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SME Center Conference 2022 Attracts 900 Participants and Exhibitors



Singapore's meetings, exhibitions, and conventions industry's back to business and in full swing.

And it was a show of confidence on 31 August 2022 when nearly 900 leaders from small and medium enterprises and industries specializing in sustainability gathered for the SME Centre Conference 2022 at the Marina Bay Sands Convention Centre.

Organized by the SME Centre at the Singapore Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry and Enterprise Singapore, the half day conference was graced by Minister of State for Trade and Industry, Ms. Low Yen Ling.

SICCI's Chairman, Mr. Neil Parekh, gave the opening address.

The Conference looked at how businesses could navigate the future of sustainability and harness opportunities in this space while contributing to Singapore's green transition.

In her wide-ranging address, MOS Low announced that small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in Singapore can now tap on a first-of-its-kind mentorship programme that will make it easier for them to kickstart their sustainability journeys and build capabilities to decarbonize.

Known as the "SME Kickstarter Decarbonization Programme", it is supported by Enterprise Singapore (EnterpriseSG) under the Enterprise Sustainability Programme (ESP).

"I was happy to announce that as part of Enterprise Sustainability Programme, Enterprise Singapore is collaborating with Schneider Electric on a decarbonisation programme for SMEs. This SME Kickstarter Decarbonisation Programme will link SMEs with experts who will help them set up decarbonisation targets, access energy efficiency services and take actionable steps to reduce energy use and emissions. SMEs will be able to actively monitor their energy consumption, as well as use energy efficient solutions to reduce business costs and become sustainable in the long run. In addition, I shared that companies from food services, food manufacturing and retail sectors can apply for the Energy Efficiency Grant from tomorrow onwards, 1 Sep 2022", explained Ms. Low.

In his speech, Mr. Neil Parekh noted that according to a recently concluded UOB SME Outlook Study 2022, three in five SMEs in Singapore believe in the importance of incorporating sustainable practices in their businesses.

Added Mr. Neil, " With plans for Singapore to reach zero carbon emissions by 2050 and the Singapore Green Plan 2030 already underway, the trade associations and chambers, as well as SME Centres, are taking the first steps to create more awareness amongst SMEs of the training programmes and solutions available for sustainability practices. We will play a critical role in facilitating sustainability journeys for SMEs".

The theme for this year's conference was Navigating the Future of Sustainability.

Participants also visited an exhibition held as part of the conference.

From ethically and sustainably designed homewares to smart vending machines for orange juice and sustainable ceramic tiles, these were just some examples of "green" projects by our very own SMEs that were on display.

Said MOS Low, "Kudos to Singapore Indian Chamber of Commerce & Industry for successfully hosting this year's Conference, and a special shoutout to SME Centres and Enterprise Singapore for their continued support for our SMEs".



We bring you the full text of the speeches delivered by MOS Low and Mr. Neil Parekh in the next few pages and more pictures of the SME conference

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Speech by MOS Low Yen Ling at the SME Centre Conference 2022



Mr. Neil Parekh, Chairman, Singapore Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen

A very good morning to all. I would like to start by thanking the Singapore Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SICCI) for inviting me to this year's SME Centre Conference. This is my third time taking part in this annual event. After two years of attending the conference virtually, I am delighted to be here at this conference in person.

The SME Centre Conference is an excellent platform for SMEs to exchange views and share ideas on how to grow, transform, and capture new opportunities. On this note, I would like to extend my heartfelt gratitude and appreciation to all our 11 SME Centres, our hardworking Business Development Advisors and of course, my colleagues at Enterprise Singapore for their continued support for our SMEs throughout the pandemic. It has been a very difficult two and a half years. And of course, all the Chambers of Commerce, especially SICCI for making today's conference possible.

Companies will need to embrace sustainability to remain competitive

In the last two and a half years, our SMEs have shown great tenacity and resilience in adapting and transforming, and many rose to the occasion. Our SMEs, micro-enterprises included, found new opportunities to pivot and grow even amid the crisis. There is a Chinese saying 危机中总有奇迹; there are always opportunities amidst a crisis. When discussing micro-enterprises, a topic very close to my heart, for instance, is shopkeepers in the heartlands who have digitalised and gone online. Three years ago, would you have imagined that more than 88 per cent of HDB shops would offer e-payments. But today, 88 per cent, close to 90 percent, of our HDB shops offer e-payments, and over 65 per cent of them have digitalised, either through e-commerce or digital solutions. And I think some of you would have seen the shopkeepers selling their products and services via a "live" stream.

As we move into the post-pandemic era, SMEs would do well by spotting new opportunities in the green economy. You would all agree that the green economy presents opportunities not only to big organisations, but also to smaller SMEs. Indeed, the green economy is a new area which beckons with a bright horizon. Climate change concerns are

spurring governments, businesses and consumers to place greater emphasis on reducing carbon footprint and becoming more sustainable. This has opened up fresh possibilities for growth. To expand your revenue stream, introduce new products, and capture a wider consumer base.

To that end, in February last year, we launched the Singapore Green Plan. The Singapore Green Plan 2030 has set concrete and ambitious targets to help Singapore move towards a greener future. It will open doors to promising new areas, for example, green finance, carbon services and sustainable tourism. The theme for this year's event – "Navigating the Future of Sustainability", is therefore very apt and timely.

We hope our SMEs will tap on sustainability as a new avenue of growth. Let me elaborate on why it is compelling for enterprises, big and small, to come on board. Using a word we are all familiar with – "eco", or the letters E, C and O.

"E" is for "environment". I think we would agree that the weather we experienced in August alone, the first two weeks of August, was very hot. And the third and fourth week of August, the heavy downpour reminded us of the year-end season. It was unprecedented. As the world seeks to protect our environment from further damage and climate change, SMEs can take the chance to also get into the act and make sustainability part of their business practices, part of their business model and their revenue model.

"C" stands for "competitive advantage". To me, going sustainable is not adding cost. We should see it as a competitive advantage. Going green can be a competitive advantage for your company as an early mover in this emerging sector.

c. "O" in 'eco' stands for "opportunity". Getting into the sustainable space will open new growth opportunities for you, your staff and your company in the green economy.

Each of you today plays a pivotal role in Singapore's green transition and how we can make this green transformation work for Singapore. We want to assure you that the Singapore Government, not just MTI but the whole of government, including MSE, MOT etc., are all very committed to the Singapore Green Plan 2030. The Government will spare no effort to support and help our SMEs stay competitive and relevant as we move towards the green economy.

The Government will support SMEs as we navigate the future of sustainability

To this end, the Government has launched a robust range of support schemes and measures to help our SMEs embrace sustainability and be part of this emerging green future. We do so because we recognise that SMEs need an extra boost to get started. To help them embark on their sustainability journey, Enterprise Singapore has launched the Enterprise Sustainability Programme (ESP). I remember joining Minister Gan Kim Yong on 1 October last year, where he launched the \$180 million ESP which provides targeted support for companies.

a. For instance, SMEs that are new or in the early stages of their green journey can start by building your awareness and knowledge of sustainable practices. For example, you can attend subsidised training courses organised for local companies by Enterprise Singapore in partnership with Global Compact Network Singapore, PwC Singapore, and the Singapore Environment Council. We have worked with them to curate courses to help our SMEs.

b. In the area of funding, which is very important, SMEs can also tap on additional support, such as the Enterprise Financing Scheme – Green, to access financing for capability-building projects or new sustainable solutions.

I am happy to share that since the launch of the ESP in October last year, more than 300 local SMEs have participated in awareness and education programmes. More than 40 sustainability-related projects are being developed, with the support of Enterprise Singapore. This is a very well thought-through and curated support scheme. To me, level 1 is to support our enterprises. We also support our TACs (Trade Associations and Chambers), for sectoral-focused areas. We also take an ecosystem approach to focus on certification, financing and training.

It is not just the big SMEs that are well-equipped to come on board. No matter your size, and whether you think you are ready to, do approach the SME Centre that is in your vicinity. We have 11 centres and very committed business development advisors. One company which has benefitted from the ESP is Yeap Transport. Yeap Transport is a local private bus operator. Yeap Transport has undertaken a climate strategy and footprint study to measure its scope 1,2 and 3 carbon emissions. It has also developed a sustainability roadmap to help

the company achieve net zero carbon emissions, for example, by turning its bus fleet electric.

As our SMEs go green with more sustainable practices, we are also giving them a helping hand. The recently launched Energy Efficiency Grant provides SMEs from the food services, food manufacturing and retail sectors funding support to adopt energy-efficient equipment for their business, which can reduce their overall running costs. I addressed this in a parliamentary question at the August Parliament Sitting; we have chosen to start off with food services, food manufacturing and retail because, looking at their expenses, energy costs comprise a significant proportion of that. And we want to help bring business costs down and help them to embrace and adopt energy-efficient equipment. Eligible companies can apply for the Energy Efficiency Grant from tomorrow, 1 September.

I am happy to announce that as part of ESP, Enterprise Singapore is collaborating with Schneider Electric on a decarbonisation programme for SMEs. This initiative will link SMEs with experts who will help them set decarbonisation targets, access energy efficiency services, and take actionable steps to reduce energy use and emissions. All very practical issues and problem statements to solve. We hope that through this SME Kickstarter Decarbonisation Programme, SMEs will not only actively monitor their energy consumption but also use energy-efficient solutions to reduce business costs and become more sustainable in the long run.



SME Centres will continue to support the growth and transformation of all enterprises

Helping our SMEs continue to grow and flourish is a network of 11 dedicated SME Centres located all over Singapore. Besides providing business advisory services, these Centres also focus on boosting the capabilities and skills of our SMEs, including micro-enterprises. In 2021, the SME Centres assisted over 28,000 SMEs to improve and meet their business needs despite the challenges of COVID-19. There was a lot of focus on helping our micro-enterprises and SMEs to adopt sustainability standards and implementing sustainability projects through the ESP.

Furthermore, under the Partners for Business Growth (PBG) pilot programme, more than 100 SMEs were supported in their growth journey as they set new goals and implemented new projects, including those involving sustainability.

I would like to highlight two SMEs that have successfully incorporated sustainability as part of their PBG programme. One of them is Long Pun Enterprise. Long Pun Enterprise is a 40-year-old plastics and products manufacturer in the construction industry. With the help of Business Development Advisors (BDAs) from the SME Centre@SMF, Long Pun incorporated sustainability into its business strategy. This has led the company to expand its product range into providing clean energy solutions like energy storage systems and flexible solar panels to the construction and landscape industry.

Another company that grew its sustainable offerings with the help of the PBG, is Sheldon Global, the home and lifestyle company behind local brands such as HOUZE and Table Matters. With the advice of BDAs from the SME Centre@SICCI, Sheldon Global automated its e-commerce workflow and used Robotic Processing Automation to enlarge its sales capacity. As business leaders, you would know that if you can enlarge your sales capacity, you are well placed to grow your top line and bottom line. The company has created a new line of eco-friendly homeware called ecoHOUZE, which is well-received by consumers.



On behalf of MTI, congratulations to Long Pun and Sheldon Global on your green progress! A big thank you to our 11 SME Centres and our hardworking BDAs who work alongside our SMEs to enable them to overcome the adversity in the last two and a half years and to grow and expand their business. We plan to launch the official PBG programme in 2023. Meanwhile, I encourage SMEs to sign up for PBG - to explore and capture the exciting potential of the green economy.

I want to assure you that the Government is committed to seeing our SMEs grow in Singapore and beyond. Who says that our small HDB shops and micro enterprises will only cater to business in the domestic market? I cited in Parliament in March Heng Foh Tong, which is a traditional shop that sells herbal tea. They have come on board e-commerce and are now selling their products to 10 countries. Whether it is digitalisation or sustainability, these are two very important growing trends that we must seize to help our SMEs grow their top line and bottom line and, at the same time, to future-proof their capabilities and their talent pool.

At the exhibition today, you can take the chance to learn more about how companies are pursuing sustainability practices and benefitting from their green moves. I hope you will be inspired to embrace sustainability practices and make them part and parcel of your business and revenue models.

As more borders continue to re-open in the post-pandemic era, the windows of opportunity are widening as well. This is why in Singapore, we have been very committed to reopening our economy since March. I was so happy to see all the ballrooms being taken up as I came in. Tourism is coming back, and now we are back to more than 55% of our traffic volume for Changi compared to post-COVID level, and I think it bodes well for our business sector. We can capitalise on the momentum and emerge better and stronger. SMEs should seize the chance to build new capabilities and future-proof their companies and their teams, in the new economy, and you will be able to endure and thrive in the post-COVID world

As PM Lee urged in his National Day Rally speech last week to “seize the window of opportunity” and secure Singapore’s place in the post-COVID-19 world, let’s continue on our sustainable journey together and turn Singapore into a city of green possibilities for future generations.

Thank you, and I wish you all a productive and constructive conference today.



Speech by Mr Neil Parekh at the SME Centre Conference 2022



Our Guest of Honour, Ms. Low Yen Ling, Minister of State for Trade and Industry and Minister of State for Culture, Community and Youth, Partners from our Chambers of Commerce and Trade Associations, Our guest speakers, Ladies and Gentlemen.

I am very pleased to welcome all of you to the SME Centre Conference 2022.

SME Centre@ SICCI is honoured to host this year's event, especially as this is the first year we are reconvening this conference in physical format since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The annual SME Centre Conference always seeks to address some of the emerging challenges faced by SMEs by bringing together thought leaders and industry experts to share their experiences and provide actionable insights.

Thus, this year's conference theme is Navigating the Future of Sustainability.

The team at SME Centre has lined up a team of eminent speakers to highlight current trends in sustainability and how businesses can leverage opportunities to grow and stay ahead of the sustainability curve.

Today, the word sustainability is a catchphrase used in many sectors, but how does it really impact your business?

According to the recently concluded UOB SME Outlook Study, 60 per cent of small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Singapore believe in the importance of incorporating sustainable practices in their respective businesses. The view of these SMEs is that having sustainability as a core lens to their business will help to:

1. Improve the company's credibility and reputation
2. make it easier for them to work with multinational corporations (MNCs) who care about their sustainability goals and their supply chain
3. enable them to help build an environmentally and socially responsible Singapore

SMEs are embracing or planning to embrace sustainability goals by integrating environmental, social and governance (ESG) considerations into various aspects of their business. According to this survey, the key ESG-related practices SMEs plan to implement include:

- more efficient use of resources to minimize waste
- use of energy-efficient equipment and technologies.
- clear operational policies and processes such as risk management and financial control

This survey shows a positive outlook on the awareness and adoption of sustainability amongst SMEs.

However, when implementing such practices, we understand that small businesses face challenges such as:

1. insufficient skills to identify and execute relevant green initiatives
2. inadequate support on areas such as sustainability training, and lack of internal funds to initiate such projects as it may hit profitability in the short term
3. potential increase in prices for end customers if they transfer the costs on.

The question is how can SMEs build these capabilities and tap on sustainability opportunities to transform?

With plans for Singapore to reach zero carbon emissions by 2050 and the Singapore Green Plan 2030 already underway, our chambers of commerce and trade associations are fully conscious of the need for our SMEs to move towards more sustainable business practices.

Thus, the trade associations and chambers as well as SME Centers are taking the first steps to create more awareness amongst SMEs of the training programs and solutions available in this area. We will play a critical role in facilitating the sustainability journey for SMEs.



We will not be doing this alone. Together with the support from Enterprise Singapore and partner agencies such as IMDA, SSG, WSG and GC@SBF, there is a network of support readily available for SMEs to tap on to. They have come today to lend their support to the conference and are ready to meet with you today at our exhibition next door.

On that note, I encourage everyone to visit the exhibition, where you will find potential solutions and technologies that may facilitate your sustainability initiatives. More importantly, the exhibition also features some success stories from fellow SMEs who have already embarked on similar initiatives with the support from our SME Centres' Business Advisors.



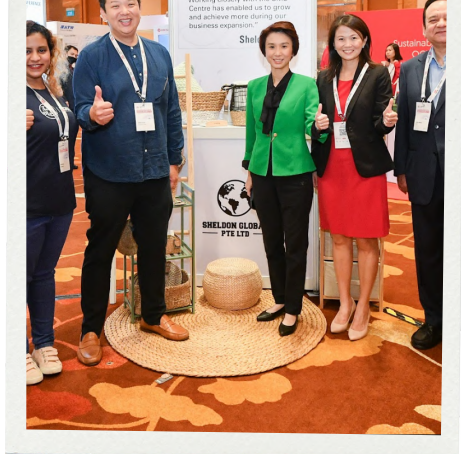
This SME conference is taking place shortly after our Prime Minister's National Day Rally speech on 21 August.

It is also most heartening to hear from PM that the government will spare no efforts in helping businesses tackle the issue of rising costs and to remain competitive globally. For that, sustainability is one key factor.

We look forward to hearing some new ideas on hastening our efforts in this area in Singapore today.

And on behalf of all our chambers of commerce and trade associations, I look forward to the strong partnership with Enterprise Singapore in supporting our SMEs to go green and take active steps to further their sustainability journey.

Thank you for joining us and I look forward to an enriching conference.



Sri Lanka and Its Provinces Welcome Investors and Tourists



Exploring opportunities in Sri Lanka's Northern Province.

In its ongoing series of dialogues with visiting dignitaries, the Singapore Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry held a networking and discussion with the Governor of the Northern Province of Sri Lanka, the Honorable Jeevan Thiagarajah, at SICCI Building on 9 September 2022.

Also taking part in the hour-long session was Her Excellency, the High Commissioner of Sri Lanka to Singapore, Madam Sashikala Premawardhane.

The wide-ranging discussion was chaired and moderated by SICCI's Chairman, Mr Neil Parekh.

Giving his welcome remarks, Mr Neil noted that Sri Lanka has been having a bit of a gruelling time and rather sadly.

"First, we all went through it together- the Covid-19 pandemic. And just when things were returning to normalcy in many parts of the world, a second crisis hit Sri Lanka, and this was a double whammy- both political and, as a result, economic too. We all watched the gripping pictures of Sri Lankans exercising their democratic rights in front of the Presidential Palace. We are all glad that good sense did finally prevail, and the rest is now history".

Mr Neil added that SICCI has many members with direct or indirect interest in Sri Lanka.

"It is a country with a reservoir of opportunities and going forward, with political stability and trust returning, it will be a great opportunity to expand and do more for Sri Lanka. And let's not forget the tourism potential that Sri Lanka offers, the hilly resorts, the elephant resorts, the Hindu and Buddhist temples."

With the political situation in Sri Lanka returning to normalcy, it was an opportune moment for SICCI's members to hear firsthand from Governor Jeevan the business and investment opportunities in his region and the prospects for tourism in the Northern region.

Sharing her thoughts on her social media page was the Sri Lankan High Commissioner to Singapore, Ms Sashikala Premawardhane.

She said the discussions with SICCI showcased trade, employment and investment opportunities in the Northern Province.

"We had a very useful session where the Governor had the opportunity to interact with the Chairman and some board members and also address SICCI members. Interactions on the labour side and on possible philanthropy projects were also discussed with several other interlocutors. We look forward to increasing engagements in the months ahead".



Meanwhile, Governor Jeevan Thiagarajah gave an overview of some of the industries in which businessmen and investors from Singapore can consider investing in their business plans. These include areas of food security coupled with cold chain and logistics operations, the IT sector and healthcare, where the northern territory already has a link up with SingHealth. Participants had an engaging session with the Governor and the High Commissioner, and they took advantage of the discussion to clarify various government and labour policies to facilitate investments to flow into Sri Lanka.

Rounding up the hour-long session with a vote of thanks was SICCI's Treasurer, Mr K Jayapal, who quipped that there is more to Sri Lanka than just the favourite spring hoppers and Sri Lankan crabs. And he urged the Indian business community to cast their net far and wide into Sri Lanka and its various provinces to give the South Asian nation the much-needed economic boost to continue to grow and prosper.



Opening remarks by Mr. Neil Parekh at the dialogue with Governor of the Northern Province of Sri Lanka



Her Excellency Ms. P Sashikala, Sri Lanka's High Commissioner to Singapore, The Honourable Governor of the Northern Province of Sri Lanka, Mr. Jeevan Thiagarajah, Senior officials from the High Commission, My fellow Directors, Dear Members of SICCI, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thank you for joining us this afternoon for this talk and dialogue session about the emerging and growing opportunities in the Northern province of Sri Lanka and the South Asian country.

To give us a first-hand insight, we have none other than the Governor of the province, Mr. Jeevan Thiagarajah accompanied by High Commissioner Sashikala, with whom my colleagues and I have had an opportunity for an engaging session on the current situation in Sri Lanka, which has also led to us deciding to organize this talk for our members.

Sri Lanka

This beautiful country called Sri Lanka has been having a bit of a gruelling time, sadly. First, we all went through it together- the Covid-19 pandemic.

And just when things were returning to normalcy in many parts of the world, a second crisis hit Sri Lanka and this was a double whammy- both politically and as a result, economically.

We all watched the gripping pictures of Sri Lankans exercising their democratic rights in front of the Presidential Palace. We are all glad that good sense did finally prevail, and the rest is now history.

The Singapore Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry has many members with direct or indirect interest in Sri Lanka.

It is a country with a reservoir of opportunities and going forward, with political stability and trust returning, it will be a great opportunity to expand and do more for Sri Lanka. And let's not forget the tourism potential Sri Lanka offers, the hilly resorts, the elephant resorts, the Hindu and Buddhist temples, Kandy in particular - where the Golden Tooth of Buddha is housed, and the mountain terrain.

The Northern Region and Its Governor

One way to create greater awareness is to share more information about the prospects in Sri Lanka, and this is precisely what we hope to do and find out more from both Her Excellency the High Commissioner and our special speaker this afternoon, the Governor of the Northern Province of Sri Lanka, the Honourable Jeevan Thiagarajah.

The governor is here for the second series of the International Conference on Communal Societies which was opened by President Halimah Yacob.

A word about the Northern province and our speaker before I conclude.

The Northern Province consists of five districts namely Jaffna, Kilinochchi, Mannar, Mullaitivu and Vavuniya. The total population of the northern province is around 1.3 million people.

Among the key economic activities in the northern province include agriculture, farming, fisheries, construction, IT services, telecommunications, and energy production.

The Honourable Jeevan Thiagarajah has been the Governor of the Northern Province since October 2021. Mr. Jeevan Thiagarajah has worked in the NGO sector in Sri Lanka since 1984, holding executive positions in several humanitarian and human rights organizations. In December 2020, he was appointed as a member of the Election Commission of Sri Lanka, a post which he resigned in October 2021. That month he was sworn in as the Governor of the Northern province.

We look forward to hearing more about what the northern province can offer to the Singapore Indian business community, and we will be in touch with you and your staff when investment and business opportunities arise.

Thank you very much, and let us have a fruitful discussion.



Little India Brightens Up for Deepavali 2022



Singapore's Little India district has come aglow with the annual Deepavali Light Up ceremony for the entire stretch of Serangoon Road and Race Course Road.

Doing the honors was Deputy Prime Minister and Coordinating Minister for Economic Policies, Mr. Heng Swee Keat. He was joined by his wife and Minister in the Prime Minister's Office and SICCI Advisor, Ms. Indranee Rajah together with business and community leaders.

During the ceremony, DPM Heng presented plaques to various sponsors, among them the Singapore Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

The plaque was received by SICCI Chairman Mr Neil Parekh.

Sharing his thoughts on his social media pages, DPM Heng said in Singapore Deepavali is not just a celebration by the Indian community.

It is an occasion for neighbours and friends from across all races and nationalities to come together as a community to celebrate our country's diversity and unique identity.

He added, "I hope that Singaporeans can continue to appreciate and understand different cultures, so as to connect with people from around the world. The Deepavali light up at Little India is a tradition that has gone on for nearly thirty-five years. This is possible because of the generous contributions of the many volunteers, residents, partners, and sponsors. May this tradition continue on for many more years"!

Do make your way down to Little India for your favourite items for Deepavali this year.



Fostering A Stronger TAC Community



Its now all at a click of a button on your mobile device or laptop.

A new OneTAC SG platform has been launched to help bring together the Trade Associations and Chambers (TACs) community in Singapore and enhance capabilities within TACs.

OneTAC SG was officially launched by Ms Low Yen Ling, Minister of State for Trade and Industry, at a TAC networking event organised by the Singapore Business Federation (SBF).

OneTAC SG is a “for TACs, by TACs” collaborative tool to strengthen partnerships within the TAC community, enable information sharing and enhance the internal capabilities of TACs in Singapore.

It has three key objectives or 3 ‘C’s – Connect (through meaningful conversations), Collaborate (to drive actionable outcomes), and Cultivate (to build internal capabilities of TACs).

OneTAC SG is open to all TACs in Singapore and their secretariat staff and will enable them to share and connect with one another as well as receive the latest updates on policies, initiatives and events from the Government, TACs and other business stakeholders.

Key features of OneTAC SG include the TAC and User Directory, Event Calendar, Communities and Groups, Direct Messaging, Resource Hubs and many more.

OneTAC SG is part of SBF’s efforts to enable a strong TAC community and a strong business ecosystem in Singapore.

Attending the event from the Singapore Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry was its Board member and businesswoman Ms Jayanthi Maniam.

She adds, “It is an excellent initiative from SBF to launch the OneTAC SG App to strengthen partnership and information sharing among TACs. The Funding Programme will be helpful to deepen the capabilities of the secretariat staff to support industry transformation”.



Added SICCI's Chairman, Mr Neil Parekh, "As the saying goes, Unity Is Strength. And this is most applicable for the collective efforts that our trade associations and chambers, together with the Singapore Business Federation and Enterprise Singapore have embarked together on the One TAC App project. With digitalization and online processes becoming the order of the day for many of our businesses, small and big, the One TAC app is most timely in particular for SMEs to come on board and take advantage of it for their growth. The Singapore Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry strongly commends the team that has worked behind this App. It is now our duty and responsibility to make the App known to our members and businesses, and this will be a key task for both the Chamber and its SME Centre, which has a large pool of clients to reach out to and to promote digitalization."

During the launch event, Minister of State Low also engaged the leaders from the trade associations and chambers in a fireside chat, and a key subject was how TACs could help transform businesses besides building their own capabilities.

Ms. Low explained, "I shared about the Forward Singapore exercise and called on the TACs to play an active role in empowering our workers as we refresh our social compact. TACs play a crucial role in the business community through advocacy, bridging and collaboration. The Government will strengthen our partnership with the TACs to help businesses tackle present economic challenges and prepare for the future economy".

More information on OneTAC SG can be found at <https://www.sbf.org.sg/membership/initiatives-for-tacs>.



Singapore Business Community Meets the President of the Philippines



It was an opportunity for business leaders from Singapore to hear first-hand the plans and aspirations for the business community of fellow Asean member the Philippines and that too from the President of the country.

A roundtable meeting with Singapore business leaders was organized by the Singapore Business Federation and the Philippine Trade and Investment Centre, Singapore, during the state visit of the new President of the country, His Excellency Ferdinand Romualdez Marcos Junior, on 7 September 2022.

The Singapore Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry's Treasurer, Mr Jayapal Ramasamy, was among those who attended the session on behalf of the Chamber together with key leaders from the SBF and sister chambers of commerce and trade associations. Among those who attended the session include the Chairman of Temasek Holdings, Mr Lim Boon Heng.

In his statement, the visiting President reiterated the importance of Singapore as a trade partner and a major source of foreign direct investments for the Philippines.

Mr Jayapal and other business leaders shared their thoughts with the President and his delegations on ways to boost business ties between the two economies and in particular, with the business chambers of both sides.

Explained Mr Jayapal, "Asean has been poised to be one of the fastest growing regions in the world, and it is most timely that the leading business associations and chambers renew their ties with their counterparts in the Asean member countries. For the Singapore Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, it was an excellent opportunity for me to share with the Philippines leader some of the areas of focus that the new Board will be embarking on in our internationalization drive. We will work closely with our Philippines counterparts to deep dive into new markets in the country."



Opening of the refurbished SCCC building



58 years ago in 1964, on the day of the mid-autumn festival, Singapore's first Prime Minister, the Late Mr Lee Kuan Yew officiated at the opening of the Singapore Chinese Chamber of Commerce and Industry Building.

Fast forward to 58 years later in 2022, the refurbished building along Hill Street was re-opened on the same mid-autumn festival day on 10 September 2022 by current Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong. Joining him at the ceremony were Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister Lawrence Wong, Manpower Minister Dr Tan See Leng and business and community leaders.

Addressing the gathering, Mr Lawrence Wong explained that one of his immediate priorities since taking on the new responsibility as DPM is to embark on the Forward Singapore exercise.

"It is a national conversation and a national movement to refresh and strengthen our social compact as we chart our new forward together in this new environment", said Mr Wong. And he looked forward to views from the trade associations and chambers on a wide range of issues.

Extending his heartiest congratulations to the President and Council members of the Singapore Chinese Chamber of Commerce and Industry was the Chairman of SICCI, Mr Neil Parekh.

"On behalf of the Board of Directors of the Singapore Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, I extend my heartiest congratulations to the President and Council members of the Singapore Chinese Chamber of Commerce and Industry on the occasion of the opening of its newly renovated building which stands as an icon along Hill Street.

"Both our chambers have a long and rich history of establishment and existence in Singapore. Our roles as chambers of commerce have grown and become all the more important in recent years as we all get together as one big family to address the concerns of our respective business communities during trying times, most recently the Covid pandemic and now in helping them to battle rising business costs and stay relevant in an evolving economy. Like the Chinese Chamber, my colleagues and I will also be actively seeking views from the Indian business community for the government's Forward Singapore exercise, and we hope the views that we submit to the 4G team of Ministers will help them shape future business-friendly policies for the economy of the future," said Mr Parekh.

SICCI's Board Director and the Chairman of SMEC@SICCI, Mr. Maneesh Tripathi who attended the event, said, "It was a grand ceremony and a proud and nostalgic moment as the same building was inaugurated by the late founding father of Singapore, Mr Lee Kuan Yew decades ago".

SMEICC Conferences Series 2022



The SMEICC - Annual SME Conference & Expo and Infocomm Commerce Conference, organized by the Singapore Chinese Chamber of Commerce and Industry, was held on the 13th and 14th of September 2022. The trade show, which had various main and breakout sessions, witnessed the support of more than 1000 participants.

Among the highlights of the conference was the release of some key findings from a survey done by the Chamber.

The survey was done between June and August 2022, and ninety percent of the respondents were small and medium enterprises.

A key finding of the survey - more businesses expect to be profitable this year but rising costs such as those associated with manpower, logistics, and transport are a big concern for them. The survey respondents add that digitalization is a way to overcome manpower constraints.

The two-day conference was opened by Communications and Information Minister Ms. Josephine Teo.

SICCI Board Director and the Chairman of SMEC@SICCI Mr. Maneesh Tripathi, who attended the event, said, "The event was very well organised. The most interesting was the 'Trailblazers Ahead of Time' section."

SICCI Congratulates Mr George Abraham



**Singapore Indian Chamber
of Commerce & Industry**
ESTABLISHED 1924

CONGRATULATIONS!

The Chairman and Board of Directors of the Singapore Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry extend their heartiest congratulations and best wishes to Mr. George Abraham on being conferred the National Day Award 2022 by the President of the Republic of Singapore.

Mr. George Abraham, the Honorary Treasurer and SICCI Board Director (2020 to 2022) has been conferred the Public Service Medal (Pingat Bakti Masyarakat).

Mr. George Abraham's contributions to SICCI as its former Executive Director and Board Member for several years has been instrumental in shaping and growing SICCI both in Singapore and abroad. We wish him many more years of good health and contributions to our Chamber.



Minister of State Alvin Tan Joins SICCI Board as Advisor

The Singapore Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry is pleased to welcome Mr. Alvin Tan to its team of Advisors. Mr Alvin Tan is a Minister of State for Trade and Industry; and Culture, Community and Youth.

Mr. Alvin Tan joins Ms. Indranee Rajah and Associate Professor Muhammad Faishal Ibrahim as the Chamber's advisors. Ms. Indranee Rajah is a Minister in the Prime Minister's Office, she is also Second Minister for Finance, and Second Minister for National Development. Professor Faishal is a Minister of State in the Ministry of Home Affairs & the Ministry of National Development

In his letter to Mr. Alvin Tan, SICCI's Chairman, Mr. Neil Parekh said, "It is my personal belief that your involvement with SICCI will help further expand our touch points with the small and medium enterprises on the ground and in the heartlands and work more closely with our business colleagues in the community".

Mr. Alvin Tan also sits on the Monetary Authority of Singapore (MAS) Board.



SICCI's statement on Manpower Ministry's announcement of the five-year work pass

Singapore's Ministry for Manpower made several announcements on 29 August 2022 to attract talent into Singapore to strengthen Singapore's position as a global hub for talent.

Among the measures, the Government will introduce a five-year work pass that allows foreigners earning at least S\$30,000 a month to start, operate and work for multiple Singapore companies simultaneously. It will halve the time required for employers to look for locals to fill a position before they can hire foreigners.

Employment Pass (EP) holders working in tech occupations that face a shortage of workers will qualify for a five-year EP, up from the usual two to three years.

The processing time for EP applications will be reduced from three weeks to 10 days.

Responding to the announcements, Chairman of the Singapore Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SICCI) , Mr. Neil Parekh said, "Ensuring that Singapore has both local and foreign talent at all levels of the economy and sectors is critical for the nation to remain competitive in the global economy.

The Singapore Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SICCI) welcomes the Manpower Ministry's efforts to attract the best talent for sectors that need them urgently, as spelt out by our Prime Minister during his National Day Rally speech on 21 August 2022.

In these efforts, SICCI is confident that the government will continue to emphasise and exercise its policy of Singaporeans first in encouraging companies to hire top talent when graduating students enter the labour market. In this regard, SICCI urges graduating students to give their best shot for the jobs where talent is much needed for the Singapore economy to flourish, innovate and be competitive.

Among the announcements that would be welcomed by SICCI's members, who comprise many small and medium-sized enterprises, is improvements to the processing time for all applicants for employment passes. Post-Covid, this remained a key concern of our members of the time taken to process EP applications and renew existing ones. MOM's announcement of improving the processing time to within ten business days is excellent news for employers who need to bring in workers on EP.

In the meantime, SICCI urges the government - particularly the Manpower Ministry, to continue looking into the manpower shortage needs of many businesses in the food and beverage sector. Smaller ethnic restaurants continue to need support to remain sustainable. And cater to their clients as much of Singapore's economy has opened up with relaxations to the mask-wearing policy".



SICCI's statement on the launch of the workplace safety code of practice for company management

The Singapore Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry welcomes the launch of the workplace safety code of practice for company management as announced by the Minister for Manpower, Dr Tan See Leng.

A very important element for Singapore to continue to be an attractive place for our foreign manpower to work is a strong workplace safety and health culture in ALL workplaces, regardless of size.

This is something which many business delegations which meet SICCI's management for discussions speak about and very positively indeed. For the care and concern management has for all its workers, whether local or foreign.

Under such circumstances, every workplace accident that happens is just one too many,

It is all the more tragic when it turns fatal.

On our part at the Singapore Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, we will continue to emphasize the importance of workplace safety in our discussions with our members during our regular networking sessions.

This will also be put across by our SME Centre at SICCI when they engage the hundreds of small and medium enterprises on their queries that they may have about doing business in Singapore.

SICCI will also be happy to share any collaterals which MOM may want to distribute to employers on workplace safety and health. These collaterals can be in our four official languages.

At SICCI, we stand ready to do our part with the government and tripartite agencies to achieve zero accidents at our workplaces and to make Singapore a shining example of workplace safety and health to the international community.



To support company directors' understanding and application of the COP, the MOM has also produced a set of FAQs, available on WSH Council's website here: <https://www.tal.sg/wshc/resources/publications/codes-of-practice/frequently-asked-questions-code-of-practice-on-chief-executives-and-board-of-directors-wsh-duties>

For SICCI members who wish to kickstart their WSH journey, you may sign up for the WSH Council's StartSAFE programme, which helps companies identify and manage workplace safety and health risks. For more information, you may visit the link here <https://www.tal.sg/wshc/programmes/startsafe>.

Congratulatory message from Mr Neil Parekh, Chairman Singapore Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry to the Indian High Commissioner in Singapore on the occasion of India's 75th year of Independence



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15 August 2022

His Excellency Mr P Kumaran

India's High Commissioner to the Republic of Singapore

Dear Excellency,

Happy 75 years of Independence to the Republic of India!

Together with the Board of Directors of the Singapore Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Indian business community in Singapore, I extend my heartiest congratulations and best wishes to the President, Prime Minister and people of India on India's 75th year of Independence.

Both India and Singapore enjoy excellent bilateral ties at the government to government, business to business and people to people levels.

The re-opening of travel borders and the ease of travel between both countries has once again brought back the vibrancy of travel to both nations.

And not a single month goes by without the visit of an Indian delegation comprising business leaders, young entrepreneurs and senior government officials to the Singapore Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

In my current term of office, I have made internationalisation as a key priority for my team and one area I hope to see more activity is bilateral visits of business delegations from SICCI to India and business chamber delegations from the various Indian states to Singapore. And I look forward to working closely with you and your team at the High Commission to realise this objective.

75 years of independence is no mean feat and celebrating this achievement after two years of battling the Covid-19 pandemic is more meaningful.

Kindly accept our best wishes and may I take this opportunity to wish you and Mrs Kumaran good health.

Yours Sincerely,

Neil Parekh

Chairman, Singapore Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry.



The Singapore Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry has congratulated Mr. Piyush Gupta on the recent announcement of his appointment as the next Chairman of SMU's Board of Trustees.



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22 August 2022

Mr Piyush Gupta
Chairman-Designate,
Singapore Management University Board of Trustees,
12 Marina Boulevard Tower 3,
3 Level, Marina Bay Financial Centre
Singapore 018982

Dear Mr Piyush,

My team and I at the Singapore Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry express our heartiest congratulations to you on your appointment as the Chairman of SMU's Board of Trustees from 12 January 2023, succeeding Mr Ho Kwong Ping.

One of the key features for Singapore to evolve into a global educational hub is to have good and reputed educational institutions, among them our universities. In a very short span, the Singapore Management University has risen to a much-sought after institution by both Singaporeans and foreign students, for many of the courses that it offers. A further attraction is the university in the city concept that SMU enjoys.

All these would not have been possible without the leadership that SMU has enjoyed from its inception.

The SICCI Board wishes you all the very best as you continue this tradition of leading SMU to even greater heights and reputable global rankings as you prepare yourself to assume the leadership post from January 2023.

Wishing you and your loved ones good health and best wishes.

Yours Sincerely,

Neil Parekh
Chairman, Singapore Indian Chamber of Commerce, and Industry.



The Singapore Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry has conveyed its deepest condolences to the British High Commissioner following the demise of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth.



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13 September 2022

Her Excellency Kara Justine Owen
United Kingdom's High Commissioner to Singapore
100 Tanglin Rd,
Singapore 247919

Dear Madam High Commissioner,

On behalf of the Board of Directors of the Singapore Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SICCI) and the Indian business community in Singapore, may I express our deepest condolences to the Royal family, the citizens of the United Kingdom and to you and your staff on the demise of Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II.

We also share our condolences with our friends from the British business community in Singapore.

SICCI's journey in Singapore began in 1924, during the British colonial period.

A small, dedicated group of Indian businessmen came together to form an association to better protect, advance, and unify the interests of the Indian business community.

SICCI's history is thus briefly involved with the British and since then our businessmen have continued to establish ties with many companies and the business chambers in the United Kingdom to further their business interests.

And this has been further enhanced with Her Majesty's keen interests in Singapore and its development during her three visits to the Republic.

Kindly accept our condolences in this time of sadness.

Sincerely Yours,

Neil Parekh
Chairman, Singapore Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry.



SICCI In the News

Singapore Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry chairman Neil Parekh said the group especially welcomes the improvements to the processing time for EP applications, as it remains a “key concern” of its members.

“MOM’s announcement of improving the processing time to within 10 business days is excellent news for employers who need to bring in workers on EP.”

THE BUSINESS TIMES

30th August 2022



DPM Heng Swee Keat (in red) said that this year's Deepavali is a chance to reflect on the end of muted celebrations of the last two years.
ST PHOTO: DESMOND WEE

THE STRAITS TIMES

16th September 2022

The conference was also addressed by Mr Neil Parekh, chairman of the Singapore Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry; Ms Fang Eu-Lin, partner and sustainability and climate change leader at PwC Singapore; and Mr Benjamin Henry Towell, executive director for sustainability at OCBC.

THE STRAITS TIMES

31st August 2022

WHY JOIN SICCI?

LET US HELP YOUR BUSINESS



Singapore Indian Chamber
of Commerce & Industry
ESTABLISHED 1924



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membership@sicci.com

Call: 6222 2855 / 9654 1346

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SICCI Welcomes our New Members

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Morrison Management Pte Ltd
The Chillout place Pte Ltd
Third eEye Media Pte Ltd
Handdy Container(s) Pte Ltd
Arcadia Security Protection Pte Ltd
Why Not Us Pte Ltd
Vel's Travel and Tours Pte Ltd
AMK TECH Solutions Pte Ltd
Fullcircle Risk Consulting
Xclusive Fashion Design and Tailoring
IN SAB Solutions Pte Ltd

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Kes Shotam
Juhairul Marzuk
Vivek Chhabra
Govinda rajan Sinnappan
Dolly Reavathi Gunasekaran
Zaid Khan
Kumaravelu Palanivelu
Vignesh Ram Naidu
Dhanesh Sharma S/O A K Jagdish Kumar

Associate Corporate

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