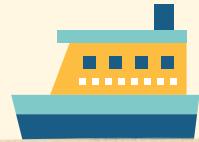


A round-up of events with possible lessons and implications for Singapore



1. Indonesian Preacher Denied Entry into Singapore

On 16 May 2022, an Indonesian preacher named Abdul Somad Batubara (Somad) was denied entry into Singapore after being interviewed by immigration officers.

What happened next?



- Somad claimed on YouTube and Instagram that he had been "deported" from Singapore.
- Supporters of Somad held protests against Singapore's actions in Jakarta and Medan. They also spammed the social media accounts of Singaporean government agencies and political leaders, such as the Immigration and Checkpoints Authority and Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong.
- Some social media comments made by Somad's supporters threatened to bomb and destroy Singapore, accusing the country of being Islamophobic and arrogant.
- In response, Indonesian Ambassador to Singapore Suryopratomo and Foreign Ministry spokesperson Teuku Faizasyah expressed that Indonesians should respect Singapore's sovereign right to decide who is allowed entry into the country.

Why was Somad denied entry into Singapore?

- According to Singapore's Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), "Somad has been known to preach extremist and segregationist teachings, which are unacceptable in Singapore's multi-racial and multi-religious society."
- MHA noted that Somad has preached that suicide bombings are legitimate in the context of the Israel-Palestine conflict, and has publicly referred to non-Muslims as "infidels".
- Home Affairs Minister K Shanmugam also told reporters on 23 May that some Singaporeans investigated under the Internal Security Act were followers of Somad and became radicalised after watching his preachings online.

"We take a zero-tolerance approach and even-handed approach towards any form of hate speech and divisive ideology. And it is not directed at any specific individual, specific religion, or any specific nationality. Our position applies equally to all."

- Minister Shanmugam, speaking to reporters on 23 May 2022



For a summary of key points, visit [SG101](#).



2. ASEAN-US Summit



From 10 to 14 May 2022, PM Lee Hsien Loong and other ASEAN leaders met with US President Joe Biden for the ASEAN-US Special Summit in Washington D.C. This was the first in-person meeting between President Biden and ASEAN leaders.

After the summit, PM Lee said that the discussions signal the upgrading of ties between ASEAN and the US. In a time of global uncertainties, it shows that the US values its partnership with ASEAN and Southeast Asia, and would like to deepen engagement with the region.

Key Areas of Discussion

1

US Commitment to Southeast Asia

- The US would appoint Yohannes Abraham, chief of staff on the National Security Council, as ambassador to ASEAN — a role that has been empty since 2017.
- President Biden also announced a US\$150 million commitment in development assistance to ASEAN.

2

Strengthening cooperation between the US and ASEAN

- The ASEAN-US Strategic partnership would become a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership, and facilitate cooperation in areas such as public health and renewable energy.
- The Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF) would strengthen and deepen economic cooperation.



Image: ASEAN

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"The US continues to be focused on the Asia-Pacific, even despite all its other many busy preoccupations. That is good for us because Singapore's view has been for a long time that the US plays a constructive, in fact, indispensable, role in our region."

- PM Lee, speaking to journalists after the summit on 14 May

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3. May Day Rally 2022



Watch the
full speech
here.

On 1 May 2022, Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong delivered his May Day Rally speech to an audience which included representatives from Singapore's tripartite economic system - the Ministry of Manpower, National Trades Union Congress, and Singapore National Employers Federation. PM Lee spoke about how tripartism must always be a 'stabilising and anchoring force' for Singapore, especially in the face of the following three uncertainties.

Domestic Economic Impact of COVID-19

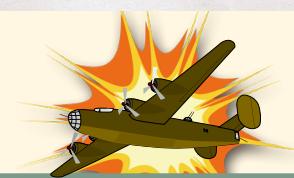


- The battle against COVID-19 is not over, but Singapore did its best to protect lives and livelihoods.
- While many workers suffered reduced earnings, job losses were minimised and Singapore's unemployment rate had almost returned to pre-pandemic levels.
- As in past crises, the Labour Movement, led by NTUC, helped to support Singaporean workers by ensuring that employment opportunities remained available.

Rising Costs of Living due to Economic Volatility



- Heightened international tensions caused by the Russia-Ukraine War have made it harder for international cooperation on global challenges, such as pandemics and climate change.
- Singapore's economy is heavily dependent on multilateral trade and investments. If countries cannot cooperate or accept the rules of free trade, our economy will suffer.
- Singaporeans are already feeling the impact of the war on the cost of living. To help cushion this, the government provided vouchers and rebates, and also tightened our monetary policy to reduce imported inflation.



Insecurity Caused by the Russia-Ukraine War

- Singapore started 2022 cautiously optimistic about its post-COVID-19 economic recovery.
- However, global risks increased after Russia's invasion of Ukraine in Feb, and more recently after various countries furnished Ukraine with military support.
- Russia's aggression undermined the global order and international rule of law upon which Singapore's security and existence is based. Singapore thus stands strongly against Russia's actions.

"Our strategy can only be one – and that is to stay open, to make our economy stronger, more resilient, and to keep on seizing opportunities for growth... But economic success alone is not enough. Our growth must be matched by social and political cohesion. There is war in Europe, there are major troubles in the world, and great power rivalry in our region. Facing all these external troubles, if Singaporeans are not strong and united, if we allow ourselves to be split and divided, we will be done for."

- PM Lee, in the May Day Rally on 1 May

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