

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

In this issue of News in Focus, we take a look at the latest developments in the region and domestically, and their potential lessons for Singapore.

Presidential Elections 2023

The presidential elections were held in Singapore on 1 Sep, and three candidates ran for the non-partisan position: Mr Ng Kok Song, Mr Tharman Shanmugaratnam and Mr Tan Kin Lian.

Mr Tharman won with a vote share of 70.4% to become Singapore's 9th President.

President Tharman highlighted these five areas in his speech at his Swearing-in Ceremony on 14 Sep:

Unite all Singaporeans

As our society matures with greater diversity of views and preferences, we must grow our sense of togetherness as fellow Singaporeans, and not allow any of our differences to divide us.

Strengthen Multiracialism

To continue to add depth and resilience to our multiracialism, and never let it fray. President Tharman said he will promote greater interactions between our different communities, so as to strengthen our shared Singaporean identity, which has been and must remain our most precious asset.

Promote Singapore's interests abroad

As Head of State in this era of profound global uncertainty and growing fragility, President Tharman said he will do his best to represent Singapore and promote the country's interests abroad, in line with the objectives and priorities of the government, and enhance our standing amongst the community of nations.



Swearing-in of Mr Tharman Shanmugaratnam as Singapore's 9th President (MCI)

Safeguard Our Reserves and Public Service

President Tharman promises to be "scrupulous and independent" in making judgements that involve the use of the "second key" on our reserves. He will also confer closely with the Council of Presidential Advisers, and be thorough and impartial in his assessments.

Build an Inclusive Society

Beyond relying on Government policies to achieve an inclusive society, we must build a strong culture of kinship and respect amongst ourselves. President Tharman plans to lend active support to the arts and sports, and encourage the building of active community stakeholders and a thriving civil society through ground-up and purpose-driven initiatives.



“ Regardless of the challenges ahead of us or the differences amongst us that we will inevitably have, let us remember we are bound by a common destiny. Let us take confidence in what we have achieved together so far, and pledge to work together for a future of optimism and respect for all. ”

President Tharman in his Swearing-in Ceremony



READ MORE

Speech by President Tharman at his Swearing-in Ceremony.
<https://go.gov.sg/presidenttharmanspeech>

Sources: CNA, 1 & 14 Sep; Istana News Room, 14 Sep; PMO, 14 Sep

Find out more about the role of the Elected Presidency on our ConnexionSG Facebook and Instagram page!



Questions for conversations



In his Swearing-In speech, President Tharman outlined a few areas on how we can progress together and deepen our solidarity as Singaporeans. What are some of the areas you can contribute or take part in?

Finding Common Ground in Troubled Times



Multilateralism is based on a mutual desire to achieve win-win outcomes.

In troubled times, it is all the more important that Singapore continues to work with like-minded friends to make progress towards a common landing point. Despite multilateralism coming under pressure, countries are still able to make progress and we should continue striving.

Here are some lessons from recent diplomatic events where Singapore continues to advocate for multilateralism on the international and regional stages:

43rd Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Summit and Related Summits



Prime Minister (PM) Lee Hsien Loong attended the 43rd ASEAN Summit and Related Summits from 5 to 7 Sep in Jakarta, Indonesia. The ASEAN Summit is the second iteration of the biannual summit this year.

Here are the key highlights discussed at the Summits:

Ongoing Myanmar Crisis

- This is the second year in a row that Myanmar is not invited to the regional meet. The bloc made a decision last year to leave Myanmar's junta out of ASEAN summits and foreign ministers' meetings.



Leaders at the 43rd ASEAN Summit on Sept 5, 2023. (PMO)

Ongoing Myanmar Crisis (Con't)

- While ASEAN members have had different approaches to resolving the Myanmar crisis, the bloc has agreed to set up a “troika mechanism” comprising the immediate past, current and incoming chairs of their regional grouping, to ensure unity and continuity in handling the Myanmar issue.
- PM Lee highlighted that ASEAN’s centrality in the Myanmar crisis needs to be built on “unity of purpose and action”. Singapore also urged ASEAN to push for the full implementation of the Five-Point Consensus (5PC) to address the Myanmar crisis. This appeal was similarly echoed by PM Lee at a separate East Asia Summit (EAS) on 7 Sep.



Singapore PM Lee speaking during the ASEAN-China Summit in Jakarta on Sep 6, 2023. (ASEAN Summit 2023 broadcaster)



US-China Relations

- The Summit came amid heightened tensions in the South China Sea (SCS), after China released a new map, which features an additional 10th dash to the east of Taiwan and claims almost all of the SCS and several land areas in India and Russia. India, Malaysia, Vietnam, Taiwan, Indonesia and the Philippines have protested the move.
- At the ASEAN-China Summit on 6 Sep, PM Lee urged ASEAN and China to intensify efforts to conclude a Code of Conduct that is in accordance with international law - like the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, to safeguard the "rights and interests of all parties".
- He added that ASEAN has a direct interest in the trajectory of US-China relations, since tensions could easily stoke existing flashpoints in the region and undermine the peace, prosperity and stability that we have all enjoyed for decades.
- It is therefore crucial that both the US and China continue to engage in dialogue and “show leadership” to address global issues.



“ Geopolitical rivalry will play out in our region, as is happening elsewhere in the world; we may not wish it, but we have to accept it. The solution is not to remain passive and avoid taking positions on all issues... Otherwise, ASEAN will lose its relevance. We have to be prepared to engage all sides actively, in mutually beneficial ways. ”

PM Lee at the 43rd ASEAN Summit

Sources: TODAY, 4 to 5 Sep; CNA, 4 to 7 Sep; PMO, 4 Sep

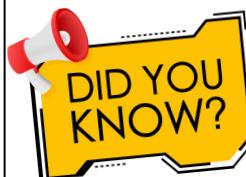
Group of 20 (G20) Leaders' Summit

An annual summit, the 18th Group of 20 (G20) Leaders' Summit was held in New Delhi, India on 10 Sep. Notably absent from this year's summit were Chinese President Xi Jinping – the first time that he has skipped G20 – and Russian President Vladimir Putin. Chinese premier Li Qiang and Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov attended in their stead respectively.

PM Lee attended the G20 summit at the invitation of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, in India's capacity as G20 president for 2023.



G20 Summit (PM Lee's FB page)



Singapore is not a member of the G20 grouping but has been regularly invited to the annual summit and its related meetings.

The G20 members represent around 85% of the global GDP, over 75% of the global trade, and about two-thirds of the world population.



G20 members (G20 website)

Here are some key highlights from the G20 Summit:

- While tensions between major powers have affected multilateral cooperation, what Singapore has done is to work with "like-minded friends", and there has been progress as a result. This can be seen in the developments between Singapore and the European Union (EU) and the United Kingdom. PM Lee met with the president of the EU Ursula von der Leyen at the summit, and they reaffirmed the warm relations between Singapore and the EU, and welcomed the recent launch of negotiations for the EU-Singapore Digital Trade Agreement.

- PM Lee also spoke to global leaders about tackling climate change, as well as the challenges facing multilateralism and how to overcome them. He emphasised the need for G20 leadership in reinvigorating multilateralism. On the sidelines of the summit, he also held bilateral meetings with various leaders, including UK PM Rishi Sunak, following which a joint declaration was issued by both countries to upgrade bilateral relations to a "strategic relationship".

G20 Communique

Earlier, the group was divided over the war in Ukraine, with Western nations pushing for strong condemnation of Russia in the Leaders' Declaration to be issued at the end of the summit, while others demanded a focus on broader economic issues. The G20 leaders finally managed to reach a consensus on the language to be used for the description of the Ukraine war, allowing the adoption of the G20 Leaders' Summit Declaration at the end of the first day of the summit.



READ MORE

Intervention by PM Lee Hsien Loong in Session III "One Future" at the G20 New Delhi Summit
<https://go.gov.sg/pmsonefutureg20speech>

RSAF55 Open House

To commemorate the Republic of Singapore Air Force (RSAF)'s 55th anniversary, the RSAF55 Open House (RSAF55OH) was held from 9 to 10 Sep at Paya Lebar Air Base. Themed "Defending Our Skies, Securing Our Future", RSAF55OH was opened to the public and attracted more than 268,000 visitors over the two days.

The RSAFOH55 featured a range of activities where visitors can get hands-on experience with interactive exhibits and simulators, delve into the RSAF's rich history and capabilities, and get to know the different RSAF vocations and how they contribute to the air defence of Singapore.



Static display area at the RSAF55 Open House (Defence Minister Dr Ng Eng Hen's FB page)

Watch this reel for a recap of what went down at RSAF55OH!

<https://go.gov.sg/rsaf55ohreel>



Visitors had the opportunity to try out flight simulators (RSAF FB page)



Members of the public getting ready for a familiarisation flight (RSAF FB page)



“ We appreciate the contributions and the sacrifices of all the men and women of the RSAF over so many years. Only through their efforts and dedication can we see this outcome, which is a free and sovereign Singapore and an air space that is well-defended 24/7. ”

Senior Minister of State for Defence Mr Heng Chee How at the launch of the event

Sources: MINDEF News Release, 15 Aug & 9 Sep; CNA, 9 Sep

World Mental Health Day on 10 Oct 2023

COMING SOON

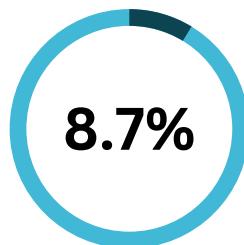
World Mental Health Day is commemorated annually on 10 Oct to raise awareness of mental health issues, reduce stigma, and promote mental well-being around the world.

In this issue, we examine recent statistics on mental health in Singapore, and explore resources that may be of help.

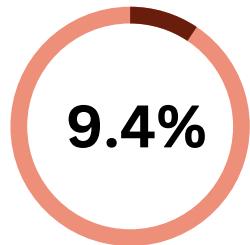
Singapore's Mental Health Landscape

Recent statistics paint a concerning picture of mental health in our city-state.

Based on a 2021 study by the Institute of Mental Health (IMH) of over 1000 Singapore citizens and permanent residents:



met the criteria for clinical depression

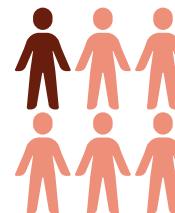


met the criteria for clinical anxiety

The Singapore Youth Epidemiology and Resilience Study conducted from 2020 to 2022 on youths aged 11 to 18 found that:



1 in 3 reported experiencing internalising mental health symptoms (e.g., sadness, anxiety, loneliness)



1 in 6 reported experiencing externalising mental health symptoms (e.g., hyperactivity, rule-breaking, aggression)

More recently in the news, mixed martial arts champion Angela Lee revealed that her 2017 car crash in Hawaii was a suicide attempt, and not an accident. She also confirmed that her sister Victoria Lee, who died last year at the age of 18, took her own life.

It seems that mental health issues do not discriminate, and can happen to any one of us. As we approach World Mental Health Day, it is crucial for us to be aware of the importance of mental health, and be reminded of how crucial it is to look out for the warning signs and provide unwavering support for one another.

Mental Wellness Begins With All of Us



We can start by being aware of initiatives in place to support mental health in Singapore, to help ourselves and to help others around. Some examples include:

Spark the Change Initiative

An initiative by the Samaritans of Singapore (SOS) to rally community support for those in need of crisis care, thinking about or affected by suicide.

Held on 2 Sep at the Singapore Sports Hub, the fest kicked-off with a 3 km #HOWRU charity walk, followed by a line-up of performances and activities throughout the day with the objective of breaking the stigma of suicide and sparking change.



“ The SOS logo, the sunflower, is a sign of hope, positivity and strength, as it always looks to the light. Just like the sunflower, we can bring hope to the people around us, especially in their darkest moments. ”



DPM Lawrence Wong in his welcome remarks at the Spark the Change Fest 2023

Watch the welcome remarks from Spark the Change Fest's Guest of Honour and Patron of SOS, Deputy Prime Minister (DPM) Lawrence Wong:

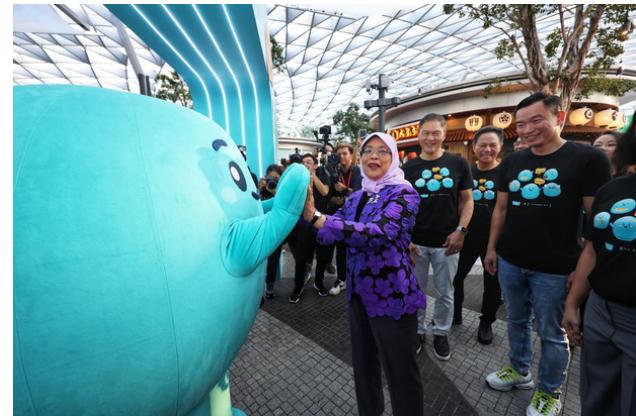


<https://go.gov.sg/sosspeech>

Beyond the Label (BTL)

A nation-wide movement started in 2018 by the National Council of Social Service (NCSS) which focuses on addressing stigma and promoting social inclusion for persons with mental health conditions.

Themed “Mental Wellness Begins With All of Us”, the BTL Fest 2023 held on 8 Sep at Jewel Changi Airport comprised wellness workshops, community performances and a fireside chat to facilitate the sharing of mental health insights.



Former President Halimah Yacob with Brave, the mascot for BTL Fest 2023 (Halimah Yacob's FB)



Where to get help:

Crisis Helplines:

- Institute of Mental Health 24-hr helpline: **6389-2222**
- Samaritans of Singapore 24-hr helpline: **1-767**
- Singapore Association for Mental Health: **1800-283-7019**

Counselling Helplines:

- TOUCHline (Counselling): **1800-377-2252**
- TOUCH Care Line (for seniors, caregivers): **6804-6555**
- Care Corner Counselling Centre: **6353-1180**

Sources: ST, 24 Aug 21 & 20 May 22; CNA, 1 Jul & 20 Sep; SOS website; BTL FB

Mental Health Resources



Health Hub Mental Wellness
<https://go.gov.sg/healthhubmentalwellness>

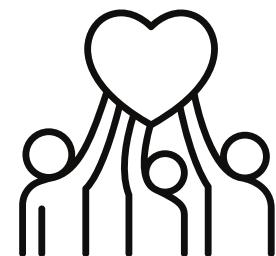


Mindline.Sg - A Mental Wellness Resource Platform
<https://go.gov.sg/mindlinesgttools>

Questions for conversations



How can we, as individuals and as an organisation, contribute to creating a more supportive and understanding environment for mental health in our workplaces and community?



END



Any feedback on this issue?
Let us know through
<https://go.gov.sg/feedbacknif>
or email us at nexus@defence.gov.sg

