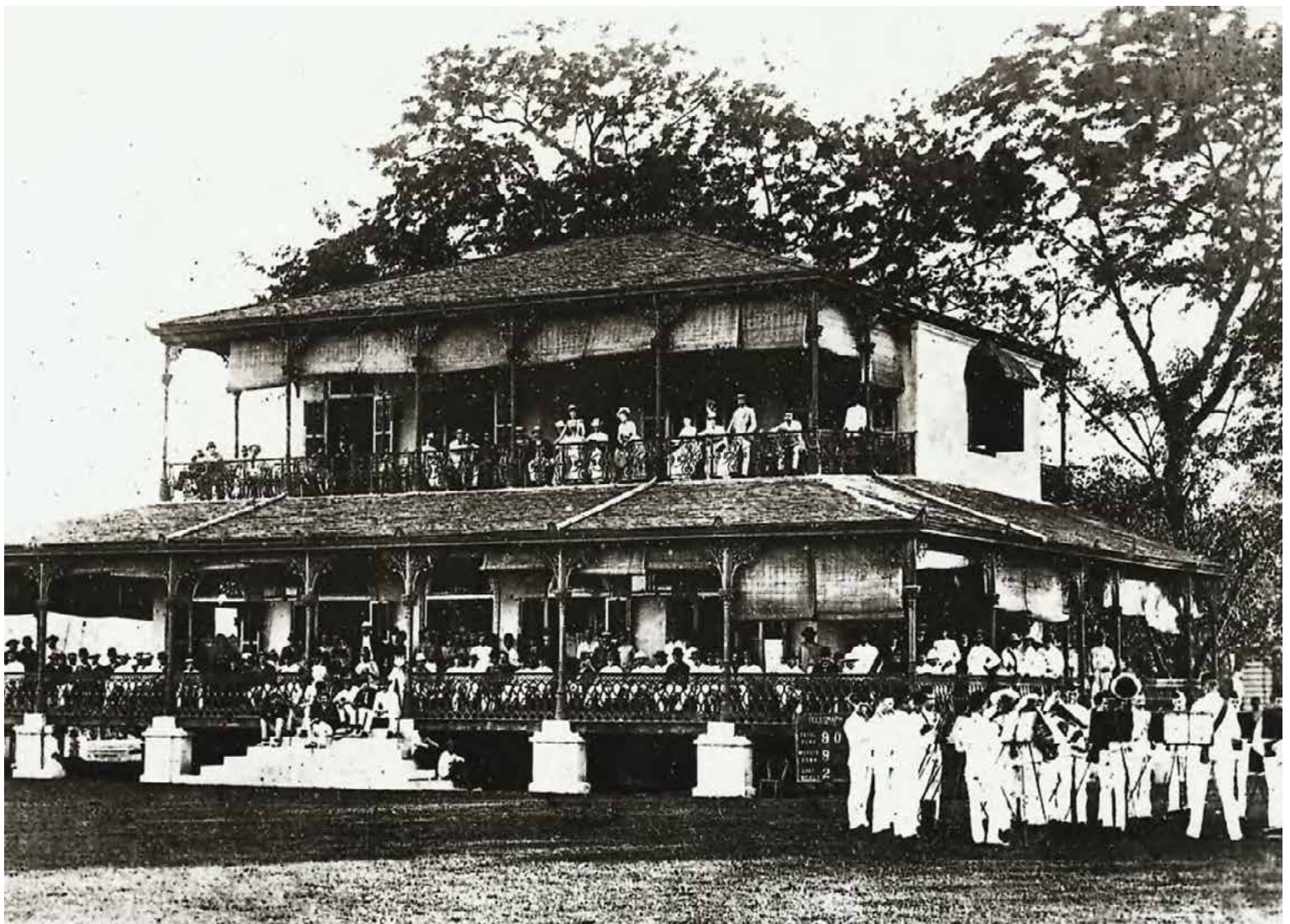
Colin Tulloh steered Battleship to victory in the 3rd Singapore Race on July 22, 1950. ST FILE PHOTO

## 1. THE COLONIAL QUARTET

The Singapore Cup for horse racing was instituted in 1842, three years before the birth of The Straits Times. The prize money: a princely \$150. The races quickly became a fixture on the social calendar and were covered extensively in The Straits Times. Cricket matches were also covered, as were weddings of the rich, famous and powerful.

But balls were far and away the highlight of the year. The more important ones made it to Page 1,





The Singapore Cricket Club in the 1880s.

such as the Sultan's Ball, held at the Singapore palace of the Johor royal family. A report on Jan 15, 1895 described the entrees served: Findon haddock mayonnaise, chicken and beetroot mayonnaise, Aspic pate de foie gras and pigeon and egg pie.

Carefully catalogued at the end of such reports was the guest list, with names printed in the order of their importance. An omission spoke volumes.

The Straits Times also saw a role for itself in developing Singapore's entertainment scene. Reviewing the first public concert by the newly formed Singapore Philharmonic Society in 1891, it grandly proclaimed the Society had "justified its existence" and thanked it for the "innocent amusement" provided.

## 2. ISLAND OF “CIVILISATION”

In November 1896, The Straits Times lamented the lack of a general social club in Singapore for “all the ordinary common or garden men among us”. Dismissing the Singapore Club

as “merely a tiffin and ‘morning cocktail’ club for the heads of firms and other deities”, it saw the Cricket Club only as an athletic club. And the Tanglin Club was “but a dancing and bowling club”.

It was not until Jan 17, 1914 that it began a regular column on the entertainment scene. Singapore Amusements was a thrice-weekly

column with summaries of ongoing social events.

By 1926, Singapore’s drawing power was in evidence. Just like the F1 night race today, there were events then that drew people from the region. One such attraction was Race Week at the Turf Club.

“Many people from upcountry find it convenient to visit Singapore, to renew old friendships and generally to enjoy the amenities which we have to offer... our friends in the back blocks look forward to these little excursions as bringing them, for a few days, back to something like civilisation,” The Straits Times reported on May 7, 1926.



A hawker selling cold drinks outside the Singapore Club on April 11, 1959. ST FILE PHOTO



### 3. LEISURE GOES LOCAL

Making a living was the overriding preoccupation of Singapore's immigrant society. Opportunities for leisure were few and "ethnic vices" such as gambling and smoking opium exerted a strong pull on migrant workers.

So when the New World amusement park in Jalan Besar opened in 1923, with kiosks, a ferris wheel, merry-go-round and football ground, The Straits Times predicted its success.

For the first time, entertainment had gone local.



Joget dancing at New World Amusement Park on September 29, 1949 (top). Tickets to New World Amusement Park (bottom left). Children having a great time at a Christmas party held at Great World Amusement Park in 1967 (bottom right). PHOTOS: ST FILES and NATIONAL HERITAGE BOARD

On Aug 29, 1932, The Straits Times reported the opening of Island Club in Thomson Road, Singapore's first non-racial country club. It offered mostly golf, but tennis courts were being laid and a swimming pool was being planned.

Its founding president S J Chan, a Peranakan lawyer, hoped it would provide "fertile ground for the growth of a deeper understanding among the different races of this city". He noted that many large donors to the club were "providing for the future". They did not even play golf.

For the elite, a column called The Social Spotlight made its debut on Jan 3, 1935. It was written by a woman reporter and covered parties and performances at established venues such as Raffles Hotel and Sea View Hotel. It carried fashion and costume reviews.

## 4. THE MOVE INDOORS

"Singapore is not so amused" was the wry headline of a July 13, 1949 report on leisure spending. Revenues from entertainment duties fell almost \$560,00 from 1947 to 1948, a drastic drop from the period immediately after Japan's surrender.

When Singaporeans were ready to spend again, they moved indoors to cinemas, shopping malls and what were called Chinese singing cafes, which sprang up during the Japanese Occupation. "Legacies of enemy occupation are usually unpleasant. A welcome exception, however, and one that has come to stay, is the Chinese evening singing cafe," said a report on March 2, 1952, headlined "Pretty girls who sing in the evenings". They were second only to cinemas in



popularity.

Amusement parks and cafes eventually lost ground to cineplexes, malls and game arcades as tastes changed. But a royal visit could still cause a flutter. On Oct 11, 1952, The Straits Times reported that the “Duke of Kent danced the conga at a students’ social at the Raffles Institution. Following this,

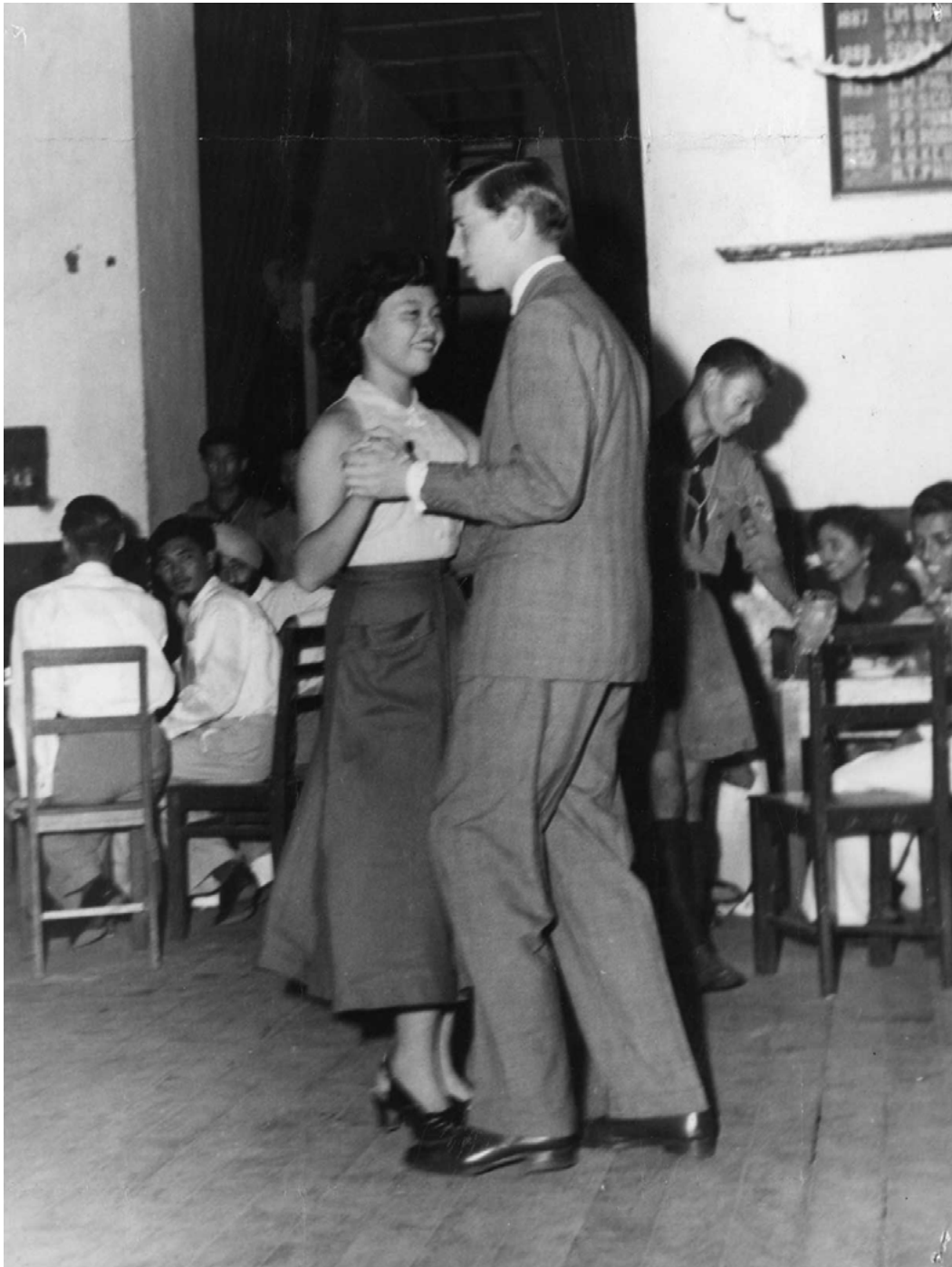
he danced a quick-step with 18-year-old Mabel Lee Soo Bee, a student from Singapore Chinese Girls’ School.” The Duke was visiting Singapore with his mother and the conga, from Cuba, was the rage.

“These socials are a regular part of school life in Singapore and last night’s dance was not specially put on for the Duke,” said the report.

The reminders of that visit remain,

etched in granite at Kent Ridge, which was named after the royal visitors.

By the late 1950s, as Singapore moved to self-rule, there was a boom. “Never before in the history of Singapore had



The Duke of Kent dancing with Miss Mabel Lee Soo Bee at a student ball held at Raffles Institution on October 10, 1952.

ST FILE PHOTO

there been so many concerts, variety programmes, drama and other forms of live entertainment as in seven days of the Loyalty Week,” The Straits Times on Dec 8, 1959, quoted Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew as saying at the opening of a variety show.



A star-studded Aneka Ragam Ra'ayat on the City Hall steps at the 1959 National Loyalty Week. ST FILE PHOTO

National Loyalty Week was held to encourage a sense of loyalty to the new state of Singapore and saw the adoption of key national symbols, including the state flag and national anthem, and the installation of Mr Yusof Ishak as Yang di-Pertuan Negara, or head of state.

## 5. NIGHTCLUBS AND THE HOME “COCOON”

Tropicana, Singapore’s first nightclub, launched a “new era” in entertainment when it opened, in 1968, where Pacific



Plaza building now is. Aimed at world travellers, executives and socialites, the four-storey complex housed a theatre-restaurant called the Orchid Lantern and two cocktail lounges. Among its famous visitors was the late American crooner Frank Sinatra. Jazz greats Duke Ellington and Count Basie also performed there.

Many other nightclubs sprung up to compete with it. The acts were risqué, with topless shows at Neptune Theatre

Restaurant in Collyer Quay, Goodwood Park Hotel and Mandarin Hotel.

The novelty, however, was wearing off by the late 1970s.

Tropicana's closing in 1989 also marked the end of an older, more esoteric era of novelty-gazing at amusement parks.

A new insularity, however, emerged, an unforeseen effect of

Singapore's successful housing programme. Piped water, phones, radio and television were turning people into homebodies, fostering isolation and hampering a sense of community.

Community clubs – venues for cultural, sports and recreational activities – stepped in to help enhance social bonding and neighbourliness.



Mr S.C. Shaw sitting on the balcony which overlooks Tropicana, Singapore's ritziest cabaret spot at Scotts Road. The building, Orchid Lantern, closed its door 21 years after it first opened, on May 30, 1989. ST PHOTO: YAP YEW PIANG

## 6. THE DISCO WAVE

After building up in the 70s, the disco wave crested in Singapore in the 80s, going mainstream with events for youth organised at neighbourhood community clubs. In one week in December 1979, there were at least 10 “disco nights”, said The Straits Times. Soft drinks were served and community centre officials kept an eye on things.

But not all were happy. A reader wrote to The Straits Times on April 23, 1980, complaining that disco dancing brought “accompanying vices” such as “illicit sex” and “cultural perversion”.

The 1980 census exposed a new trend of better-educated women not marrying. The government set up the Social Development Unit (SDU) in 1984 which, among other things, revived “tea dances” which had been popular in the 60s. Discos cashed in, slashing their entry prices between

2pm and 6pm on weekends to attract young people. A debate arose on whether the trend was healthy.

“While the SDU functions are squeaky-clean, their disco counterparts are



**A crowd of young people at a tea dance on September 24, 1994.**

THE NEW PAPER PHOTO: DAVID TAN.



smoky, filled with young teens and loud music,” The Straits Times reported on May 21, 1989 in It’s Saturday Afternoon Fever. It went on to quote Dr Paul Cheung, a prominent sociologist, who worried about the “sexual vulnerability” of the youth.

In the 90s, nightspots evolved to adopt an omnibus approach. They were discotheque, videotheque, karaoke, cafe, pub, wine bar and boutique, all rolled into one. Zouk, an \$8-million club, opened in March 1991.

In 1997, entry to tea dances and disco for those under 16 was banned in 1994, not 1997.



ST PHOTO: ALAN LIM

## 7. HEALTH CLUBS AND SPEED-DATING

At the turn of the 20th century, gyms and fitness clubs mushroomed, mainly in and around downtown and the central business district. They were ideal venues for young professionals to exercise, people-watch and mingle, The Straits Times noted on July 19, 2003. Members were in the 25-40 age group, making health clubs a social gathering ground.

Speed-dating also came into vogue. The stigma attached to being single began to dissipate.

The 2000s also brought back an old favourite: the tea dance, but with a twist. This time, it was heartily embraced by foreign workers and maids, making it the rage at discos they frequented.



**A fiery performance by Francesca Hariiman at the opening of St James Power House on March 12, 2007. ST PHOTO: JOYCE FANG**

For Singaporeans, the night scene lit up with many options. Besides Zouk, another mega entertainment complex was St James Power Station, next to VivoCity. It cost \$43 million and more than 2,500 people partied at its official opening, The Straits Times reported on March 13, 2007. Nine clubs and pubs are housed in the 70,000 sq ft complex that was once a power station. **ST**



# TIMES CAPSULE

Feels like home... in the heartlands. By 1971, the swampland had become a self-sufficient town, where no housewife or child had to leave the neighbourhood for daily needs.

## Toa Payoh, 1968



Once a swampland that squatters called home, Toa Payoh was the Housing Board's (HDB) second new town, after Queenstown. Photographed in 1968, the lone temple, Lian Shan Shuang Lin Monastery, was the only piece of architecture that stood untouched during the massive construction of high-rise flats around it. ST PHOTO: ALI YUSOFF



## Toa Payoh, 1968



By 1968, 1,560 flats had been completed, but the town began to take on a slum-like appearance. Operation Broomstick was launched by HDB to encourage residents to keep the estate clean. A contingent of men is seen marching down the road with broomsticks in this Straits Times photo.

ST PHOTO: LOW YEW KONG



# Toa Payoh, 1971



By 1971, Toa Payoh, seen here in an aerial view, was a self-sufficient town where “no housewife need go outside the neighbourhood for her requirements. No child need look for primary education outside the new town,” said an HDB spokesman. ST FILE PHOTO



# Toa Payoh, 1972



Toa Payoh quickly became the poster child of Singapore's public housing success and was visited by leaders from all over the world. Queen Elizabeth's tour in 1972 was welcomed by residents who were proud of their new home. ST PHOTO: WAN SENG YIP



## Toa Payoh, 1987

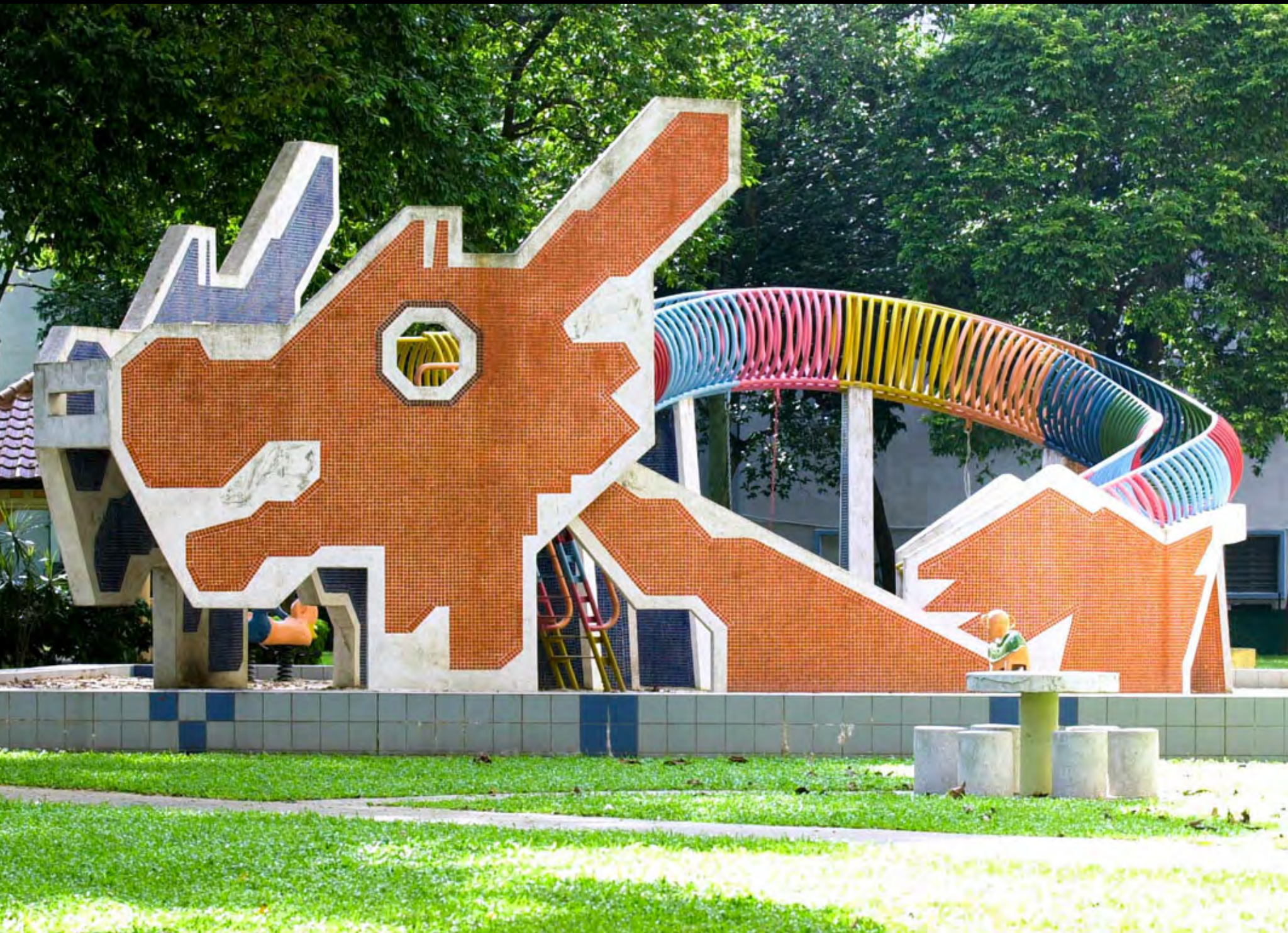


Toa Payoh was the first HDB town to have an MRT station. The North-South Line's opening ceremony was held there and the first train left Toa Payoh station on Nov 7, 1987. Train driver Shaharrudin Mokmin, then 22, told The Straits Times he was "very proud to be driving the first train".

ST PHOTO: SIMON KER



## Toa Payoh, 2003



In 2014, HDB blocks around the iconic dragon playground at Toa Payoh Lorong 6 were demolished. The dragon was "spared from the wrecking ball", said a report in The Straits Times report on April 3, 2014. Built in 1979, the dragon is now listed as one of the Top 15 Amazing Playgrounds From All Over The World by New York culture blog, [flavorwire.com](http://flavorwire.com). ST PHOTO: ALAN LIM



# Toa Payoh, 2014



Toa Payoh new town, as seen here in a picture taken in 2014, has already undergone several rounds of estate renewal and upgrading. A heritage trail was launched in Toa Payoh in 2014 to preserve historical milestones and tell the story of its development from swampland to vibrant town centre. It was Singapore's 12th national heritage trail. ST PHOTO: KUA CHEE SIONG



# REPORTING ON CRISES







# A FERRY RIDE TO REMEMBER

A Marine Police patrol craft in the foreground shadowing the Laju ferry when it was hijacked by four terrorists in January 1974. ST PHOTO: JERRY SEH





A hijacker telling the Marine Police what the Bukom Bombers want on the third day of the drama, February 2, 1974. ST PHOTO: MAK KIAN SENG

**L** 1974: The Watergate scandal brought down United States President Richard Nixon and an Opec (Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries) embargo quadrupled oil prices, tipping economies into recession. India detonated its first nuclear weapon, the Rubik's cube was invented and Muhammad Ali knocked out George Foreman to become the Heavyweight Champion of the World.

Singapore, not yet 10 years old, had its first brush with international terrorism.



The Straits Times' blow-by-blow reporting of the Laju ferry hijacking, a taut nine-day battle of nerves, the newspaper brought home two fundamentals. That Singapore was vulnerable to other people's quarrels and that constant vigilance was the price of security.

The four terrorists armed with submachine guns and explosives landed at Pulau Bukom on Jan 31, 1974, intending to blow up the Shell oil refinery there. Two were Japanese from a communist militant group, the Japanese Red Army (Sekigun). Two were Arabs from the hardline Popular Front



Liquefied Petroleum Gas tanks at oil refinery on Pulau Bukom on November 26, 1996. ST PHOTO: WONG POK SEE

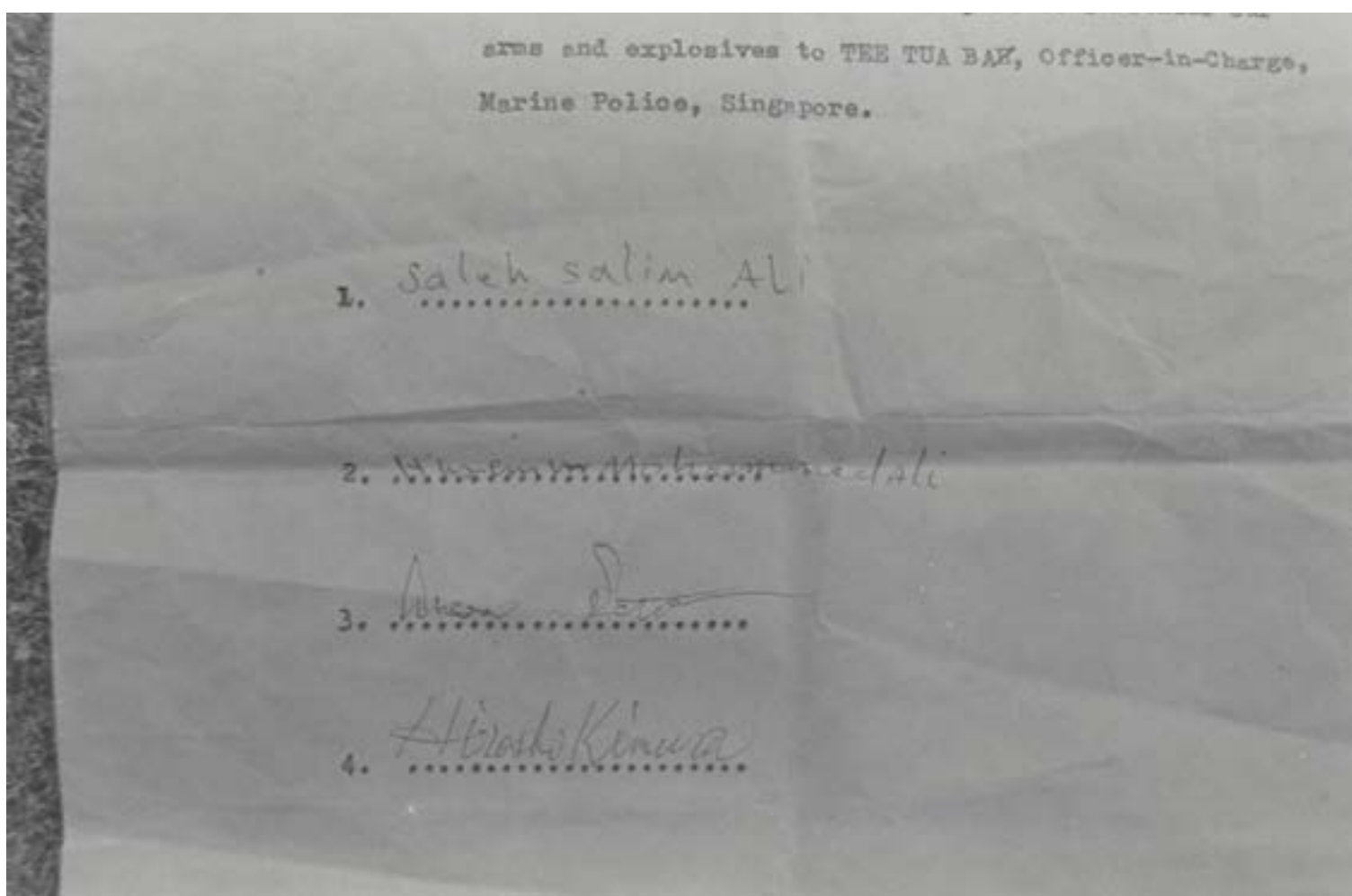
for the Liberation of Palestine.

Singapore by then was already the world's third-largest oil refining centre and the terrorists sought to disrupt the oil supplies.

When police gave chase, they hijacked the ferryboat Laju at the Bukom jetty. Soon, it was surrounded by 15 marine police boats, Customs launches and three Singapore Maritime Command gunboats. There it bobbed for the next nine days.



A letter from the Laju terrorists to the Singapore government on January 31, 1974. The terrorists demanded a safe passage out of Singapore. They were members of the Japanese Red Army and the Popular Front for Liberation of Palestine. ST PHOTO: TAN WEE HIM



Statement signed by 'Laju' hijackers at the Ministry of Culture Press Section on February 8, 1974. ST PHOTO: FRANCIS ONG PUAY GUAN



# SAIL FERRY TO FREEDOM

The Straits Times deployed more than a dozen reporters and photographers to cover the unprecedented event.

Two of the five hostages managed to escape the first night and the paper published full accounts of their ordeal.

Officials wrangled with the terrorists, night and day. They were offered safe passage out of Singapore because there had been no loss of life or serious damage.

The “Bukom Bombers” demanded food, water – and the local newspapers each day.



**A couple scanning the Singapore harbour with a telescope for the hijacked ferry Laju at the balcony of the Neptune Restaurant on February 3, 1974. ST PHOTO: NOOR**

As the crisis entered its seventh day, Japan agreed to lend an aircraft to fly the terrorists to Kuwait. In exchange, the terrorists agreed to disarm and released the hostages. They left for Kuwait in the company of 13 Singaporean officials, led by the Director of Security and Intelligence Division at the



On Day 2 of the Laju hijack drama, Feb 1, 1974, all lights on the Singapore Airport's tarmac were switched on as security was stepped up while officials awaited word on plans to fly the four terrorists out of Singapore (top). On Day 8, the Japanese government and Japan Airlines officials had arrived on a DC-8 jetliner from Tokyo. The plane flew the terrorists out of Singapore to Kuwait on the same day. (bottom left). With hijack drama resolved, Mr S.R. Nathan, then a senior Defence Ministry official, spoke to reporters on arrival at the Singapore airport on February 9, 1974. He was one of the 13 Singapore Government officers who were guarantors of safe passage for the hijackers. (bottom right)  
ST PHOTO: CHEW BOON CHIN, MAK KIAN SENG, CHRISTOPHER LOH

“ It was the first time that we had a terror incident”

– ST's former editor  
Leslie Fong, then a reporter

Ministry of Defence, Mr SR Nathan, who later became the President of Singapore.

The Straits Times reported that the terrorists' farewell to the three hostages, whom they hugged and kissed, was “highly emotional”. One of the hijackers even said he wanted to visit Singapore again, as a tourist. They apologised to the



## FROM HIJACK TO RESCUE

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*1973*

### **December**

Two men from the Japanese Red Army and two men from the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine arrive in Singapore. They do a recce of Pulau Bukom Besar and plan their attack.

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*1974*

### **January 31**

The men bomb at least three oil tanks on Pulau Bukom, but cause little damage. They escape and hijack the Laju ferry, taking its five crew members hostage.

The Marine Police give chase and the ferry came to a halt at the Eastern Anchorage, with the hijackers demanding safe passage out of Singapore. The Government agrees.

### **February 1**

Singapore and Japan cannot reach a decision on which country should provide a plane for the hijackers.

### **February 2**

The hijackers reject Singapore's offer to leave the country with the Laju. They want to leave by aeroplane.



After studying the four Bukom bombers on the hijacked Laju ferry, on February 4, 1974, the police believed this man - one of the two Japanese in the group - was their leader. ST FILE PHOTO

Singapore government and to Singaporeans for the “many inconveniences” caused.

The bizarre episode ended unexpectedly well. Crisis past, the nation took stock. The Straits Times summed it up on Feb 9, 1974: “The fact that Singapore was not involved does not guarantee the Republic’s safety. But the fact that Singaporeans can and do look after themselves will minimise chances of another Bukom-Laju emergency.

“Singapore was caught by surprise this time, but it has shown it is no pushover.”

The incident, said Mr Lee Kuan Yew, the prime minister then, demonstrated how impossible it was for Singapore to “isolate ourselves from conflicts in which we are really spectators”.

But he added: “We will minimise the reasons of any group to pick any quarrel with us.”

Mr Leslie Fong, the newspaper’s editor from 1987 to 2002 and currently senior executive vice-president of SPH’s Marketing and Digital Divisions, was then a 24-year-old

**February 3**

Singapore diplomats are asked to find an Arab country willing to take in the hijackers.

**February 4**

Singapore offers the hijackers asylum in any foreign embassy in Singapore that would accept them in exchange for freeing the hostages. The hijackers' safety is guaranteed.

**February 5**

The hijackers want asylum at the North Korean mission.

**February 6**

A related group of terrorists seizes the Japanese Embassy in Kuwait. Several hostages are taken. The group demands a Japan Airlines plane be sent to Singapore.

Within an hour, Japan agrees and the plane will leave for Singapore the next day.

**February 7**

The hijackers accept Singapore's offer of safe passage to Kuwait.

**February 8**

The hijackers free the three hostages and fly to Kuwait on a Japan Airlines plane. They are accompanied by 13 Singapore government officials as guarantors, 12 airline crew members and a group of senior Japanese officials. On arrival, the five terrorists who seized the

reporter deployed to cover the story. "It was a big story and everyone was excited," he recalled.

Between the press briefings, he said, there was a lot of waiting, adding: "There was nothing you could actually see from a distance. Other reporters tried to hire bum boats to go out but were turned back by police."

Still, there was plenty of drama at the nightly press briefings led by Mr Tay Seow Huah, the Home Ministry's top civil servant then.



A press conference on February 1, 1974 which details the Laju hijack drama. On the right is Government spokesman, Mr Tay Seow Huah.

ST PHOTO: KOK AH CHONG

The international press was aggressive, demanding answers and the "right to know" how the Government would handle itself.

"Mr Tay would not bat an eyelid," said Mr Fong. "He would say, 'You know what I choose to tell you... you are in my country, you play by my rules. And if you cross the line, I will not hesitate to deport you'.

"You could see his mastery of the details. He opened my eyes to how a self-confident civil servant in a developing country could conduct himself with dignity and confidence."



Japanese Embassy join the four hijackers on board the plane. They leave for Aden, capital of Yemen. The Singapore officials disembark and fly home via Bahrain.

### **February 9**

The officials land in Singapore.

### **February 10**

Yemen gives the nine terrorists permission to leave the country.

### **February 11**


The Laju is back at work at the Tanjong Berlayar jetty.

### **August 28**

Police arrest a Japanese man in Paris with four passports, suspecting he is Hiroshi Kimura, one of the Laju hijackers.

Noted Mr Tee Tua Ba, then officer-in-charge of Marine Police and now the chairman of the Singapore Red Cross: “It was only then that the Government realised that all vital installations were unprotected.”

The Laju lessons were not forgotten. Security was stepped up at critical infrastructure installations and public places. A crisis machinery was put in place.

Nearly two decades later, when SQ 117 was hijacked while flying from Kuala Lumpur to Changi on March 26, 1991, there were no hiccups. A team of commandos stormed the plane after it landed and rescued all 129 passengers and crew – after shooting dead the four Pakistani hijackers. It was almost textbook perfect, done in 30 seconds. 

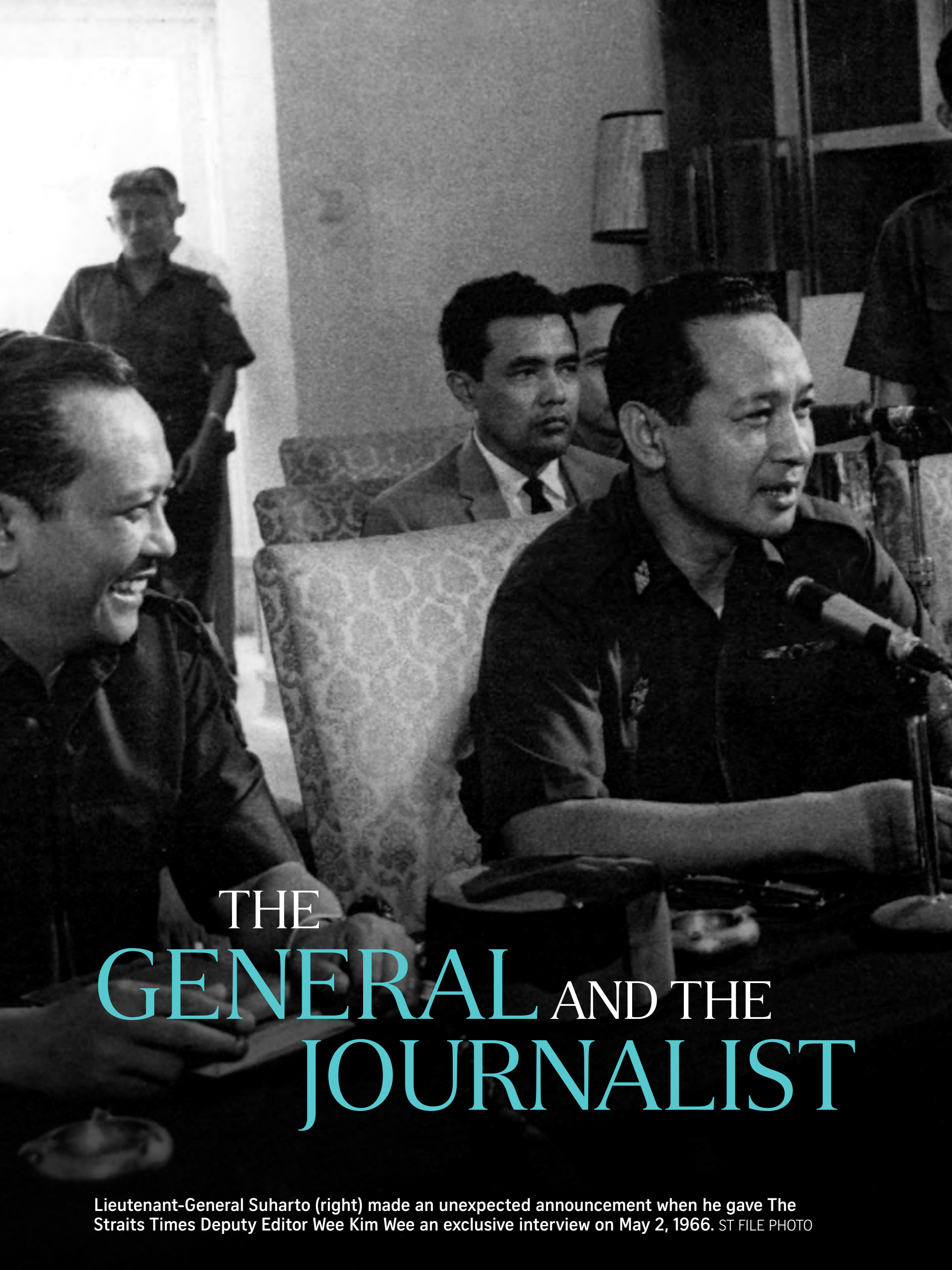
“I never expected something like this to happen. I realised that this was going to be a big case and it was going to be a prolonged siege.

– Tee Tua Ba, who led negotiations with the hijackers



The hijacked SIA flight SQ117 on March 27, 1991. ST PHOTO: FRANCIS ONG PUAY GUAN

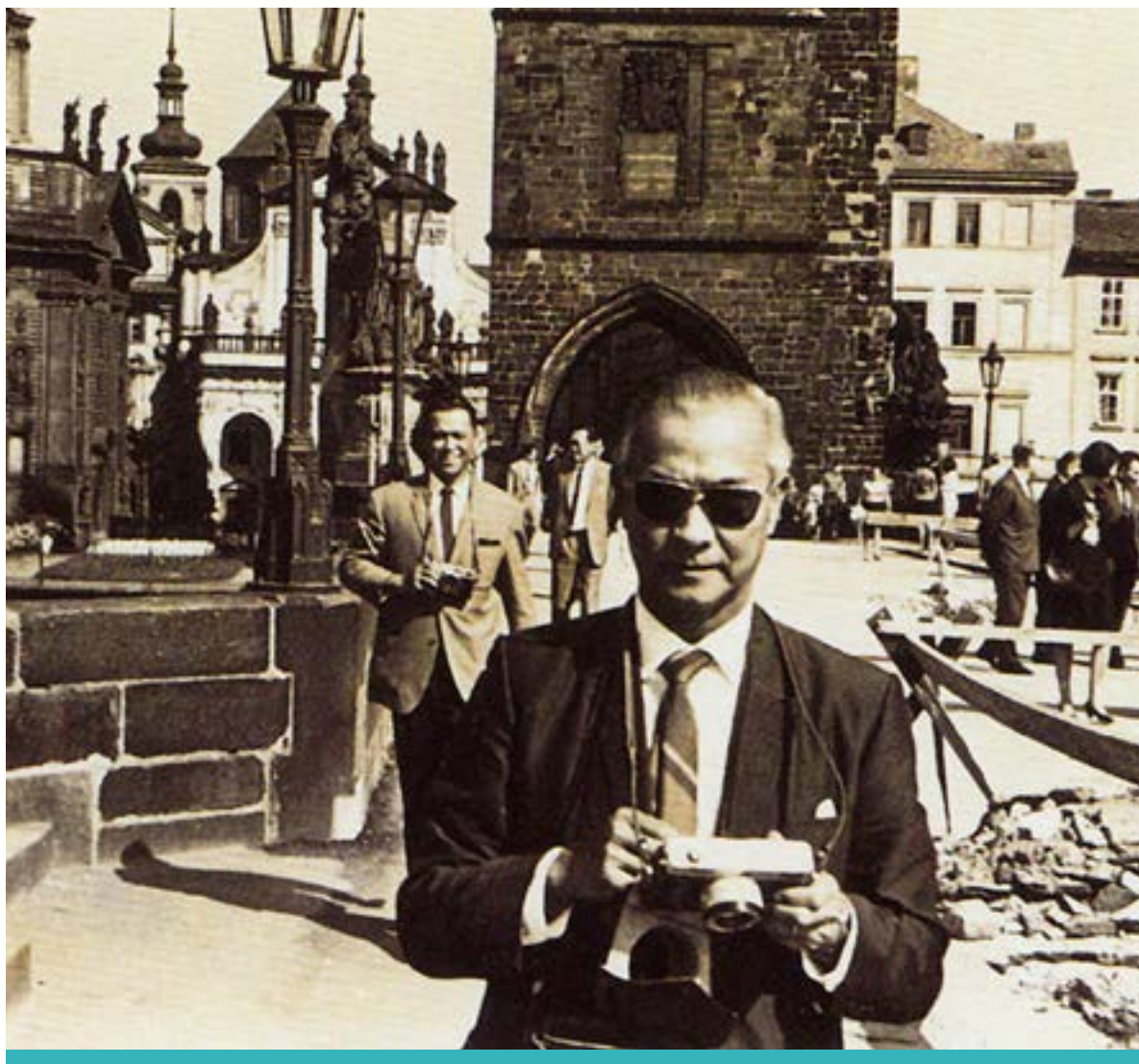




# THE GENERAL AND THE JOURNALIST

Lieutenant-General Suharto (right) made an unexpected announcement when he gave The Straits Times Deputy Editor Wee Kim Wee an exclusive interview on May 2, 1966. ST FILE PHOTO





Mr Wee Kim Wee in a 1966 photo when he was part of a delegation to Eastern bloc countries, led by then Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew.

PHOTO: WEE KIM WEE

The story behind one of The Straits Times' greatest scoops is a story in itself. As he stood in the immigration line at Jakarta airport, the unassuming man probably attracted scant attention. After all, Mr Wee Kim Wee was not everyman's idea of the flashy, big-scoop journalist.

That changed when his name was called out over the public announcement system and he was ushered in.

Mr Wee reminisced about it years later, after he became a diplomat and then one of the country's most beloved presidents.



**I was escorted into (Indonesia) without immigration delay," he recalled.**

**"I am sure the onlookers were thinking, 'What is this enemy doing here?'**

It was 1966. Singapore, nine months into its journey as a new nation, was yet to be officially recognised by Indonesia

Along with Malaysia, it had been at the receiving end of Indonesia's violent Konfrontasi policy for three years. Sukarno, Indonesia's first president, saw the formation of the Federation of Malaysia in 1963 as Britain's attempt to perpetuate its colonial rule in South-east Asia. He sent armed raiders, infiltrators and saboteurs to destabilise life in the Federation, of which Singapore was a part. Diplomatic and economic relations, going back centuries, were severed. No one from Malaysia or Singapore was allowed to enter Indonesia.

Mr Wee's presence at the Jakarta airport that day was, in short, an aberration.

After Mr Wee, then the deputy editor of The Straits Times, was whisked away from the immigration queue, he was granted an interview with the enigmatic and powerful new leader of Indonesia.

It got better. Lieutenant-General Suharto, who had confined then president Sukarno to a palace in Bogor after a failed communist coup in 1965, made the dramatic announcement that Indonesia was ready for peace.





Attacks, related to the Konfrontasi policy, at Katong Park blew a car against the railing of the park, scattering twisted pieces of metal on the road on October 6, 1963. ST FILE PHOTO



More than 500 women held banners and shouted slogans in an anti-Sukarno rally at Istana Besar Padang on October 31, 1963. ST PHOTO: MAK KIAN SENG



Two men were killed in Sennett Estate by a bomb on December 10, 1963 – the fourth in the series of mysterious explosions in Singapore. ST PHOTO: LOW YEW KONG



A sergeant-major examining a grenade in the compound of the Pontian Kechil police station on August 18, 1964. ST PHOTO: LOW YEW KONG



Kampong folk helping the Malaysian Security Forces to carry a badly wounded Indonesian infiltrator out of a rubber estate on August 25, 1964. ST PHOTO: KOK AH CHONG





“Peace: The sooner, the better,” declared Suharto in that interview, which was splashed on the front page of The Straits Times on May 2, 1966 (above). This was the first time that the de facto leader of Indonesia had indicated that he was ready to turn the page on Konfrontasi.

True to character, Wee claimed no special credit for a story that changed the course of South-east Asia. The veteran newsman ascribed it to just plain luck. During a layover in Bangkok on his way back from London, he had chanced to



meet Indonesia's former consul-general in Singapore. His friendliness encouraged Mr Wee to ask if he could get a visa to visit Jakarta.

To his surprise, the diplomat was agreeable, but on the condition that he travel from a third country.

Not long afterwards, Mr Wee was queueing up at Jakarta airport.

By this time, Mr Wee was rather known for his penchant for being at the right place at the right time. And he seemed to court danger. In late-1960, he rushed from Copenhagen, where he was on holiday, to civil-war torn Congo, where Malayan troops were suddenly despatched to help UN peacekeeping operations.

How he made it into that newly-independent territory on short notice, short on money, with no hotel room or even a visa, is the stuff of newsroom legend. As are his vivid stories of the war, delivered over cable and managing to beat the news relayed by military channels. Mr Wee died in 2005, at age 89.



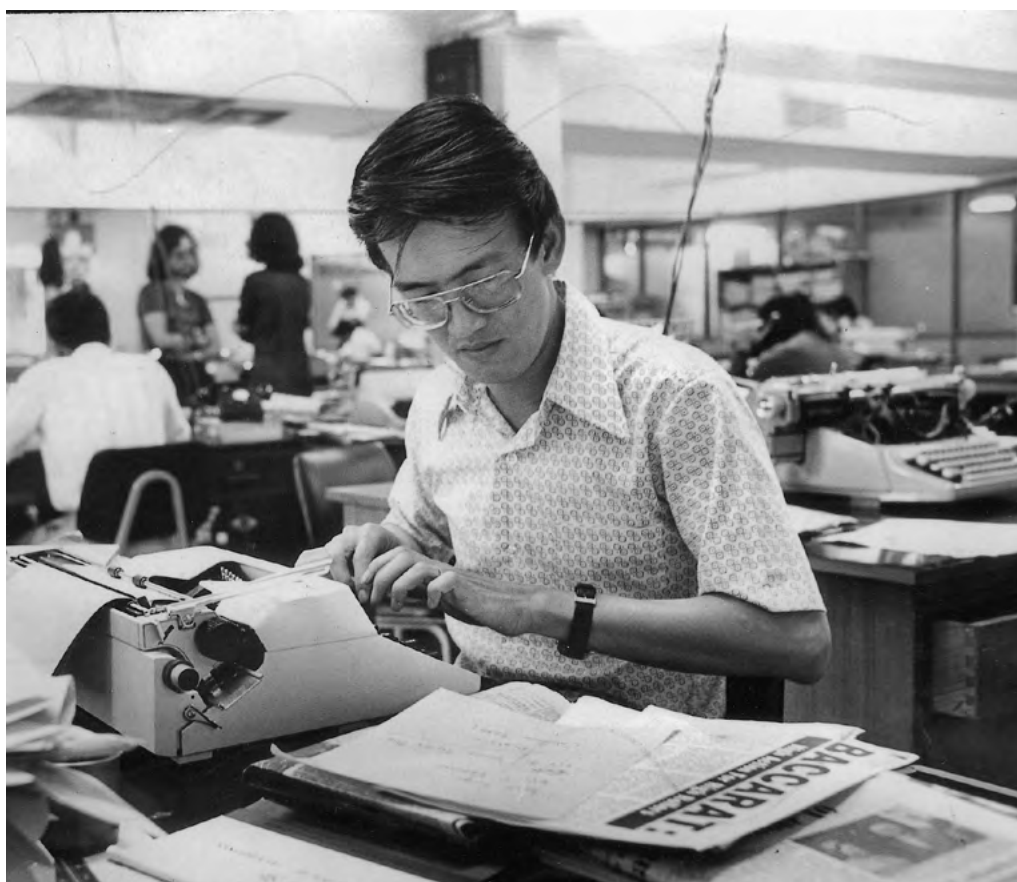
Dr Wee Kim Wee, former President of Singapore, in 2003. ST FILE PHOTO

The Suharto interview made headlines the world over, and less than a month later, Konfrontasi was over.

The chapter was far from closed, however. It took seven more years for real trust between Singapore and Indonesia to develop. It was helped by a small but significant gesture, witnessed by another Straits Times journalist.



**Mrs Janet Koh mourns her daughter Juliet, 23, who was one of the two victims of the Macdonald House Bombing on March 10, 1965. ST FILE PHOTO**



**Mr Cheong Yip Seng in 1974 when he was New Nation's assistant editor. ST PHOTO: MAK KIAN SENG**

## MACDONALD HOUSE BOMBING

Mr Cheong Yip Seng, who was to become the newspaper's editor for eight years until 1987 and its editor-in-chief for nearly two decades, was barely two years into the job when a bomb went off at the tallest building in Orchard Road. It had been planted on the mezzanine





The concrete wall separating the stairway and the correspondence room of the Hong Kong and Shanghai Bank was completely destroyed by the bomb, exposing a side of the bank's car park.

ST PHOTO: HAN HAI FONG

floor of the nine-storey MacDonald House, just over a kilometre away from the Istana, the office and residence of the President of Singapore.

“I was a rookie, barely two years into the job,” said Mr Cheong, 72, now retired.

“But my colleagues and I were pitchforked, with barely any

journalistic experience, into covering a story that was basically a struggle for Singapore’s future.”

The March 10, 1965 incident was the deadliest in Indonesia’s Konfrontasi campaign, and remains post-war Singapore’s most serious bomb attack. Some 25 pounds (11kg) of explosives had been used in the blast that killed three people and injured 33.

“I remember vividly the whole place was cordoned off when the reporters arrived, so we could only observe what was going on outside the cordon that was thrown by the police around the building,” says Mr Cheong.

“Cars could not go through. We were hanging around Orchard Road by the road divider. There was shattered glass all over the place... it was drizzling.”

The damage was extensive – lift doors and toilet doors were ripped off, the inner walls collapsed and rubble rained down on employees. The blast was of such force that it shattered the windows of buildings within a 100m radius.



The culprits, Indonesian marine commandos Osman Mohamed Ali, 23 (far left), and Harun Said, 21 (left), were caught at sea three days later. They were convicted of murder and sentenced to death.

Indonesia appealed for mercy but the Singapore Government refused. On Oct 17, 1968, both men were hanged.

Mr Cheong remembered the tensions escalating as Singapore stood firm in the face of pressure from Jakarta.

He said: “If you allowed two murderers to go scot-free, even though the Indonesian president sent a special envoy to plead for their lives, can you imagine what a terrible blow it would be to our judicial system, our system of justice? How can you free two murderers who killed three people?”

Public anger mounted in Indonesia. About 400 students raided the Singapore embassy in Jakarta and embassy staff had to be evacuated. When the bodies of the two marines were flown back, they were buried with military honours. Hundreds of thousands joined their funeral procession which extended at least 8km.





Mr Lee Kuan Yew scattering flowers on the graves of the marines on May 26, 1973, during his official visit to Jakarta. ST PHOTO: MAK KIAN SENG

## FLOWERS AT THE GRAVE

Tensions simmered until Mr Lee Kuan Yew, then prime minister, made his first official visit to Indonesia in May 1973 at the invitation of Mr Suharto, who had by then shed his general's uniform to become president.

Leading up to the three-day visit, Indonesian newspapers wrote about the mutual mistrust and “psychological barriers” between the two countries.

Mr Lee visited the Kalibata National Heroes Cemetery to lay a wreath for six Indonesian generals killed in an abortive coup that had paved the way for the Suharto presidency

Another gesture was to come.



Mr Cheong, who had travelled to Jakarta to cover the visit, watched in surprise as Mr Lee stopped to scatter flowers over the graves of the two men who had bombed MacDonald House eight years earlier.



Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew with President Suharto at his first official visit to Indonesia since Konfrontasi, on May 26, 1973. ST FILE PHOTO



Dr Dino Patti Djalal, former Indonesian ambassador to Washington, laying flowers in front of MacDonald House on March 25, 2014. ST PHOTO: LIM YAOHUI

In Indonesia, the duo were seen as heroes who were killed while carrying out a state-sanctioned mission. The country needed to see Singapore's leader make a gesture that, in Javanese belief, propitiated their souls.

"If LKY had not 'made amends' through the sprinkling of flowers, it would



not have been possible to turn the corner fully,” Mr Cheong said.

“He had to swallow the bitter pill for the sake of a new chapter in bilateral relations. That gesture, that act of contrition, if you like, made a big difference to bilateral relations.”


As a reporter, Mr Cheong would not witness a more historic occasion.

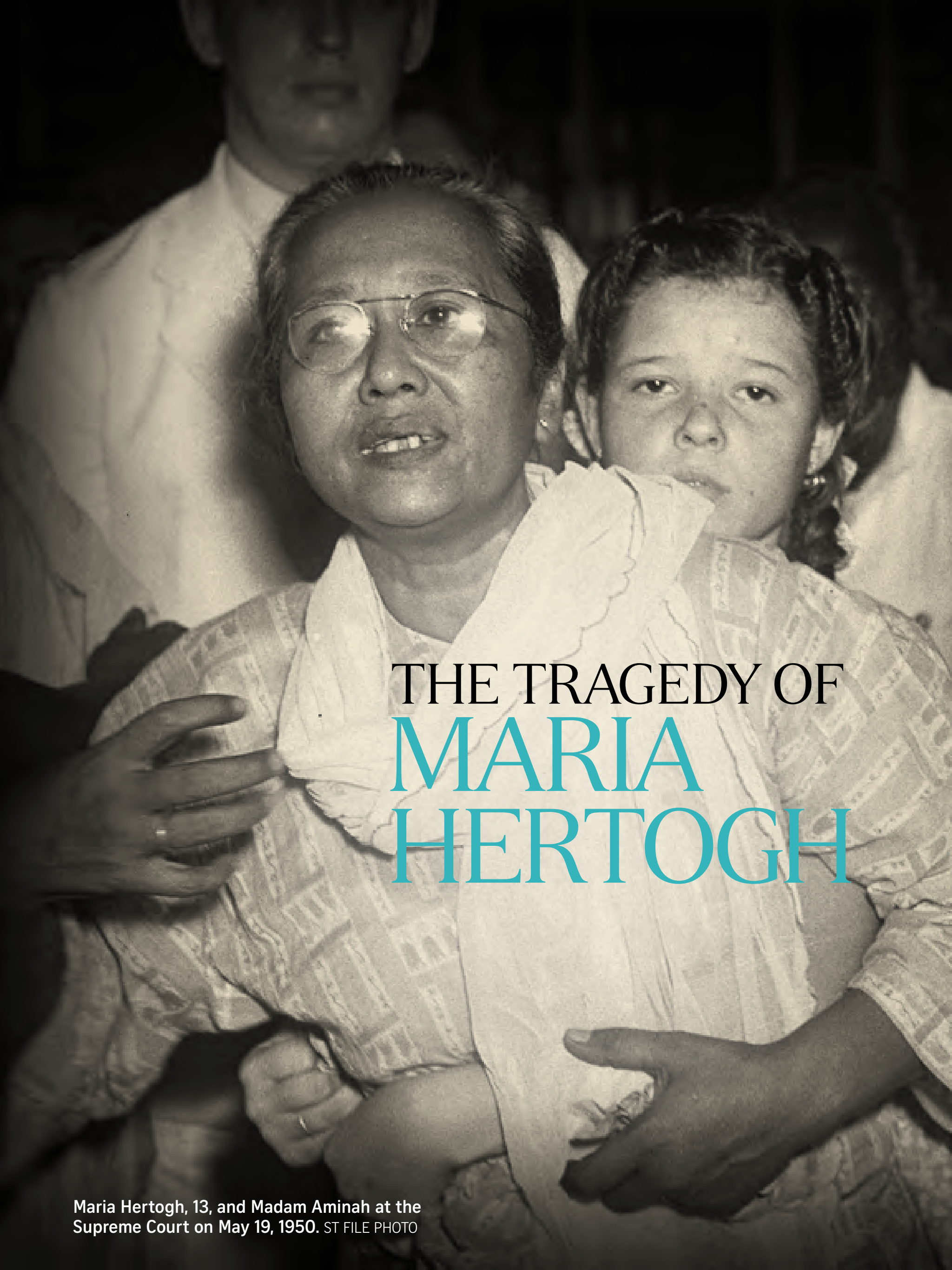
“The tone completely changed from cold hostility to one where both sides decided that we better be pragmatic about the future, be pragmatic about how we should conduct bilateral relations. We’ve got to look forward, we can’t keep looking back.”

Mr Cheong chose not to lead his story that night with PM Lee’s graveside gesture, focusing instead on the overall improvement in the relations.

During the Konfrontasi period, media reports from Jakarta were hawkish and shrill. But The Straits Times had steered clear of rhetoric.

“It helped to lower the temperature,” said Mr Cheong, although he maintains that it would “attach too much importance” to the newspaper to say its tone helped ease tensions.

But he added: “I suppose you cannot deny that The Straits Times did make a small contribution.” 



THE TRAGEDY OF  
MARIA  
HERTOGH

Maria Hertogh, 13, and Madam Aminah at the  
Supreme Court on May 19, 1950. ST FILE PHOTO





When she was 60, Maria (seated, third from left) visited her foster sister Kamariah (second from right) in Terengganu in 1998.

PHOTO: ROKAYAH YUSOF

The KLM plane stood silently on the tarmac at the Calcutta airport, wraithlike, in the cool December afternoon. A ring of armed police kept a smattering of reporters at bay. In 1950, there were yet no television camera crews jostling to record what was a major news story.

Inside the plane sat a terrified 13-year-old girl with her mother, fleeing a personal tragedy that had ballooned to engulf Singapore in a riot.







detect an ugly turn in public mood and prevent a riot that in three days left 18 dead and 173 injured as well as 72 vehicles burnt and 119 damaged.

The violence halted only after the army was called in and the country placed under curfew.

When the news of her arrival in Calcutta appeared in a Page 1 article in The Straits Times, Singapore was reported to be back to law and order. But only just.

A Straits Times reporter travelling in an armoured car

described the “strange silence” that enveloped the area around Sultan Mosque, which was under daylight curfew.

“In the still smouldering wreckage of dozens of private cars and army vehicles, shattered glass from windscreens, brickbats and broken timbering lay everywhere. But above all was the strange silence. Not a sound of life as our mobile arsenal came to a halt at every street corner.”

Maria had been raised a Muslim from age five by Malay divorcee Aminah Mohamed. But after the



Troops clearing burnt cars at the junction of North Bridge Road and Arab Street on December 13, 1950. ST FILE PHOTO



Armoured cars and troops on guard at North Bridge Road on December 12, 1950. ST FILE PHOTO

war, her biological parents, the Hertoghs, launched a legal effort to reclaim her, saying they had asked Madam Aminah to look after their daughter, not given their child to her.

The Singapore Chief Justice ruled on May 19, 1950 that Maria should be given into the care of Dutch diplomats who

would return her to parents in Holland.

Madam Aminah appealed and won on a technicality to have Maria returned, and the teen was married four days later to Mr Mansoor Adabi, a 22-year-old English teacher.

Maria's Dutch parents challenged the marriage and another court battle began.



**Mrs Adeline Hertogh, Maria's biological mother, arrives at Kallang Airport on November 14, 1950. ST FILE PHOTO**



**Maria with her husband Mansor Adabi (left) and Madam Aminah (centre) at a party on August 5, 1950. ST FILE PHOTO**



“Maria with nuns” was The Straits Times’ Page 1 headline on Dec 3, a day after the court ordered that Maria be

returned to the custody of her biological mother. The judge also declared the marriage invalid, sending ripples of shock through the Muslim community, who had viewed it as properly solemnised.

Maria slept that night in the lodgings of a convent school, where The Straits Times said her re-education was to begin right away. Red-eyed and still dressed in Malay attire, Maria asked The Straits Times reporter who met her: “How is my foster mother?”

A day later, the reporter spotted Maria running hand-in-hand with a friend at the convent and wrote another Page 1 story: “Maria is a little girl again.”

In the next few days, The Straits Times, along with other newspapers of the time, the Singapore Tiger Standard and Utusan Melayu, photographed her. The Straits Times showed her



Maria with a nun on December 2, 1950 (top) and with her mother at a convent on December 4, 1950 (bottom).  
ST FILE PHOTOS

playing dominoes with her mother; the Standard showed her holding hands with the Mother Superior, along with a report that said she had knelt before the Virgin Mary statue. The Malay newspaper Utusan Melayu reported she had pleaded for their reporter's help and showed her weeping.

The Muslim community was enraged that her marriage had been invalidated. Passions were stoked further by radical politicians who viewed the affair as a means to undermine the colonial authorities.

On Dec 11, more than 2,000 people gathered to hear an appeal against the judgment. It was dismissed within minutes. Rioting broke out soon after, mobs blindly targeted any European or Eurasian in sight. Hundreds were arrested, mainly for breaking the curfew.



Hundreds wait outside the Supreme Court on December 11, 1950 to catch a glimpse of Maria. ST FILE PHOTO





Protestors wrecking havoc at Padang on December 11, 1950 (top). A fire-fighter extinguishing a destroyed van on the same day (bottom). ST FILE PHOTOS

# 'I always cry when I think of her'

## **Maria Hertogh's niece Rokayah Yusof**

**(right)**, 68, still gets emotional when she recalls how her "Auntie Nadra's" (far left) life was turned upside down when she was separated from her family in Malaya



and returned to The Netherlands.

Maria was adopted by a Malay woman, Che Aminah, during World War II when she was five years old. She was brought up as a Muslim in Terengganu and took on a Malay name: Nadra Ma'arof.

Trouble began when her biological parents tried to claim her back after the Japanese surrendered. The resulting legal battle lasted for more than half a year, and when Maria was returned to her Dutch parents at age 13, riots broke out in Singapore. The three days of violence left 18 people dead.

"I always cry when I think of her," Madam Yusof, a retired English teacher who lives in Kemaman kampung in Terengganu, told The Straits Times in a telephone interview.

"My mother had a good life, she was very lucky. Eight children who were close to her



and my father to take care of her. But not Auntie Nadra."

Her late mother Kamariah (far left) was 10

years older than Maria (right). A Japanese, she had been adopted in Tokyo by Che Aminah when she lived there with her lecturer husband.

Madam Yusof said her last meeting with Maria was on the eve of Hari Raya in 1998,

When the fury abated and Singapore began asking why a custody battle could prove so inflammable, fingers were pointed at the newspapers.

In London, the House of Commons and British press had criticised the "inept handling" of the Maria Hertogh case and its bloody sequel, The Straits Times reported on Page 1.

Police officers giving evidence before a commission of inquiry said two factors had precipitated the violence: putting a child raised as a Muslim in a convent and the emotional press reports and photographs which had stirred up passions.

The Straits Times ran a letter from a European reader who was categorical: "The one absolutely cardinal blunder was the story prominently published in a Singapore newspaper that Maria had knelt in worship before the statue of Our Lady of Fatima. In Muslim eyes, the worship of images is anathema. That, more than any other story, inflamed Muslim feeling."

The Straits Times was not that newspaper; its photographs had steered clear of religious imagery and its reports had explored the human dimensions in Maria's story – the tug-of-war over a child, Maria's love and heartache, the hopes of a foster-mum, the distress of a biological one.



when Maria made a surprise visit from Holland, accompanied by Dutch journalists.

"There were so many of us at my mother's house, we had all come back home for Hari Raya. My mother finally met her after 48 years of separation," she said.

"We all hugged and cried.

We had so much to catch up on that night.

"My mother gave Nadra a baju kurung (traditional Malay outfit) to wear for Hari Raya and, because it was the festive season, we had prepared a lot of traditional Malay snacks that Nadra said she had missed."

Madam Yusof recalled that after so many decades away, Maria still spoke Malay well.

"I spoke to her in English, but she kept answering in Malay, so we ended up conversing in Malay and even used Indonesian slang."

The unexpected visit lasted two nights and Maria took time to visit the grave of Che Aminah, who had died in 1976.

Madam Yusof said her conversation with Maria revealed that Maria was unhappy for most of her life in Holland.

It was a far cry from the kampung life she had enjoyed, with Che Aminah doting on her. She had received several death and abduction threats and was under police protection.

"She told me the police would follow her to school and she couldn't speak freely," said Madam Yusof.

After her visit, Maria kept in close contact with the family of Madam Yusof, who wrote letters to her regularly and called her every month.

Maria died in 2009, but her children still keep in touch with Madam Yusof and her children.

Madam Yusof said she continues to collect information about Maria, carefully filing away all news stories that mention her.

"The story is not complete yet," she said.


"There are still a lot of details that are missing."

In a piece dissecting the tragedy, The Straits Times also felt that "Muslim feeling was affronted by Maria's stay in a Catholic school at a moment when utmost prudence was necessary rather than merely desirable."

But it also recognised that reporting responsibly in a multicultural society meant being aware of racial or religious tensions that can be invisible until they ignite.

When Singapore experienced Chinese Malay riots in 1964, the newspaper was mindful of the need to play down trouble. Similarly, during the 1969 racial riots in Kuala Lumpur, The Straits Times made no mention of race while reporting the violence, a practice it has kept to this day. The mob were described as "rioters", "curfew-breakers" and "armed youths", rather than by their ethnic identities.

For Singapore, the incident was a painful lesson that tolerance and understanding are paramount in keeping the peace.

In the ensuing years, the Government single-mindedly put in place policies to integrate the different races, such as through public housing quotas to prevent racial enclaves, and through national education. There have been no race riots since the country's independence in 1965. 



# TIMES CAPSULE

If you were a resident of Katong in the late 1800s, it is likely you were a victim of a petty crime, ST reported. Still, it had the seaside charm of a weekend spot.

Katong, 2002



A shophouse at Joo Chiat slated for conservation. The familiar sight of old juxtaposed with new is an outcome of decades of development and change in Katong. Since 1993, the Urban Redevelopment Authority has gazetted more than 800 buildings in Joo Chiat to preserve their unique architecture. ST PHOTO: JAMES CROUCHER



## Katong, 1952



Growing demand for seaside recreation led to the construction of Katong Park in the 1930s. Katong Park was most famous for its swimming bay, which was enclosed by a pagar (a fence) to protect swimmers from shark attacks and strong waves. ST FILE PHOTO



## Katong, 1963



During the Konfrontasi years when Singapore was part of Malaysia, Katong was attacked thrice by Indonesian saboteurs. The first two bombs let off at Katong Park in September 1963 failed to incur significant damage, but the third one, planted on the rear axle of a car on Oct 7, 1963, was more devastating. The force of the explosion overturned the car and threw it against the park railing. "I heard an explosion. When I ran out, I saw my car on fire," said Mr Low Poh Lin, a lifeguard at Katong Park who was the owner of the broken car, a Black Mayflower. Nobody was injured.

ST FILE PHOTO



# Katong, 1969



Roads and walkways in Katong became congested with the growing population of residents and students. The chaos at bus stops led the Safety First Council to start a "queue-up at the bus stops" campaign. This queue of children stretched 400m down the road from the bus stop outside Tanjong Katong Girls' School. ST PHOTO: CHRISTOPHER LOH NJ



## Katong, 1974



Tanjong Katong and Joo Chiat are widely known for their rich Peranakan roots. But in the 19th century, wealthy Chinese and European immigrants also built bungalows and recreational facilities there. Back then, Katong faced the sea. Its sea view and cooling breeze gave it a relaxed atmosphere, attracting hundreds of people every weekend.

ST PHOTO: JUNID JUANI



## Katong, 1991



The presence of the Hollywood Theatre probably further augmented Joo Chiat's popularity in the late 20th century. The Hollywood Theatre was famous for screening Chinese blockbusters in the 1960s and 1970s. It even staged live performances by popular Hong Kong movie stars such as Siao Fong Fong and Fung Bo Bo. As other cinemas sprouted up with better facilities, the theatre's blue mosaic tiles and faded colour photographs of old movie stars made way for a church, a supermarket and finally OneKM today.

ST PHOTO: LIM SIN THAI



## Katong, 2014



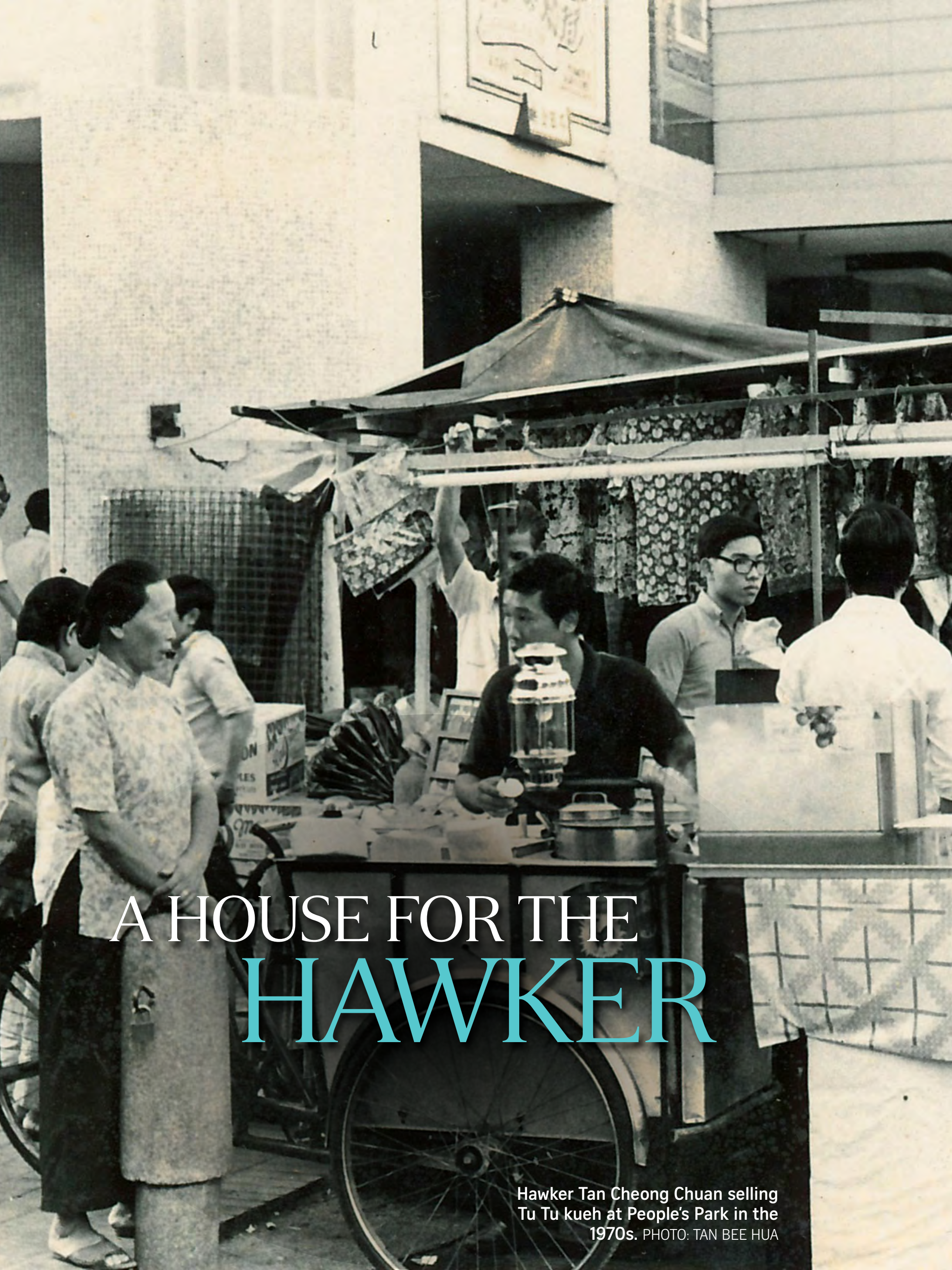
OneKM now stands where the Hollywood Theatre was. Since the mixed-used development opened at Tanjong Katong Road in November 2014, new cafes have been springing up further along the stretch. Positioned as a lifestyle and knowledge mall, OneKM targets nearby office workers, residents and students. ST PHOTO: NEO XIAOBIN





# 170 YEARS OF SINGAPORE LIFE





# A HOUSE FOR THE HAWKER

Hawker Tan Cheong Chuan selling  
Tu Tu kueh at People's Park in the  
1970s. PHOTO: TAN BEE HUA





Ah Koong fishball noodles stall on October 26, 2006 at Food Republic, a food court set in early 20th century style at Vivocity.  
TNP PHOTO: MOHD ISHAK

There was a time when hawkers riding trishaws with tinny bells were as common a sight in Singapore as are people today with eyes glued to smartphones.

Until they were swept off the streets and moved into markets with roofs, walls, taps, drains and gas connections, the hawkers were footloose purveyors of cheap food described simultaneously as tasty and of doubtful quality. A



somewhat endangered species today, the hawkers made it through the rough, early days of Singapore and even defined those times.



The hawker was sometimes seen as a nuisance because his unsanitary methods brought on ravages such as cholera and typhoid. Here, a street hawker makes the rounds in the Singapore Improvement Trust (SIT) flats in Tiong Bahru, on September 12, 1961 (left). Another is captured in this October 19, 1935 photo, waiting to fill his buckets with water on. ST FILE PHOTOS

At the turn of 19th century, hawkers began to make cameo appearances in *The Straits Times* – for all the wrong reasons. Sometimes, they were accused of crime or engaging in questionable activity. One of the earliest mentions of a hawker is from the July 28, 1898 edition. The unnamed man was “fined with two dollars, or three days, for gambling with cakes with children”.

Another, also unnamed, was fined \$15, in default of 15 days’ rigorous imprisonment, for “obstruction with baskets” on March 13, 1901. He had been fined earlier, the short report noted grimly. Was he perhaps the same man who was fined \$2 on March 5 for slapping a woman on the face? “Evidence showed that the woman quarrelled with the hawker over the purchase of some fruit. He objected to her returning the fruit and she tore his coat. He slapped her face.”



One of the earliest pictures of a hawker appeared in The Straits Times on January 24, 1934. Woolworth's on wheels! said the caption of the faded black-and-white photograph of a man on a trishaw, his face in shadows under the trademark conical hat. "This enterprising hawker can sell you anything from a pair of chopsticks to a dinner service," it continued. Readers never learned his name though.

Still, by then, the hawker had assumed a certain place in the Singaporean's life. He had come to seem desirable. The

Sunday Times, June 27, 1937 (left), almost saluted him with a photo spread. "The Singapore itinerant hawker is an indispensable man to many thousands of people, whatever may be said of his unsanitary methods. To these thousands, the sound of the ice-waterman's tinkle is like sweet music and the sight of him riding along on his tricycle more welcome than a chariot from the heavens.

"What a necessary part the cake and fruit seller, the ice-cream man, the newspaper boy, the satay seller, the cobbler, the cigarette vendor and the



hundred and one other people, who bring their wares to their customer's doors play in the everyday lives of Singapore's citizens.

"At some time or the other in the day, they are to be seen in any street in town. They appear in the smallest villages. They find their way into the most inaccessible country lanes

to delight kiddies and receive the silent blessing of eyes."

In 1930s Chinatown, for instance, it was common to see "baskets being lowered from the fourth storey to the hawker in the street", in what was probably the country's first incarnation of home delivery. But mostly, it was concluded, the hawker was a nuisance. His unsanitary methods caused disease, especially the reckless disposal of refuse.

### ***This Is The Hawker Problem....***



THIS photograph of Trengganu Street, Singapore, was taken by Kok Ah Chong, Straits Times staff photographer, a few days ago. It was taken in the morning, with the street completely blocked to traffic by street hawkers and the buying public. A Singapore Hawker Inquiry Commission is now investigating the hawker problem in its social and economic aspects.



Singapore's colonial government saw the hawker as little more than a risk to public health. Unkempt and unorganised these “peripatetic” men and women obstructed traffic and impeded pedestrian flow. They competed with the government for land use. Sometimes, they were accused of trying to bribe policemen. The Straits Times reported on Page 2 on May 3, 1898, that a hawker was fined \$5 or 14 days' in jail for offering 10 cents to a policeman to release him.



**Illegal hawkers facing police action on May 23, 1959 at Raffles Place (top) and at Change Alley (bottom) on July 22, 1960. ST PHOTOS: MAK KIAN SENG AND WAN SENG YIP**



**Hawkers can be seen spread around Raffles Place in this photo from April 6, 1959. ST PHOTO: MAK KIAN SENG**

The tension between the law enforcer and the hawker continued through the 1930s and 1940s and even into the 50s. The more common problems were with unlicensed hawkers setting up stalls along areas like Boat Quay. Police would demolish these rickety structures and confiscate their supplies and food items. In these battles, the public often took the side of the hawkers, according to The Straits Times records.





Wayside hawkers spill onto streets and obstruct traffic in the streets of Chinatown on January 16, 1958 (top) and Hock Lam Street, a popular eating spot of the 1950s. In the 1970s, Hock Lam Street was redeveloped and Funan Centre was built over the site in 1985. ST PHOTOS: HAN HAI FONG and K.F. SEETOH



A hawker selling bird's nest drinks at Maxwell Road on August 16, 1957. ST PHOTO: WAN SENG YIP

Soon after the Japanese Occupation, the British colonial government came up with a policy in 1950 to house the hawkers at centralised locations. Predictably, this was easier said than done.

It was not until the late 1960s, in independent Singapore, that order came.

After an island-wide hawkers' registration, the government announced on

Aug 4, 1970 that all 25,000 hawkers in Singapore were to be cleared off the street under a massive five-year scheme. The policy, which sparked what can be called “pre-emptive” nostalgia for hawker haunts that were soon to disappear,



drove some Straits Times writers to wax lyrical about them.

A Straits Times report on Aug 9, 1970 chronicled the atmosphere at these noisy, egalitarian places that came alive after dark and where millionaires and mechanics sat and ate alongside each other.



**Hawkers in Bugis Street in October 1985, serving beef noodles, wanton mee, chicken porridge and raw fish, just before the area was demolished to make way for the development of the underground MRT network. The area was known for attracting transvestites.**

ST PHOTOS: TAN SUAN ANN

Bugis Street (left), then a top tourist haunt in Singapore, was described as a place of inimitable colour and curiosity value. As famous for beef kway teow as for people who went there not only to eat but also to see and be seen. “Its habitues, hip swinging and handbag twirling, with their occasional escorts, are a piquant contrast with the sober appearance of tables spread with white cloth,” said the report, referring to

the transvestites who flocked to the area.

It spoke of the unique serenity of the Satay Club in Hoi How Street in Beach Road. “Many who visit it will regret the passing of its intrinsic features: the flickering flame in a container of oil and water, the steady fanning of charcoal



A family enjoys a satay feast at Satay Club on September 7, 1952. ST FILE PHOTO

brazier and the revving of buses just across the narrow side street.”

In Hokkien Street, celebrated for prawn noodles, hawkers would slit the shrimp and ladle soup into bowls of noodles for their faithful clientele: millionaires, government ministers, cabaret girls, night-shift workers and couples looking for a snack after a date at the cinema or

nightclub. Sometimes, those doing the slitting and the ladling were millionaires themselves, although clad in the unofficial hawker uniform of singlet, shorts and slippers. Fatty was one such icon. “In Albert Street we basked in the good company of 46-year-old Au Chan Seng, better known as Fatty. “Widely rumoured to be a millionaire from his chilly crab, sweet and



“Fatty” Au Chan Seng and his son “Skinny” Au Kok Wing in their restaurant at Albert Complex in 1986. ST PHOTO: WAN SENG YIP

sour pork, shark’s fin soup, roast chicken and fish-head, he is a voluble and entertaining talker. Hear him speak with gay frankness of the family’s 47-year-old restaurant and two stalls outside: The sooner the government move us into



hawker centres the better – the street is crawling with cats, rats and bugs. I’ve maintained the stalls only to please my old Pa, he started the business and has great attachment to them.”

Fatty was a hawker that a newspaper reporter could love. He was the only one who could “cook, roast and cut” among his 11 siblings who were teachers, lecturers and chartered accountants.

The moon-faced hawker, a tourist attraction in his own right, was often seen in a chauffeur-driven Mercedes Benz although he told ST it was his father’s car. Fatty’s restaurant was eventually relocated to Bencoolen Street and although he died in 2000, it continues to draw crowds.

The transformation of Singapore’s street food culture, with the ushering in of hawker centres built with modern amenities, happened quietly in the mid-1970s. The Government doggedly pursued the hawkers, coaxing them to move in, educating them and holding them to higher standards of hygiene. Newspaper coverage focus mainly on the benefits of this uniquely Singaporean attraction: the availability of

affordable local fare in clean surroundings. The first hawker centre built by the Government in post-independent Singapore was Yung Sheng Road Hawker Centre, now called the Taman



**Former Yung Sheng Food Centre, Singapore’s first hawker centre built in 1972.** ST PHOTO: LIM YAOHUI

Jurong Market & Food Centre. At its opening in July 1972, layed in keeping the cost of living down, which was among





Crowd at the revamped Lau Pa Sat on July 3, 2014, after it improved ventilation and increased seating space. ST PHOTO: LIM YAOHUI

the reasons why millions of dollars were spent in setting up hawker centres.

By 1986, all the hawkers had been resettled. At last, the Singapore hawker had a roof over his head, with all the facilities – water, electricity, gas, waste disposal, ventilation, freezer and wash areas - that made for a safe and pleasant dining experience. The rating of the hawker stalls for cleanliness and food handling, from A to D, offered an assurance that the era of suspect hawker hygiene, associated with typhoid and cholera outbreaks, had passed.

For more than 20 years after that, no hawker centres were built. Residents of new HDB estates especially longed for these eating places which offer good food at affordable prices. People also mourned that the nation's food heritage was on the wane amid growing recognition that the hawker was a uniquely Singaporean institution worth preserving.





Young hawkers (from top): Jason with his father Koh Ah Koon at their Garden Street Kway Chap stall in 2005; Mr Malik Hassan, who gave up his aviation dream to steer his father's Selera Rasa stall; and the Chan sisters behind the Chocolat N' Spice bakery at Shunfu market in 2004. ST PHOTOS: LAU FOOK KONG AND SEAH KWANG PENG



Madam Betty Kong, owner of Kay Lee Roast Meat Joint in Upper Paya Lebar. ST PHOTO: DESMOND FOO


In October 2011, the Government announced that 10 hawker centres would be built in new towns such as Pasir Ris, Jurong and Punggol. And in March 2015, plans were announced for another 10 new hawker centres by 2027 to make affordable hawker fare more widely available.

Recently, some university graduates made news when they swapped their briefcases for frying pans to become hawkerpreneurs. At the same time, many famous hawkers, now in their 70s, are giving up as their children show no interest in taking over the business. Some, however, are quitting with a tidy profit while keeping Singapore's food heritage alive.

Madam Betty Kong, 68, and her husband Ha Wai Kay, 64, made headlines in 2012 when they put up their 30-year-old hawker business for sale, at an eye-popping \$3.5 million. Of the asking price, \$2 million alone was for their secret Guangzhou-style barbecue recipe. The couple had hoped their 32-year-old son would take over but he chose to stay on in Australia after his studies.

In 2014, their Kay Lee Roast Meat Joint, in an old shophouse in Upper Paya Lebar Road, was sold for \$4 million to Aztech Group. The conglomerate made it a franchise and opened

several outlets. Madam Kong said she and her husband would work with the new owners to ensure the signature Kay Lee style survives. "We wanted the name to continue successfully and we will support them. When I'm 90 years old, Kay Lee will still be here," she told The Straits Times on Oct 21, 2014.

In other words, the hawker has not left the building. 





# MYSTERY VISITORS TO THE LION CITY AND OTHER TALES

A subdued bull elephant (centre) is led off by trained elephants in an operation on June 9, 1990 to capture the jungle giants who had strayed into Pulau Tekong. ST PHOTO: ALBERT CHUA





A footprint, believed to be that of a young elephant, seen on the ground softened by rain, in Pulau Tekong on June 6, 1990.

ST PHOTO: ALBERT CHUA

**T**he creatures seemed to have materialised from nowhere, on the island of Pulau Tekong used by the Singapore Armed Forces for training.

They were clearly not denizens of the sea: large footprints had trampled over grass, coconut trees lay uprooted and large droppings were left behind.

A group of national servicemen first spotted the jungle giants around end-May 1990 and reported the sighting to incredulous officers. Officials from the Defence Ministry and the Singapore Zoo made several trips to the island but



saw nothing.

The Zoo analysed the dung and confirmed it came from elephants, which it emerged, had swum the 1.5km expanse from Johor.

The three wild elephants had probably been driven away by forest-clearing and logging in Johor, the officials surmised.



Two wild elephants knocked out by tranquilliser darts fired by the members of an elephant capture team in on June 8, 1990. PHOTO: SINGAPORE ZOO

For the Singapore Armed Forces, the three animals in their training ground became a jumbo-sized problem.

But Singaporeans could not get enough of the unexpected visitors, several called The Straits Times to say the elephants should be allowed to stay.

The solution, in the end, was a new home in a Malaysian forest reserve. After a brief stay in Singapore, from late May



to June 10, the three bull elephants were captured with the help of Malaysian wildlife experts and taken by lorry to Endau Rompin Park on the border of Johor and Pahang, where they were released.

The visitors left but revealed a hitherto hidden aspect of Singapore. “Singaporeans do care - some even passionately – about conservation of wildlife even though they live in a highly-urbanised country,” The Straits Times observed in a report on June 18.



**An affectionate pair of Purple Herons claim their spot in the Sungei Buloh Nature Park on March 15, 2002. The park also plays host to plovers, sandpipers and bitterns at different times of the year.**

ST PHOTO: STEPHANIE YEOW

A soft spot for the island’s diverse flora and fauna has often motivated Singaporeans to launch conservation campaigns like the one in 1986 to save the bird haven of Sungei Buloh, home to more than 200 avian species, as well as a few salt water crocodiles. In another instance, passionate nature lovers worked with the authorities to





An Oriental Pied Hornbill plucks a berry off the Alexandra palm at Pasir Ris Park on April 3, 2014.  
ST PHOTO: MOHDI ISHAK



A family of smooth-coated otters has made Sungei Buloh its home since the late 1990s. PHOTO: BRANDON CHIA

preserve Chek Jawa in 2001, an oasis on the island of Pulau Ubin, so untouched that it offers a glimpse of what Singapore's shores could have looked like before the 1950s.

Meticulous planning as well as research, public education, reforestation and clean-up

projects have also led to a few success stories for the animals.

The oriental pied hornbill, for instance, had once disappeared. But it was taken from captivity to help strengthen numbers of Singapore's native creatures, and now, is a fairly common sight in parks here.

In recent years, families of the critically-endangered, smooth-coated otter have begun charming visitors with



their antics in mangroves, coastal areas and even urban parks and drains.

But perhaps the honour of most frequently mentioned animal in The Straits Times should go to the tiger.

Singapore's first zoo, established in the Singapore Botanic Gardens grounds in 1875, housed a tiger. On May 18, 1896, a reader wrote in to The Straits Times to complain of animal cruelty. But he did not mean the tiger. He was distressed about a live dog being put in the cage to feed it.

"Can you not break a lance in your much-read paper for our faithful quadruped friends?" the writer asked.

More often, though, stories in The Straits Times were about tigers of the uncaged variety.

"Excursionists to Changhie may, if so inclined, have a tiger hunt," began an article on April 3, 1875. It was a short report, unusually so given its grave content, about the appearance of the "Pulo Obin man-eater", who had already killed a man. The animal had been seen by a policeman as he went about "trimming the lamp". In the days without electricity, this meant trimming the wick of street lamps, to keep the flame burning clean and bright.

Sightings were not uncommon at the time.

"We have had reports of a tiger being seen about Singapore; first he was seen on two or three occasions near Changhie; then he was heard of at Siglap; and then there were signs of him near the Botanical Gardens, and there seemed ground for hope, that H.R.H would exhibit himself, if not among the animals at the Gardens, at least as a mark for some of our sportsmen," said a report on November 6, 1875. "We now hear of him at Seletar."

On March 24, 1935, the king of the jungle earned prime billing: a banner headline across Page 1 that screamed: 'TRACKER FINDS SINGAPORE TIGER'. A small blurb assured The Sunday Times readers it was NOT A MAN-EATER.

A 'beat' was organised to hunt 'Mr Stripes', as The Straits Times dubbed him.

In the early 20th century, a tiger reportedly visited the iconic Raffles Hotel for tea. The wild cat hid beneath a billiard table and was shot square between the eyes by the school principal of Raffles Institution, The Straits Times reported on August 13, 1902.

Not as majestic as the tiger, but feared nonetheless, were crocodiles and sharks. In February 1904, a column titled 'Singapore's Excitements' boasted about a macabre haul. "There are few cities for instance which can boast like Singapore of having had two crocodiles captured and a tiger killed within the limits of one week."

THE OCEAN  
ACCIDENT  
AND  
GUARANTEE  
CORPORATION,  
(Incorporated in Great  
Britain.)  
Head Office for Malaya  
SINGAPORE.

# THE SUNDAY TIMES

THE LEADING SUNDAY NEWSPAPER IN MALAYA.

No. 170. Sunday, March 24, 1935. Price 10 cents.

5 A. M.  
EDITION

CLEAN  
MOTOR  
POLICIES

## TRACKER FINDS SINGAPORE TIGER

### AFTER TRAILING HIM FOR A WEEK NOT A MAN-EATER BEAT NOW TO BE ORGANISED

DEFINITE EVIDENCE OF A TIGER BEING AT LARGE IN SINGAPORE ISLAND WAS FURNISHED TO THE SUNDAY TIMES YESTERDAY.

It was revealed that an experienced tracker had been trailing Master Stripes for the past week, and had found his lair. This tracker is employed by Mr. A. J. Braga, the well-known lawyer-sportsman.

The tiger is believed to have swum the Straits of Johore, as others have done in the past. A beat is being organised.

"I CAN LEAD YOU TO HIM"

Tiger is now prowling about in a jungle reserve off Bukit Timah Road.

"Yesterday an old Malay tracker waited into an office in Raffles Place to tell his master the news.

"Tuan," he said simply, "the tiger that they talk about is here. For four days and nights I have been on his trail. I have seen the marks of his feet, one day here and one night there.

"I can lead you to him now."

The tracker's master, Mr. A. J. Braga, Singapore lawyer and a first-class shot, put down his briefs and asked for details.

The Malay said he first saw the tiger's pug-marks between the 14th and 16th milestones, Lim Chu Kang Road.

This bears out the story of a Chinese trader of the Straits Times who wrote to the editor following a report from a European.

This European said he "distinctly" heard the roar of a tiger or some similar animal" as he and a friend descended from the summit of Bukit Timah Hill a week ago.

The Chinese reported that the tiger's footprints had been seen and that, judging from these impressions, the beast probably weighed about 200 lb. No depositions were reported by pugny breeders and was pronounced the best was heading for survivors outside the district of Lim Chu Kang.

Mr. Braga's tracker gives the weight of the beast as 200 lb., probably three-quarters grown.

"This was not the first Mr. Braga had heard of Singapore's tiger. A few months back shooting parties reported to him that they had seen a cub in the vicinity of the Macao Reservoir, and Mr. Braga himself saw the young animal's footprints there.

Interviewed before he went to Kuala Lumpur to attend the races this week, Mr. H. R. Kivran, the tracker, who also does a good deal of shooting.

#### HONOURING HANDEL



A torchlight procession at Halle, Germany, at the celebration of the 125th anniversary of the birth of Handel, the great composer. Handel was born in Halle, but he composed his finest work in England, and became a British subject.

#### RUSSIA HANDS OVER C.E.R. FIRST PAYMENT MADE.

Halle, Saturday.

The Soviet Government today formally handed over control of the Chinese Eastern Railway to the Manchukuo Government.

The transfer ceremony was held at Halle on the conclusion of which the Soviet representative and Mr. Ting Chien-hua, Manchukuo Minister of Communications, shook hands.

Several thousand Japanese railwaymen, who had arrived recently to take over the jobs vacated by the Soviet Russians, were present, besides many high Japanese and Manchukuo officials.

The management of the newly-acquired railway is in the hands of the C.E.R. sale agreement was signed at the official residence of Mr. Hirota, Japanese Foreign Minister, this morning.

Immediately afterwards, a cheque for an undischarged sum, representing payment of the first instalment of the purchase price of the railway was handed to M. Vorontzoff, Soviet Minister in Tokio and chief delegate during the protracted negotiations that led to the sale.

The Chinese Government spokesman in Shanghai today declined to comment upon the transfer.—Lin Chew Jit Poh.

#### CURRENT ACCOUNTS BANKS TO MAKE CHARGE

A service charge on current accounts of less than £1,000 is to be made by banks in Malaya as from April 1, according to a circular issued by the Malayan Exchange Bank Association.

The charge will be 85 per cent per annum on current deposits exceeding an average balance during the six months of less than £1,000.

A reduction is also to be made in the interest on current deposit accounts.

#### MANAGED CURRENCY FOR CHINA? FINANCIERS AND NEW BOND ISSUE

Shanghai, Saturday.

The strengthening of the capital of the three leading Chinese banks by means of the new £10,000,000 bond issue is regarded in financial circles here as the first step towards managed currency.

Meanwhile, the printing of the bonds is being rushed in order to ensure their issue on April 1.

A suggestion that China exchange her silver for American gold is held to be impracticable as most of the silver in China is held by the people and not the government.—Lin Chew Jit Poh.

#### CURED BARMAN NOW CHASING HIS SHIP

H. Phipps, the third bar-keeper of the Empress of Britain who was found to be suffering from malaria when the 43,000 tons world-cruising liner was in Singapore on May 1, has been cured and is being sent after his ship.

It was at first thought that Phipps had only contracted a cold, and the ship's doctors were undecided. They finally sent him to a port health officer an hour before the Empress of Britain sailed, and Phipps' malady was diagnosed as malaria.

He was immediately taken off, landed on St. John's Island and detained in hospital there, while crew's quarters in the Empress were fumigated.

Now, completely cured from his mild attack, he has been discharged from the quarantine station, and will board a Jardine steamer for Hong Kong. If he does not pick up his ship there, there will have to chase her north to Japan.

#### ITALY'S 1,000,000 MEN

Rome, Saturday.

The remainder of the 1931 class of conscripts has been called to the colours as a precautionary step.

This brings the number of troops with the colours up to some 400,000. In addition, there are about 400,000 Fascist militia armed with rifles and machine-guns. So Italy will have over a million men under arms.—Reuter.

#### U.S. SUPPORTS TREATIES

London, Saturday.

It is reported from Washington that the American Secretary of State, Mr. Cordell Hull, stated yesterday that the United States Government were closely following developments in the European situation.

He said that the United States had always asserted that treaties must constitute the foundation for any stable peace structure and that they would always use their influence to encourage strict adherence to treaty provisions.

He added that all who believed in the peaceful settlement of international problems felt increasing concern at the general tendencies of nations to fail to adhere to the letter and spirit of treaty engagements.—British Wire.

#### BISHOP OF SINGAPORE

(From Our Own Correspondent)

Ipoh, Saturday.

Twenty-three candidates were confirmed by the Bishop of Singapore at St. John's Church. The Bishop's address was translated into Chinese and Tamil.

Tomorrow the Bishop will install the Rev. Mr. Oliver as Chaplain for South Perak.

#### MR. LYONS IN LONDON

London, Saturday.

The Australian Premier, Mr. Lyons, who arrived in London on Thursday, made courtesy calls yesterday on the Prime Minister and Mr. Snowden. It has been arranged that Mr. Lyons and other Ministers and the Australian delegates shall meet the British Ministers next Monday.—British Wire.

#### KILLED BY CAR

(From Our Own Correspondent)

Kuala Lumpur, Saturday.

A Tamil pedestrian, not yet identified, was knocked down and killed in this town by a car belonging to Mr. Davies Officer in Charge of Police District, Campbell Road Police Station, who was in the car with a spy driving.

#### SENTECE INCREASED

(From Our Own Correspondent)

Ipoh, Saturday.

Convicted in the police court and fined £10 each for voluntarily causing grievous hurt to a constable, two Tamils, aged Mr. Terrell, appearing for the applicants today, asked to be allowed to withdraw the appeal.

The DPP submitted that the magistrate dealt with the sentence with leniency that was unwarranted. His Lordship agreed and altered the sentence to three months' imprisonment.

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#### ATTACK UPON ROOSEVELT

Barranquilla, Colombia, Saturday.

A slashing attack against the Roosevelt regime is made by Mr. Herbert Hoover, former President, writing in the Colombia Republican Assembly. Mr. Hoover urges that the present conception of national economy based on scarcity must be reversed to economy based on production.

"The most solemn Government obligations have been repudiated and the nation is faced by the greatest debt in her history," writes Mr. Hoover.

Currency has been rendered untenable, the cost of living is steadily increasing, and more people than ever are dependent on the Government for relief, while recovery is still delayed.

Before us is a sink into which our great nation after another is falling, and America today must look at greedily to the creative impulses of free men and women for economic recovery. The freedom of men to think, act and achieve is being hampered.—Reuter.

#### NO QUOTA CHANGE EXPECTED

(From Our Own Correspondent)

London, Saturday.

London rubber interests are anxiously awaiting the meeting of the International Committee on Tuesday next. For there is a possibility of the committee revising the current export quota in order to bolster up the still very weak market.

It is impossible to obtain an inkling of the committee's intentions but the sentiment here do not anticipate any change, as it is now believed that world stocks of rubber are coming down by 15,000 tons a month and a gradual rise in price is to be expected with the restoration of confidence in the commodity markets generally.—Sunday Times copyright.

#### LONDON RUBBER

London, Saturday.

RUBBER (Questions as supplied by Symington and Wilson.)

Spot (Buyers)	51 1/4
Jan.-Mar.	51 1/4
Apr.-June	51 1/4
July-Sept.	51 1/4

Market Quiet.

Spot	27 1/4
Forward	27 1/4

CROSS RATE

London-New York, 47.	
New York-London, 47.	

(Rate as supplied by the London Gold and Silver Market.)

Gold	160s. 14.
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#### SINGAPORE RUBBER

Daily Prices (Current For R.M.S. No. 1. X. Ribbed Smooth Sheet, Room, Saturday.)

Spot (Close)	18 1/4 to 18 1/2
(F.O.B.) Apr.	18 1/4 to 18 1/2
Apr.-June	18 1/4 to 18 1/2
July-Sept.	18 1/4 to 18 1/2
Oct.-Dec.	18 1/4 to 18 1/2

Time of Market—Steady, well-covered.

Latex Cable—per lb. 1/4.

London Spot Sheet—per lb. 1/4.

New York Spot Sheet—per lb. 1/4.

G. cents. 18 1/4 to 18 1/2.

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LIVING HISTORY | MYSTERY VISITORS

6/9



In 1965, a sword-nosed shark weighing more than half-a-ton was caught off Pasir Panjang. Two years later came the grisly discovery of a man's limbs and part of his torso inside a shark's stomach. The shark had been bought by an Ellenborough Market fishmonger at a fish auction in Boat Quay. It was reportedly caught at a kelong off Pasir Panjang but police concluded the victim was not Singaporean and probably hailed from a neighbouring island.

In 1969, Singapore police issued a "missing" report with a difference. The description read: Height 4ft, 6 inches. Has a dark brown head, black beak, blue neck, double red wattles, brown legs and black feathers.

The description was of a rare rare cassowary bird (below) that had been stolen – along with two peacocks and a pair of storks – from the Jurong Bird Park. It turned up at a Chua Chu Kang farm.





Another great escape happened four years later when the Zoo's black panther Twiggy made a bid for freedom in March 1973 and remained at large until the next February. The animal was eventually cornered and killed in a monsoon drain.



The hunt for the Zoo's missing black panther Twiggy along a track off Mandai Road on March 7, 1973. ST PHOTO: KOK AH CHONG



A group of Reserve Unit men carry on the search on the night of March 7, 1973. PHOTO: KOK AH CHONG



Twiggy remained at large for almost a year, until she was cornered killed in an underground monsoon drain in Bukit Timah. Here, Singapore Turf Club workers are seen removing the carcass. PHOTO: MOHD YUSOOF



A crane lifts the dead panther out. ST PHOTO: MOHD YUSOOF





A zookeeper holds out fruit to coax Ah Meng down after she bolted up a tree in MacRitchie Reservoir where she was taken for a photo shoot in March 1982. But she held out for three days.

ST PHOTO: TAN SUAN ANN

What about when Singapore's much-loved star orang utan was on a film shoot at MacRitchie Reservoir in 1982, and was meant to be filmed half-way up the tree?

But the Zoo's poster girl had other ideas. She climbed to the top, and stayed there for three days before falling off and breaking her arm.


"Ah Meng stages sit-in," was the paper's front page headline on March 30, 1982.

The last tiger is believed to have been shot in Choa Chu Kang in the 1930s.

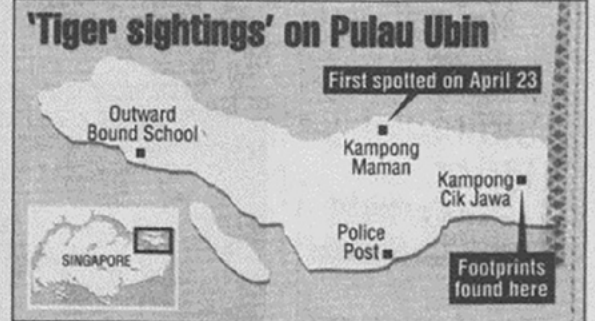
But in the late-90s, the big cat made a fleeting appearance in The Straits Times, although perhaps not in Singapore. On April 29, 1997, the paper reported the Police advising people

to stay away from Pulau Ubin after a grandmother hunting for clams claimed to have seen a tiger.

Exhaustive searches yielded nothing.

When the newspaper visited the island at the end of the year, the story was being described the tallest 'tail' of the year. "The only tiger here is Tiger beer," joked one visitor. 

## Tiger mystery: Keep away from Ubin, police advise



LEE CHEE CHEW

By Melissa Heng

POLICE have advised the public to keep away from Pulau Ubin and told residents to stay indoors at night after two reports of a tiger being sighted there.

But, so far, two search parties have not found the animal.

A team of experts from the National Parks Board and the Singapore Zoological Gardens went to the island yesterday.

But all they saw were marks of prints made by wild pigs and dogs, said a Parks officer who asked not to be named.

He said: "There is still no confirmation of any tigers here. We found markings, but they are definitely not a tiger's."

A zoo spokesman said yesterday that it was possible for a tiger to swim from Johor to the island.

Yesterday was the second time in four days that search parties have gone on a tiger hunt.

The first one took place on Friday, two days after a villager spotted an "orange-coloured animal with black stripes on its face", police said. But a five-hour search for the animal proved fruitless.

Then, on Sunday, workers on the island said they saw two tigers near one of the quarries. Villagers said they have also seen "tiger footprints".

An island resident, Mr W. S. Lee, a researcher in his 40s, said in Mandarin: "The tiger has become a hot topic in the village. The more we talked, the more we feared the rumour to be true."

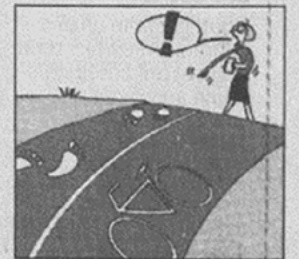
"It is not that unlikely. Ele-

phants have crossed over to the island before. Well, so can tigers. It's only about 1 km between Johor and here."

He was referring to an incident in 1991, when an elephant turned up on Pulau Ubin and attacked people. The beast was captured five days later and taken back to Johor by road.

Mr K. P. Tan, 52, a Nature Society of Singapore member agreed that it was possible for tigers to cross the water, but he doubted the sightings were genuine.

He said: "Tigers are solitary animals. And like other



ADAM LEE

wild animals, they stay away from people.

"The chances of coming in contact with a tiger at close range, as the villagers claimed, is like striking a lottery."

Residents on the island, however, are taking no chances. One 40-year-old housewife who only wanted to be called Mrs Tan, is making sure all her fences are secure.

She said in Mandarin: "Of course I'm afraid. I make sure my door is locked before I go to sleep now."

According to 1995 reports, about 600 people live on Pulau Ubin.



# TIMES CAPSULE

Market town in the industrial hub. Its fish market was said to house enough fish to fill at least a couple of three-room HDB flats. The fishing heritage is now eclipsed by malls to rival those on Orchard Road.

## Jurong, 1956



When Nanyang University was opened officially in 1958, it was the first university outside China catering to high school graduates from Chinese schools. Tens of thousands of people made their way to Jurong for the ceremony, causing a massive traffic jam. This made Sir William Goode, Singapore's Governor then, two hours late for the opening. Nanyang University merged with the University of Singapore in 1980, forming the National University of Singapore. ST PHOTOS: HAN HAI FONG



## Jurong, 1962



Jurong is widely believed to take its name from "jerung", the Malay word for shark. In the early years, the waters surrounding the industrial estate were said to be shark-infested. Houses were poorly built and when a midnight fire struck in 1961, 50 people lost their homes. In 1962, Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew made a 10-hour "problem probing" tour of Jurong's farmlands.

ST PHOTOS: LOW YEW KONG



## Jurong, 1965



The bulk of supplies and workers for Jurong's factories were far away from Jurong. In 1965, the now-defunct Jurong Railway Line was built to transport goods. ST PHOTOS: LOW YEW KONG



## Jurong, 1969



The Jurong Central fish market springs to life in the early hours of the morning. The multi-million-dollar complex, which was opened in 1969, supplies 81 per cent of Singapore's seafood. In a report on Aug 31, 1986, The Straits Times reported that "there was enough fish that night to fill at least a couple of three-room HDB flats to the ceiling." ST PHOTOS: LOW YEW KONG



## Jurong, 1971



Jurong was home to Singapore's first open-air drive-in cinema built in the 1970s. The cinema was said to be a perfect place for dates, picnics, gatherings and family outings as "children could run around while their parents watched the movie". It closed in 1985. ST PHOTOS: CHRISTOPHER LOH NJ



## Jurong, 1978



In 1978, Jurong's \$1.2-million bus interchange was touted as "the largest bus terminal of its kind in the region". In 1990, it was shifted to a plot beside Boon Lay MRT station for the convenience of commuters. ST PHOTO: WONG KWAI CHOW



# Jurong, 2014



The recent Jurong Gateway retail development added colour to the industrial town. ST PHOTO: DESMOND LIM



Future developments include the upcoming Singapore-Kuala Lumpur high-speed rail (HSR), which will have a terminus at the site of the current Jurong Country Club. Jurong is set to be Singapore's second Central Business District. ST PHOTO: JAMIE KOH



# THE SINGAPORE SOUL







Spectators waving the national flag during 2010 National Day Parade at the Padang.  
ST PHOTO: JOYCE FANG





One of the fifty designs for the 2015 National Day fun pack.

ST PHOTO:  
KEVIN LIM

National identity is a lot like individual identity: it begins to take shape after birth and continues to form well into maturity.

Singapore's sudden, traumatic birth after separation from Malaysia in 1965, its youth and astounding success have combined to make the question of national identity an especially fascinating one.

It is a question that has been examined time and again



in The Straits Times: by leader writers and letter writers; columnists and ministers; academics and foreigners. Through interviews and polls, speeches and discussions, or just layman's comments.

In the early years after Independence, building a national consciousness was no intellectual exercise. It was imperative to Singapore's survival. As a deliberate construct, it sometimes tended to be seen as aspirational, or even artificial.



Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew speaking at Jalan Besar Stadium on July 20, 1968 to mark the beginning of the two-week Singapore Youth Festival. ST PHOTO: HAN HAI FONG

Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew first raised the “grave problem of identity” in 1968, noting that all new countries faced the problem when an era of stability ends.

In Singapore's case, there were added complications. In the first place, Singaporeans did not want to be Singaporean.

“We wanted to be Malaysians,” said Mr Lee. “Then the idea was extended and

we decided to be Malaysians. But 23 months of Malaysia – a traumatic experience for all the parties in Malaysia – ended rather abruptly with our being Singaporeans.”

He also provided an “emotive definition” of a Singaporean: “a person who feels committed to upholding this society as it is – multi-racial, tolerant, accommodating, forward-looking – and who is prepared to stake his life for the community”. In the ensuing years, a few key words and concepts crystallised in describing national identity or its lack: pragmatism, passion, meritocracy, creativity, materialism, bilingualism and tolerance.



# NATIONAL DAY FUN PACK

What makes Singapore special? The National Day Parade 2015 fun pack design contest asked that question and invited Singaporeans to submit ideas. These 50 unique designs were picked:











## PRAGMATISM VS PASSION

In 1979, physician and social advocate Nalla Tan noted in *The Sunday Times* that while Singapore had succeeded in forging a national identity to establish itself as a “self



respecting and reliable society”, materialism and smugness had unfortunately emerged as offshoots.

The lack of passion and its cousin, patriotism, also became a concern. In this sense, passion is antithetical to “pragmatism”, a quality Singaporeans saw themselves increasingly as having.



Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew speaking at the 1989 National Day Rally held at Kallang Theatre. ST PHOTO: S G LIM

Mr Lee was close to tears at the 1989 National Day Rally when he spoke of Singaporeans emigrating, a problem compounded by falling birth rates. He urged Singaporeans to “have the conviction that Singapore is their country and their life... to build a country, you need passion”.

The ruling ethos of pragmatism was also seen





In 1997, 260 couples rushed to book a wedding date at the Registry of Marriages to beat an HDB deadline.

as inhibiting romance and courtship in a society with falling birth rates. A 2006 report on Valentine's Day memorably described romance in Singapore as "seasonal, consumerist, functional and in denial". It described, somewhat unkindly, that the local variant of the conventional marriage proposal, "Shall we get married?", as "Shall we get an HDB flat?"

An elevated form of pragmatism also seemed to be at play for young men serving national service (NS), as indicated in



Young Singaporean men reporting for National Service call-up on August 30, 1967. ST PHOTO: KOK AH CHONG

a 1982 Defence Ministry survey.

Most said self-interest was the strongest motivating factor for serving NS because they were committed to defending "the Singaporean way of life", which included "the food, the shopping centres, East Coast Parkway and Orchard Road".

## IDEA WITH MOST MERIT

As an idea, meritocracy is perhaps the component most baked into national identity. It has been emphasised as a key tenet of policy since Independence as the lack of natural resources makes the development of human resources paramount.

In 1981, Trade and Industry Minister Goh Chok Tong expanded the meaning of the term. He noted that meritocracy had been misunderstood by being equated with a person's ability, regardless of his ability to work in a team.

“In our definition of meritocracy, we must give double weightage to a person's ability to mobilise all concerned behind a common goal.”



A cartoon which surprised readers with the use of Singlish in 2013.

## SOMETHING IN THE WAY WE SPEAK

A 1985 column noted that Singlish, Singapore's edition of English, was tied to the national identity "like the smell of durian – a true child of Singapore would recognise it anywhere".

But some feel its usefulness is limited for pragmatic reasons.

In 1992, The Straits Times examined both sides of the debate.

Though it concluded Singlish was not "bad English", it pointed out that its widespread use on mainstream



broadcast channels would make things difficult and confuse those who could not speak proper English.

## THE CULTURE OF RESILIENCE

Ethnic cultures have also helped shape the national identity in unique ways. In a 2014 commentary in *The Straits Times*, Professor Wang Gungwu, chairman of the National University of Singapore's East Asia Institute, drew an intriguing line between identity and “cultural resilience”. A recent surge in interest in heritage issues, he said, was a sign of local cultures responding to national and global forces.

In a migrant community like Singapore, local cultures that draw on ancestry do not merely survive, but are “badges of pride”, an embodiment of “cultural resilience” in a bewildering, fast-changing environment.



Members of Singapore Kityang Huay Kwan's new youth wing, on September 2, 2014. The Teochew clan group plans to hold a coming-of-age ritual called *Chu Hua Yuan*, or “coming out of the garden” by August 2016. ST PHOTO: SEAH KWANG PENG

# SINGAPORE GIRL

Accomplished and confident, Singapore's young women are shaping the Singaporean identity while being shaped by it. In 2002, a columnist defended the perception of Singaporean women as "fierce" and made no apologies for the lack of submissive, feminine behaviour.

The Singaporean woman was shaped by her society,



its competitive nature, emphasis on education and merit. She was "pragmatic and hence, materialistic"; she "goes out to work and tries to excel in her career, and is "frank and has no time for mind games".

With a time of 46.64 seconds, the Singapore Girls A team broke the national record in the 4x100m relay at the 77th Singapore Open Track and Field Championships held at the Singapore Sports Hub on April 4, 2015. ST PHOTO: MARK CHEONG

# TIME WILL TELL

Sociologist Tan Ern Ser noted in a comprehensive 2012 report that the 2011 watershed general election gave netizens an opportunity to air views on Singapore that drew a distinction between love for the country and support for



the government in power.

“Singapore is at the threshold of a defining moment in its history when the people are rising up to take ownership of its destiny, while state paternalism makes way for state-people partnership, armed with a strong sense of national purpose. This will produce a patriotism which is more than just about love of food, place, family and friends, but extending into the realm of a national community where the people can be counted upon to stick with it through thick and thin.”

Perhaps one of the most insightful observation on national identity was made more than 40 years ago, by one

of Singapore’s founding fathers Goh Keng Swee. In 1973, he suggested “the true Singaporean” would emerge from generations of Singaporeans sharing the experience of NS.

In 2006, then-Minister for Information, Communications and the Arts Lee Boon Yang said there was no need for Singaporeans to be anxious about creating a national identity quickly. It would evolve naturally over time.

Still, 50 years is a long time. What does it mean to be Singaporean today, as National Day 2015 nears? Is there a way to measure passion? Pragmatically?

And so the quest continues. 

One of the fifty unique designs for this year’s National Day Fun Pack.

ST PHOTO: KEVIN LIM





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**THE STRAITS TIMES**  
went full colour  
in 1998 although  
it had produced  
its first colour  
supplement as  
early as 1897.  
The newspaper  
had frequent  
makeovers to  
remain visually  
appealing, with  
the latest design  
update in July  
2015.

### Teochew boy re-invented

Andrew Gin's designs are in big demand, but he remains a grounded Singaporean  
IN LIFE!



### Figuring out Iraq

Numbers provide a clue to what the US might do in Iraq  
REVIEW, PAGE 20



### Last-gasp winner

Extra-time goal gives Red Devils a win against Villa  
SPORTS, PAGE H11



# THE STRAITS TIMES

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## Landmark \$12m NKF suit set to begin

Bid to recover  
money from Durai,  
ex-board members  
starts today

By SELINA LUM

SOME 1½ years after they resigned amid public scorn, former National Kidney Foundation (NKF) chief executive T.T. Durai and members of the old board will meet again today – not in the boardroom, but in court.

This time, they will have to give an account of themselves, as NKF's new management seeks to recover from Mr Durai and other board members at least \$12 million paid out by the charity.

In what is the first suit in Singapore brought against directors of a charitable company, NKF has accused Mr Durai, former chairman Richard Yong, former treasurer Loo Say San and former board member Matilda Chua of breaching their duties towards the NKF as directors and fiduciaries.

The case will no doubt be watched with great interest, as NKF's lawyers intend to argue that Mr Durai and the board should be

held to higher standards of care as custodians of public money.

The eight-week hearing before Judicial Commissioner Sundares Menon is likely to throw up new twists and revelations about Mr Durai and the former directors, and the public is likely to be gripped again, as it was when sensational revelations came to light about the charity in July 2005.

With eight sets of lawyers representing nine parties and tens of thousands of pages of documents involved, it is expected to be

WHO'S WHO IN  
THE NKF CIVIL  
SUIT  
HOME H2

a drawn-out and fiercely contested case.

NKF's claims include: \$2 million paid to Mr Durai in salaries and benefits; \$4 million in lost donations; \$5 million paid to companies owned by Mr Pharis Aboobacker, a friend of Mr Durai; and \$550,000 in legal costs incurred when the old NKF sued Singapore Press Holdings (SPH) for defamation.



MOUNTAIN OF PAPERWORK: Boxes of documents relating to the case are wheeled into court in preparation for the hearing, which is expected to last eight weeks.

The chain of events leading to the suit stemmed from an article written by Ms Susan Long, published in The Straits Times on April 19, 2004.

Mr Durai sued Singapore Press Holdings for defamation, but found the tables turned on him during the trial, when he was forced to reveal details of his pay and perks.

Following the mass resignation, a new board stepped in. The new team,

led by social-work veteran Gerard Ee, commissioned auditor KPMG to pore over the NKF's management and financial affairs.

It culminated in a wide-ranging and damning report on the state of the charity and led to criminal charges being laid against Mr Durai, Ms Chua, Mr Yong and Mr Loo.

In the civil suit, besides Mr Durai and the three former directors, the NKF has also named Mr Aboobacker as a defendant to re-

cover money paid to his companies.

Although the NKF is suing only these five, Mr Yong and Mr Loo have dragged in four other former directors as third parties, by arguing that all directors should be equally liable.

They are: certified public accountant Alwyn Lim, Associate Professor Lawrence Chia, lawyer Kweh Soon Han and Mr Chow Kok Fong, a managing director.

This would allow the defendants – if they lost – to make a claim against the third parties to contribute towards any damages they may have to pay the NKF.

As with many civil suits, the NKF case has been divided into two parts.

The present hearing deals only with the issue of liability. The actual quantum of damages to be awarded – if the NKF wins – will be assessed at a separate hearing.

The NKF contends that even though Mr Durai was not formally a director, he was a "shadow" and "de facto" director, and is just as liable as if he were an appointed director.

The case will deal with a few issues:

The NKF asserts that Mr Durai and Ms Chua had conflicts of interest relating to their relationship with Mr Aboobacker's companies.

Regarding SPH, it claims that Mr Durai went ahead with the suit without proper authority.

He also made misleading statements to the public regarding patient numbers and NKF finances and hid details of his remuneration.

The NKF says that Mr Durai held absolute power in the organisation.

The former directors, in allowing him to subvert the proper checks and balances, are said to have acted in breach of their duties.

The NKF defendants have denied wrongdoing.

Mr Aboobacker has not responded to the suit, although he was served a writ in India. In such a situation, the NKF can apply for default judgment to be granted in its favour.

Apart from facing civil action brought by the NKF, Mr Durai, Mr Yong, Mr Loo and Ms Chua have been charged in the criminal courts with various offences, for which they face fines and jail terms. The criminal proceedings are scheduled to begin after the end of the civil case.

sefinal@sph.com.sg

### » UPFRONT

## Community ties: It's the basics that count



By TAN HUI YEE

SOMEWHERE in the heart of Woodlands is a cluster of flats that feels more like a kampung, with tidy gardens and benches.

The sight of a resident sitting there is enough to draw neighbours from their flats.

Someone will bring out a tub of crackers; another, a plate of freshly-made curry puffs. Packet drinks are passed around, followed by a steaming pot of tea.

Such impromptu tea parties happen often at Block 176, Woodlands Street 13, none of them organised by a Residents' Committee.

Here, neighbours get wind quickly of suspicious strangers loitering, and take care of your children when you are ill.

Administrative assistant Faridah Eunus, 39, who has been living there for eight years, said: "My neighbours are not just neighbours, they are like sisters to me."

On Dec 24, they celebrated Christmas and Hari Raya Haji together, and the Chinese families contributed towards halal dishes cooked by their Muslim neighbours.

Can more of this good neighbourliness happen elsewhere? Nurturing close-knit communities has been the focus of an ongoing public consultation exercise by the Ministry of National Development.

Through five small-group discussions last year and seven public dialogues coming up soon, it hopes to pin down ways to bring about firmer community ties within public housing estates, in which 85 per cent of Singaporeans live.

The effort comes at a time when more foreigners are expected to move into public housing estates, and when longer working hours limit the interaction people have with their neighbours.

Minister of State for National Development Grace Fu, who is head-

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



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## Security concerns loom over Asean summit

By ALASTAIR MCINDOE  
Philippines Correspondent  
IN MANILA

SECURITY will be a key theme at a summit of Asian and world leaders set to get under way in the Philippines this week after being postponed last month.

The topic will dominate discussions among leaders, as well as activities outside the meeting rooms in the city of Cebu.

Agreements on counter-terrorism, energy security and trade are expected to be sealed at the gathering of 10 Asean leaders and their counterparts from six Asia-Pacific countries, abruptly called off last

month because of an approaching typhoon.

But outside the meeting room walls, fears of possible terrorist attacks take centre stage.

Britain, Australia and Canada, have warned of possible attacks, and are maintaining their travel advisories on Cebu over the summit period from Wednesday to Jan 15.

But the Philippine government insists its security arrangements, involving 4,000 troops and 6,000 police, backed by special forces, are up to the job.

"We've had an extra month to fine tune and are very confident we can protect the delegates," said Chief Superintendent Silverio Alarcio, Cebu's regional police chief.

"Our latest intelligence information continues to show that there is no specific security threat against the summit."

The Philippine Navy is already patrolling the cove-studded waters off the plush Shangri-La resort on Mactan island, where many of the leaders attending the Asean and East Asian summits will be staying.

From Wednesday until Jan 16, the air force will enforce a 32km no-fly zone around Mactan airport.

The regional security concerns – the nuclear tension in North Korea, the military coup and New Year's Eve bombings in Thailand, and the hunt for Muslim militants in the southern Philippines – are crowding out the "One Caring and Shar-

ing Community" theme of the Asean summit.

One of the key resolutions of Saturday's meeting of Asean leaders will likely be a convention on counter-terrorism. Under the pact, national security agencies will share intelligence and training, as well as help each other extradite suspects.

Other highlights of the one-day Asean summit include accelerating economic integration and a blueprint for a charter for the 10-nation grouping, which will rely more on a set of rules to govern it, instead of the current principle of non-interference.

Among the other items on the table are the activation of an Indonesian-drafted anti-haze plan, read-

ied by Asean's environment ministers in November.

The plan's main elements are a fund to bankroll haze-prevention projects, and enabling haze-affected countries to work directly with blaze-prone regions in Indonesia closest to their borders.

The leaders of South-east Asia will also consider a proposal to accelerate the creation of a single-market economic community to 2015, from 2020.

Asean's strategists believe this will give the region more clout globally.

After their one-day summit, Asean's leaders will be joined by the heads of government of China, Japan, South Korea, India, Australia and New Zealand for wider talks on Monday.

Meanwhile, unlike the last time, the weather forecast this time round is for relatively clear skies.

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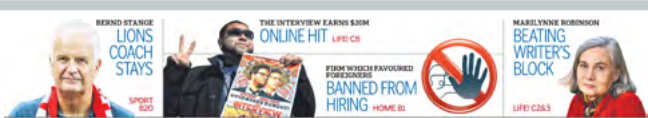
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# THE STRAITS TIMES

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 30, 2014

**India on high alert after bomb blast**  
A bomb blast in Bangalore that killed two people and injured several others has put Indian authorities on high alert for another such attack. The country's top police officer, the director of the National Security Council, said the country is on high alert for another such attack. The country's top police officer, the director of the National Security Council, said the country is on high alert for another such attack.



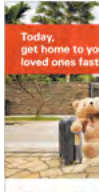
## Plane likely ended up in sea, says rescue agency chief

Search effort widens, but no signs of wreckage yet

**Focus on helping families live closer**  
Singapore's new housing policy, which aims to help families live closer together, has been welcomed by many. The new policy, which aims to help families live closer together, has been welcomed by many. The new policy, which aims to help families live closer together, has been welcomed by many.

**Legal hawking: Complaints rising**  
Reports of illegal hawking are on the rise, with more than 3,000 complaints received by the Singapore Environment and Nature Department in 2014. The department has been working to address the issue, but complaints are still rising.

**Plane likely ended up in sea, says rescue agency chief**  
A search and rescue operation for the missing Indonesian Air Force plane, which crashed in the Java Sea, is still ongoing. The search and rescue operation for the missing Indonesian Air Force plane, which crashed in the Java Sea, is still ongoing.



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DECEMBER 30, 2014

# THE STRAITS TIMES

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 21, 2009

**Jack vs Fann**  
Chinese New Year movies face off  
LIFE: PAGES C4&5

**Are you sure you can sing?**  
New games tell you the truth  
IN DIGITAL LIFE

**Not just plum jobs and fat pay**  
What new NUS business dean wants for students  
PRIME PAGE A12

## Obama pledges a new era

PRESIDENT PROMISES SWIFT, BOLD ACTION TO REMAKE AMERICA



With his wife Michelle by his side, taking the Oath of Office as the 44th President of the United States. He was sworn in by Chief Justice John Roberts during the inauguration ceremony in Washington. PHOTO: REUTERS

**Obama may stumble, but he can deliver, says Jonathan Eyal**  
Obama's to-do list: So much to do, from Day 1  
Obama's to-do list: So much to do, from Day 1

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# THE STRAITS TIMES

THURSDAY, APRIL 12, 2012

**Blueprint for success**  
LIFE: PAGES C4&5

**Freeze eggs now, have babies later**  
LIFE: PAGES C4&5

**Rise and fall of Bo Xilai**  
Intrigue, murder, corruption  
PRIME: PAGES A6&7

## Big quake puts region on alert

Tsunami jitters across Indian Ocean after 8.6-magnitude quake off Sumatra



Achinese women hugging on the beach after a powerful earthquake struck off the western coast of Sumatra in Indonesia yesterday. PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE, LAM HON KONG

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**"Accuracy is everything where you're chasing tornadoes across the plains."**

Dr. Josh Wurman  
Meteorologist and Creator of the Doppler Radar on Wheels

**MAS SELAMAT CAPTURED**

Fugitive who escaped from Whiteley detention centre last year is tracked down and captured in Johor after tip-off from Singapore; he is being held for interrogation by Malaysia.

**MAY 8, 2009**

Singapore role in arrest

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Arts Correspondent Huang Lijie runs fact checks in preparation for an exhibition showcasing ST on the occasion of its 170th anniversary. Singapore STories: Then, Now, Tomorrow runs from July 17 to Oct 4, 2015 at the ArtScience Museum. ST PHOTO: JOYCE FANG



**K Shanmugam**  
Minister for  
Foreign Affairs and the  
Minister for Law

**2015.** The Straits Times turns 170, and Singapore turns 50. It is a year to celebrate, reflect, and then to look ahead.

The Straits Times has been an integral part of Singapore for 170 years. It has become an important and vital institution in our society, a force for much good.

But to remain relevant, all institutions must adapt along with societal change. So even as it celebrates its



170th Anniversary, the ST is confronting a fast-changing landscape.

ST, like all traditional media outlets, has to confront the changing role of the media in society. As the leading national broadsheet, the role that ST defines for itself forms an important benchmark for the role of media here in Singapore.

One question which frequently arises is: should ST adopt the ideology of the media as Fourth Estate: ferretting out the truth, holding governments to account and championing the poor against the rich.

A corollary to this ideology is that the media should not be subjected to rules and regulations, so as ensure that those in power cannot withhold information and stifle criticism.

But there are some realities which this ideology must confront:

- The reality of press barons who control substantial sections of the media, and use this influence to compel governments to pander to them and their interests - the media then becomes the handmaiden of the rich.
- The reality that the media, not infrequently, has to have an eye on its revenue, and hence the interest of its advertisers.
- The reality that the media holds tremendous power to discredit legitimately chosen governments, derail policies which may be good for society as a whole, and colour people's perceptions.

These realities are quite at odds with an ideology built on the belief that the media will always put forward different

views objectively, without bending to pressure, financial or otherwise. These realities reflect how the media, left entirely to its own devices, might not always choose to act in the best interest of society as a whole.

A faith in the media as Fourth Estate also allows the media to become a powerful political actor, despite being unelected. It can and often does make or break governments. It can and often does decide which party wins elections. It can and often does make politicians of all stripes fawn on media barons.

We see this in many other countries, and this is not healthy for democracy.

In Singapore, we believe that the media best serves society by reporting honestly, accurately and truthfully on what is happening in the political arena.

In Singapore, we have thus employed a mix of approaches:

- Rules which prevent any single person from having majority control of the media (to prevent the rise of media barons);
- Laws which circumscribe, among other things, gratuitous insulting of race and religion; and
- Laws, conventions and mores which constrain the media from being a political actor and which encourage the media to be neutral, fair and objective in reporting.

Over time, these have formed the boundaries for media operating in Singapore. We want our media, including ST, to be neutral prisms, reflecting accurately the viewpoints across the political spectrum. They must let the people decide for themselves, based



on the facts put forward, honestly and objectively.

In this way, the people benefit. They get to hear the viewpoints across the political spectrum without distortions. It makes for a freer, more honest debate.

## MEDIA AND SOCIAL HARMONY

This approach is not without its detractors. They see these constraints as stifling free speech, rather than a response to the realities of media as a business.

This is another ideological stance, one which states that there should be minimal constraints on information and speech. This ideology states that complete freedom of information and ideas results in greater discussion and enlightenment.

This ideology is often imbued with universality: that all

societies must adopt this same approach, because it is equally good for all.

On 7 January this year, two gunmen forced their way into the office of the French magazine Charlie Hebdo. They killed 12 people in cold blood, calling out the names of their victims as



A poster reads 'Je suis Charlie' (I am Charlie) in a commemoration for those killed in a shooting at French satirical magazine Charlie Hebdo in Paris on January 8, 2015. PHOTO: EPA

they shot them. The gunmen believed that they were the warriors of God, and were avenging insults to their religion.

Charlie Hebdo is a product of this ideology of complete freedom of information and speech. Charlie Hebdo's creed was irreverence. It had portrayed Jesus, the Pope and Prophet Mohamed in sexual cartoons, and published images of masturbating Catholic nuns on their pages. Nothing was sacred nor out of bounds.

But the belief that free speech, regardless of what form it takes, will necessarily lead to greater understanding is itself built on another belief: that groups of people in society, when faced with attacks on their own identity - be it race, religion or culture – will choose to react calmly and engage in philosophical debate about the merits and demerits of the attack, however vitriolic.

Experience shows that the truth is sometimes the opposite. Charlie Hebdo had faced lawsuits from Catholics. It faced much more from the self-styled Muslim warriors of God on that fateful day in January.

Especially in diverse societies, people do react violently when attacks are made against them. Over the long term, distrust and animosity builds up as a result of such attacks, and racial, religious and cultural fault lines are deepened and widened.

Any honest debate on media freedom must reflect these realities. A society could choose to accept the inevitable societal consequences in pursuit of the broadest possible set of media freedoms. But it cannot proceed on the assumption that complete media freedom will have no impact on racial, religious harmony, that there will only be rational debate and enlightenment, more light than heat.



Singapore's choice has been to accept the realities of our society. Our people generally do not want to allow their race, religion or culture attacked or demeaned. They are not willing to accept the consequence of allowing such attacks, which is a higher propensity for violence in society, and a less harmonious society, with deeper fault lines.

This is why we have laws which proscribe the freedom to launch an attack along racial, religious and cultural lines.



A crowd at Orchard Road on August 31, 2010. In Singapore's diverse society, media has to handle race and religious issue carefully. ST PHOTO: BRYAN VAN DER BEEK

## CONFRONTING A DIFFERENT MEDIA LANDSCAPE

The debate about the rules of media in society is only one of the challenges that traditional media, like the ST

## ABOUT THE WRITER:

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Mr K Shanmugam read law at the National University of Singapore. He was admitted to the Singapore Bar as an Advocate & Solicitor in 1985.

He went into private practice and became one of the Senior Partners and head of Litigation & Dispute Resolution at Allen & Gledhill LLP.

In 1998, he was appointed a Senior Counsel of the Supreme Court of Singapore at the age of 38, one of the youngest lawyers to be so appointed.

On May 1, 2008 Mr Shanmugam was appointed a Cabinet Minister. He is now the Minister for Foreign Affairs and the Minister for Law. He has also served as the Minister for Home Affairs.

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face, the world over. There are other challenges as well.


The way people consume news is changing. There is less faith in institutions. There is less faith in mediated viewpoints. We live in the age of citizen journalism, where anyone with internet access is able to disseminate news and information. There is a proliferation of views on many issues, which dilutes the value of truly expert, well-considered views put across through traditional channels.

If we do not hold everyone to the same rules of integrity and honest reporting, we risk the media landscape becoming one which sensationalises and panders to popular sentiments.

And even as traditional media around the world face the challenge of falling advertisements and revenues, new players are finding ways to profit from their activities. The same realities on media freedoms apply equally to these new players.

The emergence of new players should not trigger a race to the bottom. It behoves ST to find the right platforms to reach out to a younger generation, whose consumption patterns are very different, without compromising its integrity.

ST's rich heritage must continue to serve as its lodestar. Through credible, honest and objective reporting, ST has been an enabler of our collective conscience. In playing this role, it has contributed significantly to the success of Singapore over the last 50 years.

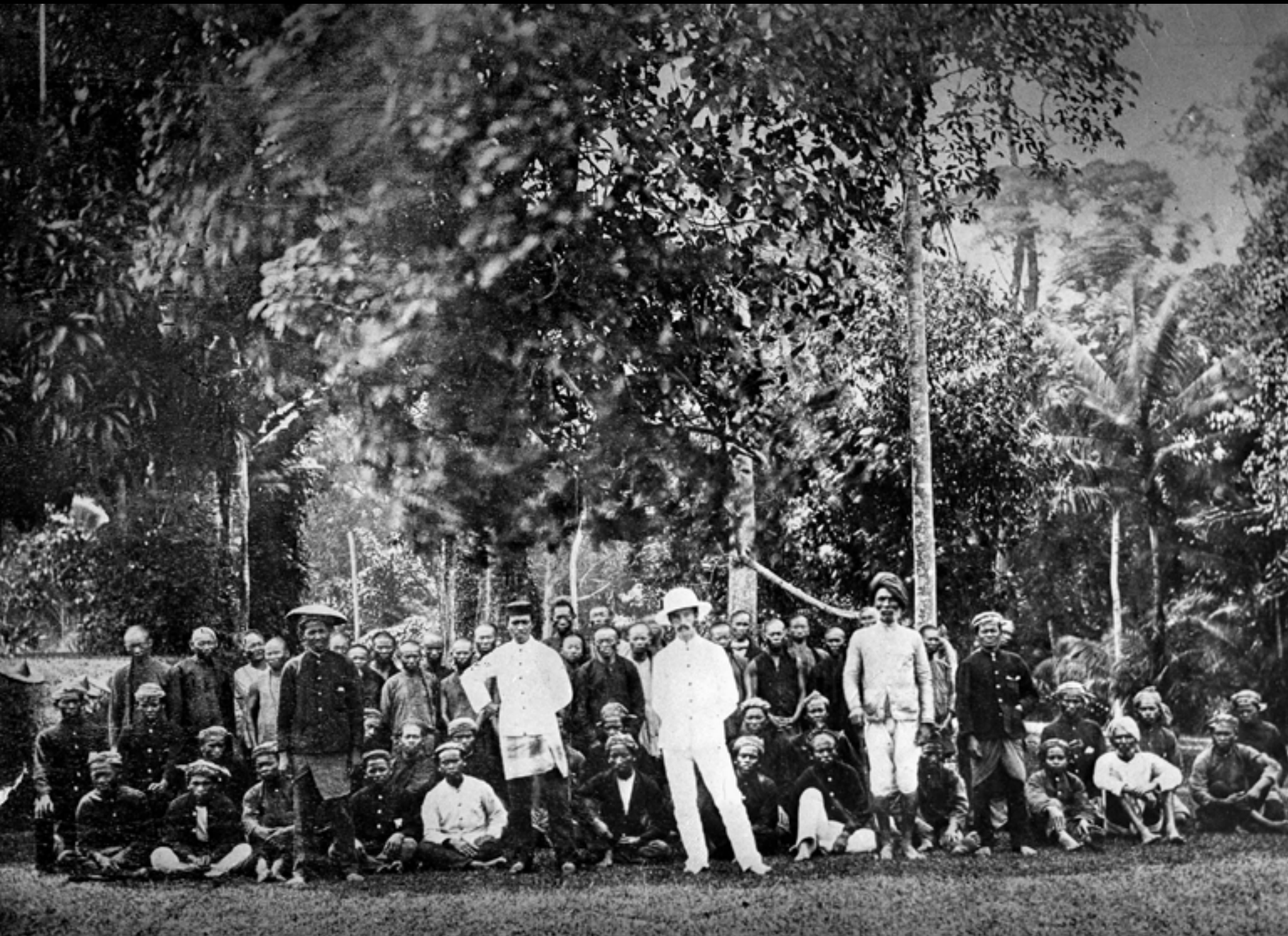
I wish ST the very best as it celebrates its 170th anniversary, in our jubilee year. Long may it continue as an important institution, and play its part in defining our society. 



# TIMES CAPSULE

Singapore's urban jungle. The evergreen Botanic Gardens have spun plenty of gold. Pioneering work on rubber cultivation was carried out there in the 1880s and 1890s, laying the foundation for the Malaya's rubber boom, the source of many a fortune.

## Botanic Gardens, 1877



The keepers of Botanic Gardens pose for this July 8, 1877 photograph, including Kew-trained botanist James Murton, and Javanese and Chinese gardeners and coolies. When Singapore fell to the Japanese in 1942, Mr Kwan Koriba – a botany professor from the Imperial University of Kyoto – was appointed director of the Gardens.



# Botanic Gardens, 1966



To set up the gardens, the Agri-Horticultural Society acquired a plot of land in 1859 from influential Singaporean businessman Ho Ah Kay. A zoo with 140 animals, including a leopard, four kangaroos and a wallaby, was introduced in 1875 to attract more visitors. The zoo, however, was criticised for its smell and small range and closed in the early 1900s. Still, it remained an animal-friendly garden as seen in this January 23, 1966 photograph. ST PHOTO: MAK KIAN SENG



## Botanic Gardens, 1980



The Botanic Gardens is not only home to the giant Tembusu tree, featured on Singapore's \$5 currency notes, but to many other conserved heritage trees as well. This picture shows school-leavers Ivy Yeo and June Tok singing Christmas carols under an old, knotted tree on December 25, 1980. In the 1980s, the Parks and Recreation Department took the greening of Singapore zealously, planting 56,000 flowering trees, 400,000 shrubs and more than 10,000 fruit trees in a typical year. ST PHOTO: HAIRIS



## Botanic Gardens, 1984



This 1984 May Day photo of merry-makers gathered for a performance by the Singapore Symphony Orchestra (SSO) is testimony that the attraction is a much-loved civic space and one of the country's top attractions. The Gardens' recent international accolades, which include Time magazine's choice as "Asia's Best Urban Jungle" and a three- Michelin star rating by the Michelin Green Guide, reflect its enduring charm. ST PHOTO: WONG KWAI CHOW

## Botanic Gardens, 2015



On July 11, 2015, thousands turned up at the Gardens to watch the SSO perform for The Straits Times' 170th birthday. The high-rise tree cover and thick vegetation along the perimeters of the Gardens shield visitors from the bustle of traffic, and partly explain why it draws more than 4.4 million visitors annually, making it the most-visited botanic garden in the world. Now that it is on the UNESCO World Heritage Sites list, the Gardens will continue to draw visitors from near and far.

ST PHOTO: JAMIE KOH



# Botanic Gardens, 1996



Faced with the challenges of an independent Singapore in the mid-1960s, the Government assigned the Botanic Gardens the responsibility of creating a "Garden City". In 1967, the Gardens welcomed two Australian swans: gifts from the Western Australian Zoological Gardens in Perth. Swans continue to be hallmarks of the Singapore Gardens, as seen in this August 22, 1996 photograph. Not forgetting its original purpose, which is research, the School of Ornamental Horticulture was opened in 1972. ST PHOTO: GEORGE GASCON



# Botanic Gardens, 2009



Depending on what time you visit the park, sightings include exotic dog paraders, tree-huggers, brides and grooms posing for wedding pictures or that lone office worker having lunch. This April 3, 2009 photograph shows a group of friends posing for a photo after climbing onto a low-lying Tembusu tree branch. The tree, which is the most well-known in the Gardens, was there long before plans were made for the site in 1859. ST PHOTO: JOYCE FANG



# Botanic Gardens, 2015



Even after the 101-hectares Gardens by the Bay opened, the Botanic Gardens continues to hold its ground. It has more than 1,200 species of orchids and about 2,000 hybrids housed mainly in its National Orchid Garden – making it the largest collection in the world and a leading centre for botanical research and conservation. This May 15, 2015 photo shows a couple having their wedding photographs taken amid trees at the Gardens. ST PHOTO: KUA CHEE SIONG



# Botanic Gardens, 2015



The Singapore Botanic Gardens became the country's first Unesco World Heritage Site on July 4, 2015, making it the third botanic gardens in the world to be placed on the list, and the only one in Asia. The Unesco committee said the 156-year-old Gardens, shown here in a May 29, 2015 photo, was an epitome of a British tropical colonial garden evolving into a modern and world-class botanic garden, scientific institution and place of conservation and education. ST PHOTOS: JAMIE KOH AND MARK CHEONG



# ST MILESTONES

Singapore's top-selling newspaper, The Straits Times, was born 170 years ago. Its journey from an eight-page weekly read by a few hundred people to a multimedia news organisation with more than a million readers is marked by dramatic turning points. Here are some highlights.

## 1845

**A BANKRUPTCY  
AND A DEBUT**



An Armenian merchant Marterus Thaddeus Apcar orders a printing press and materials from England, but he goes bankrupt before they are delivered.

Another Armenian, Catchick Moses, buys the machine and hires Englishman Robert Carr Woods as the editor to bring out the paper: The

Straits Times And Singapore Journal Of Commerce. The first issue comes out on July 15. It appears every Tuesday, with eight pages of news, market reports and advertisements. It sells at 16



Spanish dollars a year or 36 Company rupees, the currencies of that time. A single copy sells at one Java rupee. After a successful four months, it is published twice a week.



## 1846

### FIR SALE

Moses puts up the paper for sale. There are no buyers and editor Woods takes over the printing press.

## 1848

### BREAKING NEWS

The Straits Times covers its first breaking news event: the mutiny of 93 Chinese convicts on board the ship General Wood, off Singapore's St John's Island. The captain, chief officer and some sailors are killed. The convicts are recaptured and their trial is marked by controversy because despite the murders, they are charged only for seizing the ship.

## 1853

### TRANSFER CAMPAIGN

A series of international and regional news events provides engaging content for the next few years – riots among Chinese secret societies, the Crimean War (1853–1856), the Second Opium War in China (1856 to 1860), a rebellion in Sarawak and the Indian Mutiny (1857).

The Straits Times becomes one of the main supporters of a



10-year campaign to transfer the Straits Settlements to direct colonial rule from London. The transfer takes place in 1867.

1858  
NEW NAME

The paper becomes an afternoon daily, with a new name: Singapore Daily Times.



1869  
BANKRUPT  
BY FIRE

A fire destroys The Straits Times premises and plant, bankrupting editor John Cameron (left). But



aided by a friendly printer, the paper comes out the day after the fire with an editorial lambasting the inefficient fire brigade.

1870  
CABLE NEWS

With the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869, the first ocean telegraph cable linking Bombay to Britain is laid. The Straits Times begins subscribing to Reuters news agency to provide fresh international news.

1883  
OLD NAME

The title Singapore Daily Times is scrapped and the name reverts to The Straits Times.



## COLOUR SUPPLEMENTS

Three supplements with colour pictures are produced, a first by a Malayan newspaper. Much admired, they cost \$12,000 to produce and make a handsome profit of more than \$3,000.

1900

## GOING PRIVATE

Bringing an end to proprietor/editor days, The Straits Times is incorporated as a private limited company, capitalised at \$100,000.

1914

## WORLD WAR I

World War I breaks out. The Straits Times raises money and recruits volunteers for forces overseas.

# 1930

## GREAT DEPRESSION

The Great Depression pushes down rubber and tin prices and brings the economy to a standstill. The Straits Times urges companies to extend – rather than shrink – activities and sets an example by buying a fleet of Morris Minor vans to deliver the paper, investing in new printing machinery and building a new office.

1931

# MALAYA'S FIRST SUNDAY PAPER

Malaya's first Sunday paper, The Sunday Times, is launched to head off competition from the Malaya Tribune. It carries 16 pages of news and features and includes a women's page and book reviews.





# 1939

## WORLD WAR II

The Straits Times reports on Sept 4 that Britain is at war, but suggests that the possibility of the conflict reaching Singapore is remote.

# 1941

## AIR RAID

A Japanese air raid in the early hours of Dec 8 takes Singapore by surprise. The Straits Times downplays the extent of casualties.

# 1942

## THE SURRENDER

Singapore falls to the Japanese on Feb 15 and is renamed Syonan, Light of the South.

The Japanese operate their own English-language newspaper, The Shonan Times, from The Straits Times compound.



# 1943

## SYONAN SHIMBUN



The Shonan Times is replaced by The Syonan Shimbun, operated by The Syonan Shimbun Association headed by Japanese-Americans who control all English and Chinese newspapers. A Malay publication Warta Malaya, edited by Indonesians and subject to Japanese supervision, also runs from The Straits Times premises.



1945

JAPANESE  
SURRENDER

World War II ends in September, when the Japanese surrender. On Sept 7, the first post-war issue of The Straits Times is published, bearing the headline: Singapore Is British Again! Our Day Of Liberation!

From this day, the front page is no longer just packed with advertisements, but also carries major news. The paper is also published in the morning.



1946

ASIA RISING

Coverage reflects the growing rise of Asian nationalism and international pressures against European imperialism.

1950

MARIA HERTOGH  
RIOTS

The Straits Times is held partly responsible for the events leading to the Maria Hertogh riots. From then, the newspaper exercises extra caution when touching on race and religion.





# 1959

## FREEDOM OF THE PRESS

Reacting to a Straits Times report that addresses the sensitive issue of merger between Singapore and Malaya, Mr Lee Kuan Yew warns on May 18 that “any newspaper that tries to sour up or strain relations between the Federation and Singapore will go in for subversion”.

The Straits Times takes the case to the International Press Institute (IPI) in West Berlin and warns of a serious threat to the freedom of the press in Singapore. IPI carries out an investigation and concludes that both sides had over-reacted.

The PAP goes on to secure a clear victory in the election, sweeping 43 out of 51 seats in the new legislative assembly. Singapore is now under internal self-government, with the British government only taking charge of foreign policy and defence, and internal security shared between Singapore, Britain and Malaya.

The Straits Times moves its headquarters to Kuala Lumpur.



# 1960

## A PAPER FOR TWO

The newspaper is printed in both Singapore and Kuala Lumpur.



# 1963

## THE FEDERATION



The Federation of Malaysia, which includes Singapore, is born on Sept 16.

The PAP's General Election victory is seen by The Straits Times as an approval of the merger, which the paper supports. It also acknowledges the PAP's ability to deal with the communists.

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# 1964

## THE RIOTS

The outbreak of Chinese-Malay riots in July and September worsens existing tensions. Journalists seek to downplay the trouble, and The Straits Times encourages moderation.





# 1965

## INDEPENDENT NATION

Singapore becomes independent following its shocking separation from Malaysia on Aug 9, 1965.

The Straits Times keeps its measured approach in a bid to calm the situation.



# 1966

## END OF KONFRONTASI

The Straits Times plays an instrumental role in ending Indonesia's violent Konfrontasi policy towards the Malaysian Federation: Deputy editor Wee Kim Wee (left) is granted an exclusive interview with Indonesian president Suharto who tells him of his wish to end Konfrontasi. After the scoop is published, diplomatic relations are restored. The nations cooperate in fighting communist subversion.



After the scoop is published, diplomatic relations are restored. The nations cooperate in fighting communist subversion.

In September, 60 Straits Times Press staff members go on strike for better pay and working conditions, to which the management agrees on the fifth day.

In December, 870 workers go on strike to protest against their small bonus. The management and union take 13 days to reach an agreement, during which time there is no newspaper.



1972  
SPLIT INTO TWO

The paper splits into The Straits Times and New Straits Times.

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1973  
BACK HOME

The Straits Times becomes a Singapore-based newspaper.

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1977  
IMPROVING  
STANDARDS

The questions of how to improve editorial standards and contribute to the nation-building process, while preserving the paper's integrity, emerge as key concerns for The Straits Times. Motivated by sharp criticism from government leaders, the board decides that The Straits Times should define an editorial policy that would promote national development.

It starts its School of Journalism and prepares to open its first overseas bureau in Asia in Bangkok.

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1979  
ATTRACT MORE  
GRADUATES

By-elections are held. Mr Lee Kuan Yew criticises The Straits Times at the traditional chap goh mei party at the end of the Chinese New Year for treating the elections like a "cockfight". The Prime Minister further states at a meeting with senior and middle-grade journalists a month later that the paper's English-speaking journalists lack a grasp of realities on the ground, and that the paper needs to attract more graduates with training and better salaries.

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1981  
NOMINEE

Mr J.B. Jeyaretnam, the leader of the Workers' Party, wins a by-election in the Anson constituency. He emerges as the



first opposition member in parliament in 13 years. The Prime Minister largely blames the loss of a seat on The Straits Times' election coverage, which had included reports of an impending hike in bus fares.

Fears of direct intervention by the government in the operations of The Straits Times prompt the management to request an interview with Mr Lee. It is eventually agreed that a government nominee approved by the company will be made executive chairman of The Straits Times. The company suggests Mr S.R. Nathan, a top civil servant on the verge of retirement.

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## 1984

GOING PUBLIC

Singapore Press Holdings (SPH) is formed with the merger of three publishing companies: Singapore News and Publications with the Straits Times Press and Times Publishing. It brings all English, Chinese and Malay newspapers under one umbrella.

SPH is incorporated as a public company on Aug 4.



## 1995

GOING ONLINE

The Straits Times celebrates its 150th anniversary and goes online by launching SPH's website AsiaOne on June 15 and The Straits Times Interactive website on Dec 1.

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1998  
FULL COLOUR

The Straits Times goes full colour.

1999  
POCKET MONEY  
FUND

Launch of The Straits Times School Pocket Money Fund, a community project to help children from low-income families with school expenses. The fund supports over 10,000 children and young people every year. It has disbursed close to \$42 million and benefited over 130,000 cases until 2014.



2000  
TV NEWS

SPH sets up SPH MediaWorks Ltd to make a foray into broadcasting and The Straits Times launches a nightly TV news bulletin in the following year. This is pulled off the air in 2004 when the TV venture folds.

2004  
NKF SAGA

An April 19, 2004 article headlined: The NKF: Controversially Ahead Of Its Time? reports the outrage felt by a contractor who was asked to install a gold-plated tap in the bathroom of the office of National Kidney Foundation chief executive T. T. Durai.





Mr Durai sues senior correspondent Susan Long for defamation, but drops the lawsuit after two days of questioning in court in July 2005.

With SPH and MediaCorp bleeding from the competition, they merge their mass market TV and free newspaper operations. English-language Channel i ceases to transmit in 2005, while Channel U merges with MediaCorp's Channel 5 and Channel 8 to make up MediaCorp TV Holdings Private Limited. SPH now holds a 20 per cent stake in the new company.

# 2005

**LITTLE RED DOT**

Two magazines for schools, IN and Little Red Dot, are launched to attract young readers.

# 2006

**MY PAPER AND  
STOMP**

My Paper is launched as Singapore's first Chinese freesheet. The Straits Times steps up efforts to establish a strong digital presence. Stomp (Straits Times Online Mobile Print), an interactive online portal designed for Straits Times readers to share viewpoints and stories, is launched. The site gets 600,000 hits within a week.

# 2007

**STRAITSTIMES.COM**

STI is renamed straitstimes.com, and drops the subscription model to offer free breaking news.

# 2008

**RAZORTV**

RazorTV, The Straits Times' online video news channel, is launched.



My Paper is relaunched as the first bilingual newspaper in Singapore.

The Straits Times is revamped to feature a new masthead and a layout that incorporates some elements from the original 1845 design, reflecting the rich heritage of the paper.



2009

ON SMART PHONES

The Straits Times' iPhone application is launched.  
The Straits Times' Twitter account, @STCom, is started.

2011

PRINT-PLUS-DIGITAL

The Straits Times' print-plus-digital pricing strategy is launched, reflecting a growing focus on multi-platform media and the need to boost digital circulation, given the worldwide decline in print readership.

2012

ST COMMUNITIES

Han Fook Kwang hands over editorship to Warren Fernandez and The Straits Times is revamped to give it a fresh contemporary look.





ST Communities is launched to allow readers, journalists, artists and community partners to get published alongside one another.

The paper kicks off the Straits Times Appreciates Readers (STAR) programme on its 167th birthday with a carnival and concert at Gardens by the Bay. The programme is launched to reach out and connect with readers of The Straits Times.



# 2013

## ST RUN

The annual ST Run is launched. The inaugural event at Punggol Waterway is attended by 12,000 participants.

The Straits Times steps up efforts to engage readers through



a series of public forums on education, investments and foreign affairs.

SPH embarks on a 10-month transformation project to keep the company in sync with the changing media landscape. Editor-in-chief Patrick Daniel notes that digital growth has “more than offset” the decline in print circulation.

**2015**  
**170 YEARS OLD**

The Straits Times celebrates its 170th anniversary with a major revamp of all products, offering a new look and sharper content on its print and website editions and over its apps for smartphones and tablets. The newspaper also holds its first-ever public exhibition, drawing on its news archives of photographs and Page 1 coverage, to showcase its history. **ST**

SOURCES: The Straits Times archives and Dateline Singapore, a book by CM Turnbull





The Straits Times staff gather for a group photo outside the Times House at 390, Kim Seng Road in 2002, days before the ST newsroom moved to Toa Payoh North. The iconic building had housed the ST office for more than four decades.  
ST PHOTO: TAY KAY CHIN

## CREDITS

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