

# ADB

# *Magazine*

A Monthly Publication of the Association of Dutch Businessmen in Singapore

June 2007

MITA 373/03/2001

# Asian

# superstition

**House prices  
still have a way to go**

**Good business in Suntec  
Convention & Exhibition Centre**

# dream<sup>2</sup>

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## PROLOGUE



Frans van de Bospoort

Dear ADB Members,

Seems that recently no single day in Singapore is passing by, without announcing another unique event, record-breaking data, new investment opportunity or exiting entertainment activity. Formula 1 car races, leading container port, first airline to introduce the new jumbo jet Airbus A380, private bankers all over the place, skyrocketing property prices (and too bad, going hand-in-hand with steeply increased lease rentals) and the much discussed Integrated Resorts, are all ingredients of the buzz in today's Singapore.

This seamless brings me to our "own" ADB. By the time you read this, we have enjoyed our annual "Networking BBQ" at the Hollandse Club. An excellent opportunity to say goodbye to some of our colleagues and friends, who have come to the end of their assignment and (have to) return to the land of tulips and windmills, or move on to another adventure. Emotional goodbyes and warm farewells are often heard these days. However, we were also able to welcome many new members who joined their first ADB event. A big thank you for KLM, kindly sponsoring our well appreciated BBQ.

If you were not able to attend our BBQ, we are pleased to announce that the Board is already preparing for the 16<sup>th</sup> annual "Black Tie Dinner and Dance". Please pencil in your busy social agenda the date for the party of the year; Saturday the 25<sup>th</sup> of August. Rest assure that we will do our utmost to beat the record breaking number of last year's participants by showing off with an even more unique location and of course, delicious dining and wining.

In line with the entrepreneurial nature of our host country, you might have noticed the announcement of a joined initiative of the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands and the ADB, for which we appreciate your kind advice and input. We are wondering why, in contrary to some of our European fellow countrymen, we do not have a Chamber of Commerce in Singapore. Is there simply no need for a Dutch Chamber of Commerce, is it a missed chance and such an institute would be very welcome, or is everybody happy with the status quo? We as a Board have no clue at all, and therefore need your opinion. Please voice out, when the Embassy and the ADB organise an interactive workshop with speakers pro and contra establishing a Chamber of Commerce. The event will be held at the Hollandse Club on Saturday morning 9<sup>th</sup> of June, starting at 10.00 hrs and includes a lunch. We are counting on you!

The next official event organised by the ADB, will be an interactive panel discussion. On Monday the 11<sup>th</sup> of June at the Hollandse Club, enthusiastic entrepreneurs will shed some light on their experiences of starting up ones own business in Singapore. Looking forward to hear the stories, and hopefully one (or even better, all) of these start-ups will be in the "Fortune 500 list" soon!

For those of us who are going off soon for their annual home leave, I wish you all an enjoyable holiday and safe return to your homes. And for those of us spending their precious vacation time in Asia, I am sure you will have a marvellous time.

Warmest regards,  
Frans van de Bospoort

**'To share meaningful and business-related information amongst the Dutch business community in Singapore, whilst networking in a fun environment'**



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Wim Samlal



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Editorial contributions for the next issue may be sent or handed over to the ADB Secretariat, before or on the day of the monthly ADB meeting. The contents of this magazine are partly based on information received from third parties. The Committee does not take responsibility for the correctness of the articles.

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Membership fee is S\$ 100 per calendar year. For registration, please see the website [www.adb.org.sg/en\\_member\\_signup.htm](http://www.adb.org.sg/en_member_signup.htm). Membership is renewed automatically effective the first month of the new calendar year.

Make your cheque payable to "Association of Dutch Businessmen" and send to ADB, c/o 22 Camden Park, Singapore 299814.

Termination of membership must be received by ADB Secretariat in writing before 1 January, otherwise you will be charged for the full amount for the following calendar year.

Please notify the ADB secretariat of any changes in employer, (email) addresses or any other personal particulars that might be of interest to the ADB administration.

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# ADB Networking BBQ

A lovely setting, a good BBQ and great networking possibilities for the 111 participants who showed up (124 registered) at the swimming pool area of the Hollandse Club on the 17<sup>th</sup> of May.

We were lucky that the heavy rain stopped just in time before the BBQ started. We would like to thank KLM for sponsoring this popular event.

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# Suntec Singapore International Convention & Exhibition Centre

By Pieter Idenburg



The story of Suntec Singapore International Convention & Exhibition Centre began in the mid 80s when the then Prime Minister of Singapore, Mr Lee Kuan Yew invited a group of Hong Kong businessmen and professionals to the island state's National Day celebrations. He wanted them to see Singapore's progress in just 25 years of self-rule and its potential for investment.

Singapore was already a popular convention destination because of its strategic location, coupled with its excellent air, sea and road access, advanced telecommunication infrastructure, well-trained workforce and political stability. But it did not have a purpose-built centre catering to the specific needs of international conventions and exhibitions.

The Hong Kong business leaders recognized the opportunity and realized that such a centre while serving the community could also be used as a focal point for a mixed-land use comprising of commercial, retail and leisure. In 1988, they won the tender to build one of the biggest private projects in Singapore - Suntec City - located at the heart of Marina Bay, which was identified by the Urban Redevelopment Authority's (URA) master plan as the new downtown. The centerpiece of the mega development is Suntec Singapore International Convention & Exhibition Centre, the finest in Southeast Asia and amongst the best in the world.

Over the past years, rising demand for businesses from the MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conventions and Exhibitions) market has represented a very significant part of the growing economy. The Singapore government recognises this and has initiated programs to continually reinvent and develop new competencies with exciting offerings to maintain its edge. One of the key initiatives is to grow the tourism sector by doubling visitor arrivals from 8.3 million to 17 million and triple tourism receipts from S\$10 billion to S\$30 billion by 2015 - thereby strengthening and promoting Singapore as a destination of choice. For the second time in a row, Singapore was ranked second on the list of the world's top convention cities after

Vienna, by the International Congress & Convention Association (ICCA).

Within a short span of a decade, there have been strategic shifts in Singapore's economy and our industry closely reflected these changes. Back in the 90s when the economy was fuelled by manufacturing boom from the exhibitions market, our efforts were concentrated on these industries. Today, with a shift towards a service-oriented, knowledge-based hub, there is greater emphasis on the conventions market. As such, we have invested our efforts in diversifying our portfolio of events towards a greater emphasis on the increasing number of specialized and targeted conventions coming from international associations and focused on cutting edge areas and industries - an effort we started five years back. With the changing global environment, Suntec Singapore is marketing aggressively to attract those involved in these areas. With the developments in Asia as one of the fastest growing economic regions of the world and the island-state situated close to the buoyant economies of China and India, Singapore has also become one of the most-sought after locations for conventions.

Today, Suntec Singapore still maintains its edge as one of the leading convention centres of the world and continues to draw world-class conferences. We have contributed significantly to the MICE business and to the diverse needs of every MICE visitor. We have also established ourselves as the leader in the MICE area, having track record in hosting countless global events from the WTO Ministerial Conference to the World Economic Forum to the IMF-World Bank Annual Meetings 2006. Our dedicated, professional, efficient and reliable team has also been instrumental in ensuring the return of many shows such as Tax Free World Association (TFWA), SEMICON and GlobalTRONICS.



## BUSINESS


Since 2001, we have also been spearheading a very successful and active marketing alliance with 8 other partners - the hotels within the vicinity of Suntec Singapore, a destination management company, Singapore Airlines and the Singapore Exhibition & Convention Bureau, a group of the Singapore Tourism Board. The alliance promotes the precinct around Suntec Singapore as Asia's Convention City, an unparalleled convention city in the heart of Marina Bay. Between Suntec Singapore and the alliance, we have 75,000 sqm of meeting space, 5,200 five-star hotel rooms, access to 300 restaurants and 1,000 retail shops within 6 malls - all within a 15 minutes walk. This infrastructure offers excellent convenience for any meeting planner - a unique concept that none or few cities can boast about.

As the Chief Operating Officer at Suntec Singapore, Pieter Idenburg, a native Dutchman, who worked, on and off, in Asia for the last 14 years and lives here with his Singaporean wife and their two children, oversees the day to day operation of the convention centre. He also provides direction and structure to its food & beverage and banquet operations, the sales, marketing and operational initiatives of the centre. Prior to joining Suntec

Singapore, he has worked in the United States, Europe and Asia in senior management positions in both the airline and hotel industries as well as in the entertainment industry. Pieter is not new to Suntec Singapore, having been with them since 2005 as the Senior Director of Business Operations, and having helmed projects such as the building enhancement and the complex venue operations for the recent IMF-World Bank Annual Meetings 2006.

Pieter also heads up Suntec Integrated Media, a subsidiary that produces exhibitions such as the Asia Dive Exhibition, Sports & Fitness Expo, Boat Thai and the award winning Boat Asia 2007.

"I was asked to join the team at Suntec Singapore to facilitate change and lead the team towards the increasingly challenging and competitive environment. A task that I believe the staff at our venue is now well prepared for" said Pieter who sees his team as his greatest asset. "I love to work with people and it is amazing how well a team of enthusiastic, responsible and accountable staff can accomplish."

"I am looking forward to showcase our venue and our people to the members of ADB and hope to be able to slot in a date into the busy ADB calendar soon." 

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## INTERVIEW

### Juliet Stannard, *Citiprop Pacific* “Rents and prices of housing in Singapore still have a way to go”

*Established in 1980, Citiprop Pacific is a boutique property agency providing highly personalized services to a largely expatriate clientele. From a foundation in residential leasing, Citiprop Pacific has expanded to offer complete relocation, property management, corporate services, and property sales.*

*Our international team includes realtors and support staff from around the globe, hailing from over twelve countries, speaking fifteen languages, and with more than a hundred years of combined experience in real estate, relocation, and property management.*

*Our mission is to serve our clients, be it Multi National Corporations or a newly arrived family, with the same excellence, professionalism, and dedication to achieving Jia....a congenial place to live.*

*For more information on Citiprop Property Management Pte Ltd, visit the website at <http://www.citiprop.com>*

On Wednesday May 2<sup>nd</sup>, we had the pleasure to interview Juliet Stannard, one of the three directors of Citiprop Pacific, a property agency with a large expatriate clientele.

Juliet has been living in Singapore for almost 14 years, and has been in the property and relocation business for about 8 years. Originally conceived purely as a relocation service, her business grew and she concluded that she needed more efficient access to the real estate rental market in order to provide a premium service. Her company then merged with Citiprop, an established international real estate company with an excellent reputation, and now has fifteen agents, a support staff of seven people and three active directors. The agents form a multinational team with Dutch, Australian, English, Danish, Japanese, South African, Russian and Singaporean professionals.

The core business of Citiprop is renting houses to, and on behalf of, expats. Their main client

segment includes a large percentage of European, North American and Australasians, nearly all of them working for international companies. However, as the market demographics have changed in the past 2 or 3 years, Citiprop has also noted an increase of singles and couples arriving here with more limited budgets, partly because employers now prefer to hire staff on local or partially local contracts.

#### **The Singapore Real Estate Market**

Following an extended period of lower property rents due to a breaking of a property bubble in 1996, the Asian economic crisis, fears caused by the SARS outbreak, and a basic oversupply of rental units, the market has turned around sharply in the past couple of years - and the pace continues to accelerate. “The dynamics of the market have totally turned around” explains Stannard. “There has been a dramatic increase in demand for good quality housing with the sharp influx of



## INTERVIEW

foreign professionals in a variety of businesses - including the core financial sector (Private Banking, Fund Management etc.) but also areas like Biotechnology, Education, Health, Resources and a wide variety of service industries. These have been driven by a dynamic Government economic policy that has attracted many companies to establish or expand their presence here."

Another feature that underpins the real estate market for the long term is the forecast 50% population growth - from the current 4.4 million to 6.5 million - in the decades ahead. This will largely be driven by foreign talent relocating to Singapore. "There are very few property markets that have both the short and long term demand profile for homes that Singapore offers" says Stannard. Add to this the huge investment in infrastructure, not only the "hard" infrastructure of MRT lines, road improvements, international travel facilities, IR and other recreational facilities, but also the "soft" factors of tax structure, safety, greenery, education and health, that are all important "quality of life" components, and there are good reasons to expect that the number of residents will grow in line with the forecasts.

The short term price rises that are currently being witnessed also have a root in a restricted supply of rental units. Stannard continues "Investors, both local and international, have certainly decided that this market has significant long term potential. The market is naturally limited in supply, particularly in prime areas. These investors have moved in to buy older buildings and rebuild. They can expect much higher returns from modern developments with up-to-date amenities. Therefore, for the next few years, a number of spacious family-oriented apartment units, and other "prime" located units for professionals have been removed from the market as this redevelopment takes place. The natural result is a tighter supply at the same time as a stronger demand. Price rises are inevitable with such a demand and supply profile."

### Market Developments

Markets in transition can be difficult for buyers and renters to navigate. The Singapore market has already moved higher quite sharply, and although there may be occasional periods of consolidation ahead, the trend appears to be both long term and steady. If one compares Singapore to other European and North American countries, prices relative to those a decade or so ago still appear low. "For example" says Stannard, "if one looks at the 1996 to 2006 period, average house prices in Spain and the UK trebled, in the US they doubled, and in Singapore they fell by 20 to 30%. There is plenty of upside potential for property prices". This is underpinned by the rental market. Rents have moved from "bargain basement" levels of just 2 or 3 years ago, and will probably continue to remain on an upward bias for another 2 or 3

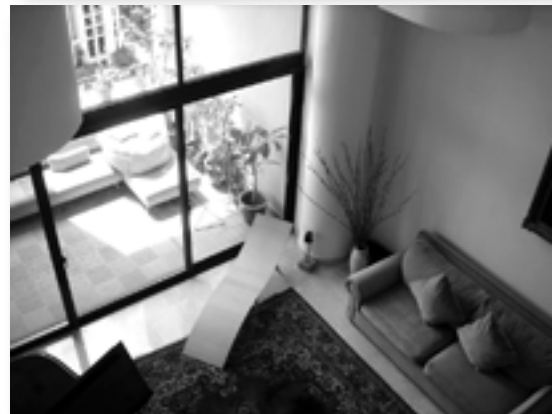
years. "There will be a supply of new units in 2009 and 2010 as some new mega-projects are completed" continues Stannard, "but this may only cause a leveling out of rental prices - and these levels could be above those of today". One must also anticipate that the "en bloc" selling process will continue. Developers will constantly be trying to add to their "land banks" - land that is available for them to build new residences - and this will mean again that people will need to move out of their older units and look for new ones.

As a logical consequence, prices do not only go up in the City centre but also in other areas. "People that are currently living in prime areas who are forced to move through redevelopment, as well as those who cannot negotiate a satisfactory lease renewal, are looking beyond the central district. So now it's not only the traditional expat areas of District 9 and 10 that are popular. District 5, West Coast, East Coast, Marina Bay, Mount Faber, Newton and others are all now considered as attractive alternatives, because you can still get a nice property there for a reasonable rent." And as expats move to these areas, more shops and facilities tend to follow - creating a virtuous circle for these new areas. A case in point is the building of VivoCity, a large entertainment and shopping centre, a few years ago. The perception of The Caribbean, a large condominium development sited very close to the VivoCity complex, changed from being a large and relatively unfashionable place to live into a trendy, desirable and sought after address. Rentals and sale prices moved in tandem with the new perception....

### Renting and buying

Every renter of property in Singapore is facing a tightening market. For many, the idea of buying real estate here is not worth considering because the expected length of stay is too short, and existing home ownership outside of the country may be considered sufficient investment. And for the renter, there is the encouragement that there will be a constant stream of new, well equipped and attractive homes available - albeit more expensive than in the past. But for those who wish to buy, either to live in the property or as an investment, there are good opportunities here.

What are the rules for buying property here? Can expats buy? There are different regulations for apartments and landed property that depend on your residential status (and financial means!).



## INTERVIEW

### Apartments:


- Foreigners (resident and non-resident) can buy apartments with condominium status (freehold or leasehold).
- There are a large number of developments to choose from. These include completed projects, and buying "off plan" with completion expected months or years from now.

### Landed property:

- Includes detached, semi-detached, terraced housing.
- Buyer needs to have a PR status
- Buyer needs to have approval of the Singapore Authority
- Land area generally cannot exceed 15,000 square feet
- Buyer is not allowed to rent out the property (i.e. it cannot be for investment only)
- Buyer is not allowed to sell the property for 3 years

Since interest rates are quite low (around 3.5 percent), it is not expensive to borrow money from the banks in Singapore and a lot of different packages are available. Buyers will usually need

to pay at least 20% in cash, but if you have a CPF account, you are allowed to use funds from your Ordinary Account to purchase a property that you will live in. As in most countries, a good real estate lawyer will be able to answer all of your questions, and ensure that you are fully aware of the contents of all relevant documents!

But whether you decide to rent or buy, information is of primary importance. Stannard concludes by saying "The market is hot, and this can bring considerable frustration for families and individuals that are looking to live or invest here. Landlords have a strong position in the market at present, but we have built good relationships over the years that help us to close deals for our clients. We focus closely on exactly what the client wants, and to showing properties that meet as many of their requirements as possible. We do not waste our client's time and patience with a large number of property viewings that simply could not fulfill their objectives. We also try to explain clearly to our clients what type of property they can expect to find within their budget. We try to make the process of renting or buying a property as smooth and successful as possible. It is how we build our reputation, and how we run our business." 

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# What makes Singapore the ideal place?

**Richard Soemita**



I'm now just over 3 months in Singapore (not by choice I may add) and seem to meet more often Dutch who have been here now for many years ie. not the folks that have been seconded to Singapore for the usual 2 to 3 years.

My first question I ask them is why they like it so much here. The standard answers are: the maid (of course!), nasi lemak, the short trips one can make to any neighboring country, the weather and of course the SPG's according to the lads. Maybe I'm too Dutch (look at the picture!) but in Holland we had the au-pair, Febo, trips to Barcelona, Paris and London, the 4 seasons to look out for every 3 months and of course Sylvia Kristel. Not to mention cycling on the canals on a cold sunny winters day.

Singapore is such a modern city that it almost looks like any other modern city, like Montreal or even Rotterdam. When friends come to visit I often send them to Vietnam, Cambodia or Indonesia since that feels more like Asia. However, if you have to visit these places for work for 2 weeks you then realize that you return to paradise as soon as you see the trees welcoming you on the PIE back to the city.

On your way back you then get confronted with those crazy drivers that still try to overtake a car in their lane whilst you approach in the opposite direction. Coming closer I then realized that it was an Ang-moh! This behavior seems to get worse as the car is bigger and more expensive. These drivers really think they own the road.

The other day I came cycling down my road and this huge Mercedes stopped to look if any car was approaching. Since I was just a cyclist he decided to pull up and nearly ran me over! Again, it was not a 'local'. My taxi normally shows this behavior so I wonder who copied who.

The work pace also seems to be different here. People spend more time at work and leave the office late, whilst they take longer lunch breaks. You get the impression that a day here is filled with work only whilst in Holland people try hard to be home early in order to spend the early evening with their family and friends. It therefore feels like having 2 half days. Given that everyone has a maid here one would expect that you would live the 'Dutch way'....

I also noticed that there is not much sense of humor here since people are too occupied with talking about how to make lots of money. I therefore do not find it surprising that the funniest guy in the morning is FD on Radio 95FM! Needless to say what FD stands for and where his ancestors are from.

Singapore is trying very hard to become one of the world players who wants to be in the same league as NY, Paris or HKG. Perhaps it is looking for a soul. Will the 2 million people that will grow the population to 6.5million bring that? My daughter, now in grade 4, said that the Dutch are for sure increasing. I asked her how she found out: 'today (30 April) all the higher grades had their orange tops on, reading: 'make way for the Dutch'. Is that a good sign?

I yet have to find out what makes Singapore so special, I probably will find out after 7 years....lah. **ALG**

# Superstition and beliefs in Singapore and South East Asia By Wil Kolen

Whichever part of the world you grew up in, everyone has been exposed to a certain level of superstition. Our parents and grand parents would warn us of consequences if we would walk under a ladder or encounter a black cat, sneeze 3 times, breaking a mirror, and other commonly known variants.

Although some of these superstitions seem to find a basis in true stories, most of them can be traced back with an aim to protect, as part of teaching children to obey and not take risks without the parent's knowledge and approval or on the other hand are related to festive occasions.

Most of these beliefs that we 'inherited' will be carried over to the next generation but with a growing level of skepticism.

As much as we have been exposed to these ancient and traditional beliefs, so have other cultures and societies around the globe.

Now living in Singapore, we are surrounded by various beliefs of Chinese, Indian and Malay origin. Directly or indirectly we will be confronted with some of those beliefs when mingling with the local population. And it would be good to be able to recognize, appreciate and respect these ideas as it can be an insult to some when ignored.

As this topic would cover an almost endless list of do's and don'ts for various cultures, I would like to limit the content to the more common beliefs based on Chinese culture.

Most of the local superstition is based around festivities, traditional rites (like the chanting and space clearing by Taoist priests before the opening of a new shop or house) and stories of ghosts. Although you also find ghost stories and afterlife experiences in western countries and other parts of the world, the unexplainable presence of afterlife related experiences and omens seem to be more frequent here in South East Asia, with many omens relating to animals, birds and reptiles

Local Chinese belief (based on Buddhism) and Japanese belief (which had Chinese belief as basis) is that a person who has just passed away briefly returns to earth in the shape of a moth to say farewell to his or her dear ones. Many stories around these appearances have been told and one may be skeptical about these events, as I used to be, but some personal experiences and stories from good friends whose trustworthiness I don't question, have changed my perception. Not meaning to say I will now blindly believe all these stories (which practical Dutch guy would do this anyway?) but I have opened myself to the possibility of 'something else' that is out there and we can't yet comprehend.

A few years ago, a moth appeared once in a totally enclosed room, with windows shut while I had a chat with a good local friend. She was surprised to see the moth and immediately responded with mentioning 'someone is saying goodbye'.

The next morning she found out that her favorite aunt had passed away the evening we saw that moth... This is one of the many occasions these appearances were connected to death but of course not every butterfly or moth is a representative.

Somehow these events also help people to accept situations in life that are otherwise hard to deal with. Another story is related to the granddad of a friend of mine. Usually there will be a wake for 3 to 5 days if a person passes away. During the last day of the wake for this grandfather, held at the void deck of a HDB block, the family spotted a large butterfly that was just flying around in the space where the coffin was placed. The widow (a Taoist follower) then held out her hand and the butterfly made its way to her and peacefully sat down on her hand until she decided to release it again and set it free. It then just flew off and disappeared. This is an event witnessed by several people.

Also in other areas in the world similar stories go round but involve different species.

Earlier this year I was in New Zealand to attend a wedding, but my stay ended with a funeral as the father of my good friend, the groom, had passed away the night after the wedding. My friend is very much aware of the influence of the Maori cultures and therefore also receptive for events related to Maori beliefs. In their culture a bird called 'Fan tail' will appear as representative of a person who passed away. So it happened the day after his father had died; a Fan tail flew into his parent's house with the front door wide open and sat down in the living room in front of the window. My friend immediately referred to the Maori belief and walked over to the bird who stayed calm and quiet, picked it up, talked to it for a short while and released it again.

As mentioned, one can dispute this kind of beliefs but in the end it is what you are comfortable with and can help you to deal with events in life better and find peace when you need it.

All beliefs in the various cultures come down to the same thing; to help us move on, protect and lead a life free from obstacles and enhance a harmonious and a peaceful environment.

That is why Feng Shui still plays an important role in architecture and interior arrangement in Asia.

“  
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in the various  
cultures come  
down to the  
same thing;  
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environment.”



Traditions and related beliefs are different in every culture and society or country whereby sometimes it even comes down to very local beliefs that are part of shape a community or a population.

In my opinion it is good to be aware of certain traditions and beliefs, even if you don't understand them, you can at least recognize and respect them, especially living in an environment away from familiar grounds.

All over the world you see that old traditions and beliefs are being kept alive in an environment that still recognizes and respect these beliefs.

Much less so in the West / Europe, where our no-nonsense approach brushes away some of the emotions related to certain life experiences that may still be valuable to look at in a different light.

Singapore is a place that is changing rapidly and with that, older values and traditions are slowly disappearing. But although the younger generation seems to become more down to earth and more skeptical about these superstitions, the stories and events continue also amongst this younger group.

It is probably due to the fact that teenagers, although vastly influenced by western culture, choose to stick to their own tradition and maintain their roots through the upbringing of their parents who spread and stressed the importance of such Chinese beliefs. Furthermore, there is evidence itself that feng shui works with great results.

Another factor is also because teenagers feel that there is no harm in believing in feng shui. Since there is evidence for all to show that feng shui works, teenagers feel that so long as it does not bring huge inconvenience to change one's luck, why not just heed feng shui advice?

Although there is a changing appreciation of old beliefs caused by the shift in religion here in Singapore. This mainly takes place among the Chinese population, where the young generation trades the Buddhist or Taoist way of life for a membership with one of the Catholic or Christian churches here.

But despite the growing popularity of Christianity and Catholicism, especially at festive occasions one can see that the old Chinese beliefs and traditions are still respected and a very visible part of society here.

Looking at the difference between the younger and older generation in terms of their beliefs in feng shui, education has greatly changed the mindsets of the younger generation. The older generation seeks feng shui advice in search for instant success and wealth whereby the younger generation seeks advice mainly for the designs and decorations at their homes for better luck in their jobs.

Chinese beliefs are not fading away in the younger generation, in fact, there is merely a change of mindset in the way the younger generation looks at such beliefs and how they choose to use it.

Feng shui is surprisingly not fading away in the younger generation; in fact, it is starting to bloom as a belief and as a commercial business as well. Since the mostly Chinese dominated population of Singapore believes in Feng Shui not just as a superstition, but as a belief that can change one's luck and fortune, Feng Shui is definitely on the rise in terms of commercial business.

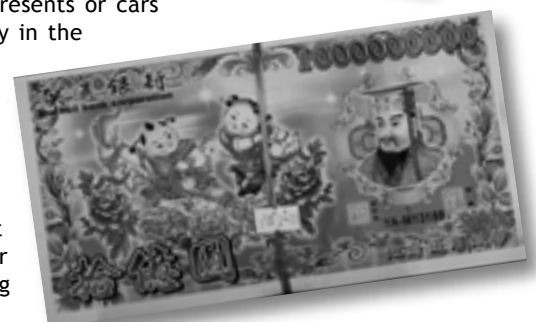
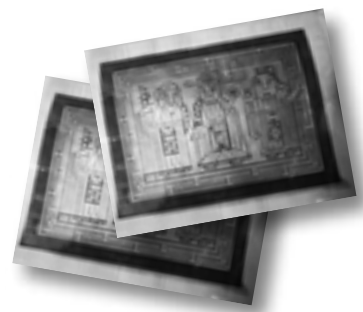
Many more are approaching masters for advice on the proper placing of decorations in their homes and others resorting to buying Feng Shui items such as lucky crystals in hope for a change of luck and prosperity.

Some of the beliefs related to death or afterlife are the burning of, so called 'hell money'.

This is often done at auspicious days throughout the year to remember and honor the ancestors but especially at funerals and during Ghost month; the 7<sup>th</sup> month of the lunar year. It is based on the common Chinese belief to ensure that the spirits of the deceased in the afterworld can enjoy a luxury life with all the hell bank notes being offered to them, which are actually money to spend in their afterworld. In addition, their family also burns other offerings such as paper presents or cars etc. for their deceased to enjoy in the afterworld.

One should never present a hell bank note as a souvenir or a gift, as it will be treated as a huge insult to that person.

Hell Bank Notes have to be kept in places where it is not easily seen for example, drawers or cupboards. Leaving such notes lying around brings about bad luck.



While burning the notes, one should give full respect to it treating them like real money and place them nicely into the fire, ensuring that the notes are not in a loose bundle. This is according to the superstition that the burning of real money gives bad luck too.

A lot of importance is given to numerology; this covers the guidance according to Chinese horoscope, which is based on numbers as well as a daily appearance of numbers.

In Chinese communities around the world, the number eight is considered the most fortuitous of numbers, making it much coveted for addresses, phone numbers and bank accounts, as the Chinese's and Cantonese's articulation and pronunciation for eight (ba for Mandarin and paat for Cantonese) sounds similar to the word that signifies 'prosperity' (fa for Mandarin and faat for Cantonese).

The number 8 can be 'sold' on numerous occasions for hundreds or even thousands of dollars to obtain for instance a car number plate.

**“In Gambling, the Chinese strongly believe that numbers affect a person's luck and fortune, and it is important to choose the right number. The numbers 4 and 58 which sounds like won't prosper in Cantonese are dismissed. Numbers that are usually associated with the number 8, are greatly welcomed. For example 84, which sounds like prosperous till death in Cantonese, or 18 which sounds like definitely prosper in Cantonese.”**

On the other hand, the number four is a very unlucky number as in Chinese it sounds like the phonetic sound of 'death'.

Seven can also signify death, and number one, loneliness.

However, the most unlucky number in Chinese belief, as considered by many, is fourteen, which is widely infamous for corresponding to the phrase, 'guaranteed death', equivalent to the Western's iniquitous number 13.

Numbers must signify something good so as to represent good health, good luck and good fortunes. This can be especially evident when the Chinese purchase lottery tickets.

In Singapore, where gambling, via a local lottery format known as 4-D (D is the abbreviation for digit) is the national tradition, the Chinese ensure that the numbers which they purchase represent good fortunes. Sometimes, they compose new meanings for the numbers to make themselves feel more confident of winning.

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numbers 4 and 58 which sounds like won't prosper in Cantonese are dismissed. Numbers that are usually associated with the number 8, are greatly welcomed. For example 84, which sounds like prosperous till death in Cantonese, or 18 which sounds like definitely prosper in Cantonese.

In addition, numbers 3, 6 and 9 are also good numbers when put together with the number 8 with other numbers, can aid in the person's chances of winning in gambling. For example, 1388 which sounds like prosperity in one's lifetime in Cantonese and 168 which sounds like prosper all the way in Cantonese are numbers that the Chinese belief are lucky and good.

Superstitions related to gambling:

- Wear red underwear when gambling;
- If you are on a losing streak, go to the washroom and relieve yourself. It can bring good luck;
- Females are more likely to win when they are having their period;
- Switch on all the lights at home before going out to gamble;
- Checking into hotel rooms with propitious numbers like 8, 18, 13, 168, 198, and 798 may bring good fortune too;
- The winning lottery numbers are actually present in the world around you waiting to be interpreted. E.g. the number on your car plate could be the numbers.

Inauspicious things to do while gambling:

- Mentioning anything about books while gambling. "Books", in Chinese, sounds similar to lose ("shu");
- Counting the money you gain or lose while gambling;
- Visiting religious places or religious leaders;
- Touching of shoulders;
- Try not to have sexual intimacy before gambling;
- Try not to enter a casino by its entrance;
- Staying in hotel rooms with inauspicious door numbers.

Superstition related to numbers can influence business behavior on a large scale:

In 1992 at a time when the Hong Kong stock market was reaching record highs, one day a rumor started around town that Deng Xiaoping had died. Coincidentally (or not), the Chinese leader happened to be on his "southern tour" to promote foreign direct investment.

As soon as news of Deng Xiaoping's alleged death reached major investors, stock trading waned. Some say this was because certain money people were waiting for a sign that the rumor was true.

Sure enough, around noon they had what they thought was their definitive answer: The Hang Seng Index stuck at 4,444.14.

This was significant because the number four is associated with death and the number one is associated with eternity. So, with just this particular number to guide them, many Hong Kongers believed Deng Xiaoping had, indeed, passed away. In fact, these believers were assured many times over because of the series of numbers documented in the Hang Seng Index. Right after that, the market dove more than 20 percent.

Fact is that Deng Xiaoping lived until 1997, five years after this incident happened.

Indeed, many people believe that superstitions are tantamount to truth.

In Thailand, the number three is good luck, so gifts tend to be given in groups of threes.

In China, gifts are often offered in groups of twos.

Finally, the Chinese zodiac, which cycles every 12 years, is also a number system that can be very influential. Many believe that the year when you are born can tell plenty about your personality, your brains, your physique and even how much happiness and success you will enjoy.

Another avenue in which we can observe the role of numbers in the Chinese beliefs is during festive seasons, especially the Lunar New Year. When Chinese exchange oranges during the Lunar New Year, they exchange two, four, eight, or even sixteen oranges at a time. This is because the Chinese believe that all things should come in pairs. More evidence where Chinese show their numeral beliefs are as follows:

- During the Lunar New Year, when relatives and friends go visiting, every household would present their tidbits in an octagonal container. The container will be divided into 8 portions, where each portion will be filled with a different tidbit.
- The number eight doesn't have the same appeal to the Japanese or Koreans whose cultures have been influenced by the Chinese, but all three cultures are united in their avoidance of the number four. Because of this, many buildings in Asia do not have a fourth floor. The architect deliberately names the second storey of the building as the first floor, so the forth storey of the building will be called the third floor. The fifth storey onwards will then be correct as it will be known as fifth floor, and so on. The ground storey will not be called first floor but rather, ground floor. This practice is more commonly found in hotels than commercial buildings.
- Many people become the victims of Chinese numerology when they are unable to sell their property in areas where the district codes contains a 4 in it. However, many others gain from the consequence of this phenomenon when they are able to inflate the price of their properties which have the digit 8 on its address.

To start off the new year good, old debts are often cleared before Lunar New Year, to avoid shame and misfortune. Conventionally, creditors could no longer demand payment of a debt by Lunar New Year's Day.

Spring-cleaning is held before New Year's Day, to sweep away all the misfortune. This way, the New Year is welcomed with a clean start. On the other hand, to sweep on the First New Year's Day to the Sixth New Year's Day, is to sweep away good fortune. Hence, dust must be swept inwards from the outside, and everything must look new or clean for fortune to smile on the family.

At Chinese New Year, the children receive traditional gifts of money, wrapped up in a red packet called hong bao, from their parents and elderly married persons. The amount in the packet should be an even number, to be lucky and auspicious.

It is bad manners to open red packets in the presence of others.

Another festive event is Qing Ming, also known as All Souls' Day. It was originally a celebration of spring, falling in early April, 106 days after the winter solstice. On this day, families usually go to their ancestor's cemeteries and tidy the graves, place red candles and joss-sticks on the stone altar and offer food, drinks and flowers to the deceased in the afterlife. But first, the Soil God has to be appeased with an offering so that he would not take the food reserved for the ancestors.

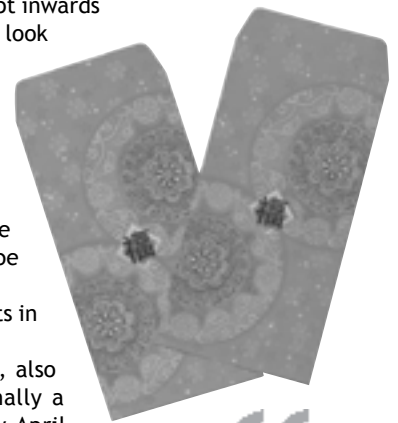
The Chinese consider the dead as living and the grave as their abode. The grave will not be build until a geomancer is consulted, who will read the feng shui on the occupant of any place. The day to start excavating would also have to be carefully picked to be auspicious.

To rest in peace, graves are usually on a south-facing hillside, with protective walls on each side to keep off east and west winds. It should also be located over an underground water source.

The seventh month of the lunar calendar marks the Mid-Year Festival, or Hungry Ghosts Festival, lasting for a whole month, during which the gates of hell are opened for ghosts to enjoy a month-long holiday.

To placate the Hungry Ghosts (restless spirits due to various reasons), humans make offerings of joss-sticks, food and joss paper (spirit money) at every roadside, cross-roads, temple and other open spaces. Makeshift tents housing altars are also built, with giant colourful joss-sticks. These places stage street theatres (wayangs), and puppet shows for the ghosts.

The Buddhists also believe, that the dreaded Hungry Ghosts are on the prowl especially on the 15th day of the seventh month. To appease them and send them on their way, food, paper gifts, money and other items are offered and burnt.



“

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Besides numbers, also colours play an important role. There are three main colours, or 'central' colours, namely red, black and white. Red is considered a lucky colour, thus it is always associated with good luck. Black signifies bad fortune and must not be worn during festivals, wedding celebrations etc. or used in home decoration. Black symbolises a lack of civilisation and backwardness. White represents moderation and purity, but is also commonly used at funerals as it is believed it can harmonise all elements. It can be used in all rituals and ceremonies as it is essentially neutral.



The rituals climax in a three-day bash in the middle of the month, which comprises operas, chantings, burning of offerings and a five-course banquet for the ghosts. (Agencies via Xinhua)

The month is still considered especially unlucky and many young people avoid getting married, moving house, changing jobs or making large investments in stocks, cars or homes. Some parents impose curfews on their children at night and swimming is not allowed as ghosts could drag one under.

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An unborn child is usually buried in silence, unlike that of an elderly person. Thus this further shows the tradition of respect that Chinese have for their elders and not the young. It is unsuspicious for the elderly to 'send off' their descendants

The superstition in Japan says that if you stick your chopsticks into your rice you will be committing a major faux pas since this is only done at funerals where a bowl of rice is placed at the altar with the chopsticks poked into an upright position. It is also not acceptable to hand food from one person to another using chopsticks since this is what is done with the bones of a body after it has been cremated.

In China, a form of chopsticks made from sticks or branches came into use about 5,000 years ago but it was during Confucianism that they became a symbolic tool as well. Later, chopsticks became the main way to pick up food in many Asian hubs. For many, the use of these nifty eating sticks can help the user to improve her memory. However, before an uneven pair of chopsticks may mean you will miss your train or your plane. And, whatever you do, avoid dropping your chopsticks as this is one way to bring on bad luck in some cultures.

Astrological guidebooks are printed and circulated showing auspicious and inauspicious days. Auspicious days are being chosen for marriage, moving house, travel for important events.


- No wedding should take place during the seventh month of the Lunar calendar because that month is known as the month of "Hungry Ghosts" as it will bring bad luck to the couple who's getting married during that period;

- No white objects to be seen in abundance during the wedding ceremony as the colour is associated with mourning. The modern white wedding gown is an exception though. Guests, however, must not wear a white suit or dress;
- No wedding gifts should be given in odd numbers as they are thought to be unfortunate. Hence, wedding gifts for the newly weds are always in even numbers or pairs for the old saying goes that blessings come in pairs;
- No clock is to be given as a gift as the act is spoken of as "song zhong", which is a pun on paying one's last respects to the dead;
- In a Malay wedding, it is unlucky to look into the bride's room when she's putting on her make-up and dress.

#### The Do's:

- Wedding attire should be red in colour as red symbolises happiness. Other bright colours are also acceptable but white is not preferred except for the modern wedding gown of the bride;
- In the morning of the wedding day, the groom has to give laisee (red packet money) to the bride's sisters or bridesmaids who will haggle with the groom at the entrance when the groom picks up the bride from her residence. The amount is usually bid in auspicious numbers like \$88 and some can go as high as \$9,999;
- After picking up the bride, the bridal car should take a roundabout route back because Chinese believe that going in a huge circle is a sign of good luck;
- Banquet should serve food that symbolise happiness, prosperity, good luck and the like and it should end with a sweet dessert, signifying a sweet beginning for the couple;
- The bride is required to cut the first piece of the wedding cake with the groom placing his right hand over the bride's. The knife used should always be new. The couple will then feed each other and the shared slice of cake represents their first meal together as husband and wife;
- For Straits-born Chinese, or the Peranakans, the couple has to drink sweet tea on the wedding night to bring more sweet days into their new life together. Sticky rice or glutinous rice puddings are also served to mean permanency of their union.

This article covers just a part of the beliefs that exist in the Asian region. There are a lot of similarities between the various cultural beliefs but appearing in different ways.

A group of Singaporean students recently released research information on this topic. You can read up about it on <http://library.thinkquest.org/05aug/01351/home.htm> 

## China to take \$3 bln stake in Blackstone

China's new state investment agency is taking a \$3 billion stake in U.S. private equity firm The Blackstone Group, in a sign Beijing plans to use its stash of currency reserves to become a global investor.

The agreement gives China's government a stake in the private equity boom sweeping the world and seals a key alliance for Blackstone at a time when foreign investors are struggling to gain support from Beijing to buy domestic assets. China is taking a non-voting stake of just under 10 percent in Blackstone, leaving it under the radar screen from U.S. government scrutiny and providing a template for future deals.

"From what I understand it should be, or will be, part of a trend," Blackstone co-founder Stephen Schwarzman said of China's investment. "Blackstone is the first, but over time I would suspect there would be others." The announcement comes just days before Chinese Vice Premier Wu Yi meets U.S. Treasury Secretary Henry Paulson in Washington to discuss sticking points in trade in the second round of the two governments' "Strategic Economic Dialogue".

The run-up to the talks has seen a flurry of deals and government measures, including Friday's move to widen the yuan's trading band, which analysts say could allow the currency to appreciate faster. "If we are going to borrow from them, then we have to let them buy things," said William Overholt, director of the RAND Corp's Center for Asia Pacific Policy.

New York-based Blackstone, which is expanding its planned \$4 billion IPO to \$7 billion to accommodate the Chinese investment, is making a big push into China to catch up with rivals. It appointed Antony Leung, Hong Kong's financial secretary from 2001 to 2003, as its China chief in January.

"For both China and Blackstone, it's about enhancing access and developing deeper relationships," said Monte Brem, CEO of advisory firm Leucadia Capital Partners. "The Chinese government wants to increase its access and role in the global private equity market; Blackstone wants to increase its access and role in China," Brem said. Private equity firms buy companies or take controlling stakes, cut costs, restructure the businesses and sell them later for a profit. They usually borrow two-thirds of the money needed to finance their purchases.

### A SIGNIFICANT MOVE

China said in March it was setting up a vehicle to diversify part of its \$1.2 trillion of foreign exchange reserves to improve returns on its portfolio, now mainly invested in dollar bonds. The agency, still to be named, is headed by Lou Jiwei, a former vice finance minister, who was on hand in New York for Sunday's signing ceremony.

The new agency could manage up to \$200 billion, state media reports have said. Finance Minister Jin Renqing has said one of its models would be Singapore's state-owned Temasek Holdings, which invests in

a broad range of industrial and financial assets at home and abroad, including Chinese state-owned banks.

"This is a very, very significant move and it symbolises that China believes in America," said Frank Holmes, chief executive of U.S. Global Investors Inc., which invests in Asia. Holmes contrasted the move with the political furor that scuttled an attempt in 2005 by Chinese state-owned oil firm CNOOC to buy U.S. oil producer Unocal.

China plans to own just under 10 percent of Blackstone's equity after the buyout firm's IPO, which Schwarzman said could be a template for future investments because they are not subject to U.S. government scrutiny. "To the extent that the state investment company stays below the 10 percent threshold for governmental review...and invests in securities that are liquid, which this security eventually will be, that's a very easy way for the state investment company to put large amounts of money to work with minimum to no controversy," Schwarzman said.

U.S. buyout firms have flocked to Asia, seeking deals that tap into its booming economy and burgeoning consumer market. But large, long-time U.S. buyout players in China, including TPG Capital and Carlyle Group, have found it difficult to secure majority deals. In March, Carlyle settled for a minority stake in China's biggest machinery maker, Xugong Group Construction Machinery Co., bowing to Beijing's concern over spreading foreign influence.

## Foreign bank seen taking ABN AMRO's Brazil unit

A foreign bank is the most likely candidate to take over the Brazilian unit of Dutch banking company ABN AMRO Holding NV, even though local banks may be gearing up to make a bid, analysts said.

ABN AMRO is the subject of a tug-of-war between some of Europe's biggest banks. The Dutch bank agreed to be taken over by Barclays Plc for 63 billion euros (\$85.69 billion), but a consortium that includes the Royal Bank of Scotland Group Plc, Santander and Fortis has submitted a rival bid of 71 billion euros.

If the trio wins, they will divvy up ABN AMRO's assets, leaving Santander with the very profitable Brazilian unit, ABN AMRO Real. But if Barclays seals the deal, analysts say Brazil's top two private-sector banks --

Banco Bradesco SA and Banco Itau SA -- as well as foreign heavyweights Citigroup and HSBC Holdings Plc could each make an offer for the Brazilian unit.

If the latter scenario pans out, a foreign bank with deep-pockets might be more likely to snap up ABN AMRO Real, which analysts estimate could fetch up to 34 billion reais (\$17.4 billion).

"ABN Real would be a very big acquisition for a Brazilian bank," said Carlos G. Macedo, a banking analyst at Unibanco Corretora in Sao Paulo. "I think a foreign buyer would be willing to pay more."

Itau, Brazil's No.2 private-sector bank, has been on an acquisitions spree of late, most recently buying up Bank of America Corp.'s operations in Latin America. Bank of

America on the other hand is now bidding for ABN AMRO's LaSalle unit in the United States.

As the No.3 private-sector bank in Brazil, ABN AMRO Real would give any buyer tremendous reach in the country. But analysts wonder if Barclays, which has no retail presence in Brazil and already said it would spin off LaSalle, would do the same with the Brazilian operation.

"Barclays might want to sell," said Luis Miguel Santacreu, an analyst at Austin Rating, a Sao Paulo consulting firm. "But they also might not, because with ABN Real they'll get a bank that is very well run."

Either way, analysts say a foreign bank would be better positioned to take advantage of ABN AMRO Real's network.

## Gorilla provoked by children throwing stones and by woman

The male gorilla Bokito, who escaped from his cage in Diergaarde Blijdorp (Rotterdam Zoo) and severely injured a woman, appears to be provoked. According to the Zoo's spokesperson children threw stones at the animal.

Furthermore, the woman would have made the monkey aggressive. She initiated eye contact, which Bokito supposedly perceived as highly threatening. He subsequently jumped out of his residence, grabbed the woman and bit her several times. The victim has been operated and is still admitted in hospital.

The zoo director explains that visitors who smile at a gorilla often think he smiles back. This is not true. A gorilla never smiles. If he pulls up his upper lip, this is done in reaction to a threat, according to the director.

## Van Hanegem possibly national coach Morocco

Willem van Hanegem will possibly take charge of the Moroccan national football team. According to the former Feyenoord player he has been approached by 'a number of Moroccan people' and is having meetings in the so-called stage one. Van Hanegem expects new talks within the week. The ex-trainer of among others Feyenoord and AZ is quite keen on a Moroccan adventure. In the words of the 'bent' one: 'I feel they have good material'.

## Postbank brand will cease to exist

In two years the Postbank brand will no longer be a familiar sight in the Dutch streets. The owner, insurance banker ING, will stop using the brand name in 2009 and will operate solely under the ING-flag in the Netherlands. In this way, the concern wants to improve its services and reduce costs. In first instance the operation will cost ING almost 900 million euro, but from 2011 it should save some 440 million euro yearly. Because of the brand merging 2,500 jobs will be cut; but according to ING hardly any people will be forced to take notice.

The banker-insurance organization announced to let go the brand at the presentation of the quarterly report. Postbank and ING have 8 million retail clients, and 600,000 business clients.

## Dutch have the highest job satisfaction

Together with the Thai and the Irish, the Dutch are the happiest at work. A British research agency has published their global research results that indicate that the Dutch complain the least about their work environment.

The French and the British are the biggest complainers and also many Swedes are not satisfied because of the lack of free time or a low salary. Furthermore the American appear to complain a lot, although they get the highest salaries in the world. The Japanese are the unhappiest in the world, although they do not seem to complain about it.

## Serbia wins Euro vision Song Festival

Serbia has won the Eurovision Song Festival 2007. Singer Marija Serifovic got the largest amount of votes for her ballad 'Molitva' or rather 'Prayer'. Ukrain ended runner-up, and Russia got to be third in line. Serbia won with a 33 point gap. It is the first time this country wins the competition.

Dutch participant Edsilia Rombley had already been voted out in the pre-round. She ended 21rd out of 28 contestants. She did appear on TV after her defeat to give the Dutch 12 points to Turkey.

The results of the competition caused some upheaval, as Albania felt the winning song was an exact copy of one of their famous singers anthems. More info and interviews on this 'debate' you can find on You-tube.

Also: <http://www.wereldomroep.nl/actua/nl/cultuur/songfestival070511>

## Most of the Dutch do not understand the Analyses of Crujff

More than half of the Dutch population admit not always to understand the analyses of Johan Crujff. Most of them do not seem to mind that, however. These are the results of a research by Maurice de Hond, at the occasion of Crujffs sixtieth birthday.

Johan Crujff is highly appreciated in the Netherlands. A solid 69 per cent says to be proud of the former number 14. Half the respondents feels that Crujff is one of the two best footballers ever; one third feels he is the best. As his best quote people most often cited 'Elk voordeel heb zijn nadeel' (every advantage have its disadvantage). Other classics are: 'Je snapt het pas als je het begrijpt' (You only get it when you understand it) en 'De verdediging was een geitenkaas' (The defense was like goat-cheese).

## Ban import of seal skin

The cabinet has decided to ban the import, trade and possession of fur, skins, oil and other products made from seals. The ban applies to two species, the harp seal and the blueback (*Cystophora cristata*).

The import of skins or products manufactured from the skins of young seals (up to around 12 days) of both species is already banned throughout the EU. "The large-scale hunt has however shifted to animals slightly older than 12 days", explained the Agriculture and Nature Ministry. "The cabinet is concerned about issues including the population count, the decline in the habitat quality of the seals and the hunting methods used".

The cabinet decision now taken introduces a ban regardless of age category. "An exception applies to products originating from the traditional hunt by the Inuit people, to live animals and to products that have previously been lawfully brought to the Netherlands", said the ministry. The decision to introduce the ban meets with a wish by the Lower House.

In Belgium, a comparable trade ban is in place, and Germany is also preparing such a ban. The Dutch government will continue insisting on a ban at EU level, but up to the present there is insufficient support for such a measure.

## World Vaccine Congress 2007

4-7 June  
Meritus Mandarin  
[www.terrapinn.com/2007/wvc\\_sg](http://www.terrapinn.com/2007/wvc_sg)



## Asian Six Sigma Summit

5-6 June  
Raffles City Convention Centre  
[www.iqpc.com.sg](http://www.iqpc.com.sg)



## GridAsia 2007

5-8 June  
The Matrix, Biopolis  
[www.gridasia.ngp.org.sg](http://www.gridasia.ngp.org.sg)



## ISPE Singapore Conference 2007

10-12 June  
Suntec  
[www.ispesingaporeconference.com](http://www.ispesingaporeconference.com)



## Knowledge Process Outsourcing and Offshoring 2007

12-14 June  
Raffles City Convention Centre  
[www.terrapinn.com/2007/kpo\\_SG](http://www.terrapinn.com/2007/kpo_SG)



## Enterprise IT 2007/Broadcast Asia 207/CommunicAsia 2007

19-22 June  
Singapore Expo  
[www.goto-EnterpriseIT.com/www.broadcast-asia.com/www.communicasia.com](http://www.goto-EnterpriseIT.com/www.broadcast-asia.com/www.communicasia.com)



## Real Estate Investment World Asia 2007

25-28 June  
Raffles City Convention Centre  
<http://www.terrapinn.com/2007/reiwasia>

## 15<sup>th</sup> World Conference on Cooperative Education 2007

26-29 June  
Suntec Singapore  
[www.wace2007.org](http://www.wace2007.org)



## International Conference on Materials for Advanced Technologies 2007

1-6 July  
Suntec Singapore  
[www.mrs.org.sg/conference/icmat2007](http://www.mrs.org.sg/conference/icmat2007)



## ASPCR 2007: 2<sup>nd</sup> Conference of the Asian Society for Pigment Cell Research

6-8 July  
Raffles City Convention Centre  
[www.aspcr.org](http://www.aspcr.org)



**Hollandia Home Services Pte Ltd**

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## EMBASSY INFO

### Incoming Netherlands Delegation

#### Incoming Netherlands Delegation from the IRO, Dutch Oil and Gas Suppliers Industry Association to Singapore 16 to 19 June

The Embassy would like to inform that a 9-member delegation from the IRO, Dutch Oil and Gas Suppliers Industry Association will be visiting Singapore from 16 to 19 June.

On Monday 18 June from 6.30 to 8.30pm, Dutch Ambassador, HE Chris Sanders, will be hosting an official Trade Networking Reception in honour of this delegation at his official Residence, located at 23 Ridout Road.

***ADB Members who are interested in attending this networking event, please register with Mrs. Liz Ng, Trade Section at [nlexport@singnet.com.sg](mailto:nlexport@singnet.com.sg) by 14 June 2007.***

#### Visit Objectives

IRO delegation is visiting Malaysia and Singapore from 13 to 19 June to be updated about the latest developments in the current booming market sectors of the oil and gas, offshore, shipping, shipbuilding and maritime supporting industries.

Specifically, they are keen to:

- explore business collaboration opportunities
- market and promote Dutch oil and gas expertise, products and technology
- seek out local agents and distributors

IRO Delegation Members:

- (1) Brush HMA BV (website: [www.fki-et.com/hma](http://www.fki-et.com/hma))
- (2) Hudig Projects & Forwarding BV (website: [www.hudig.com](http://www.hudig.com))
- (3) Inventheon BV ([www.inventheon.com](http://www.inventheon.com))
- (4) Moduspec Engineering BV ([www.moduspec.com](http://www.moduspec.com))
- (5) NEM BV (website: [www.nem.nl](http://www.nem.nl))
- (6) SICK Instruments BV (website: [www.sick-instruments.nl](http://www.sick-instruments.nl))
- (7) SIRI Marine BV (website: [www.sirimarine.nl](http://www.sirimarine.nl))
- (8) Spirit IT BV (website: [www.spiritit.nl](http://www.spiritit.nl))
- (9) Task Environmental Services BV (website: [www.task-es.nl](http://www.task-es.nl))

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## Waarom hebben wij geen Kamer van Koophandel?

Geachte Nederlanders,

uw mening wordt verzocht omtrent een Nederlandse Kamer van Koophandel in Singapore!

Anders dan veel andere nationaliteiten hebben de Nederlanders in Singapore geen Kamer van Koophandel. KvK's in het buitenland zijn meestal initiatieven van een groep bedrijven en/of individuen, die van mening zijn dat een dergelijke organisatie waarde kan toevoegen voor de Nederlandse zakengemeenschap. Het zijn geen (semi-) overheids-instellingen, zoals in Nederland: [http://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kamer\\_van\\_Koophandel](http://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kamer_van_Koophandel).

De buitenlandse KvK's worden doorgaans gefinancierd uit lidmaatschapsgelden en subsidies van bedrijven. Dikwijls presenteert een KvK zich als vertegenwoordiger van het gezamenlijke bedrijfsleven naar -bijvoorbeeld- de overheid toe om gezamenlijke belangen te behartigen. Een willekeurig voorbeeld zou kunnen zijn: Maak een afspraak met de overheid die het gemakkelijker maakt om bepaalde producten die al toegelaten zijn op de Nederlandse markt, automatisch toe te laten in Singapore. Zo zijn er vele praktische voorbeelden te bedenken die voor een variëteit aan bedrijven van belang kunnen zijn.

In Singapore is er geen Nederlandse KvK en dat is opvallend, want Nederland is een van de landen met de grootste zakenbelangen in Singapore. We hebben wel de ADB, maar dat is een netwerkorganisatie van individuen die zich expliciet niet opstelt als representant van het Nederlandse bedrijfsleven. Ook hebben we de Economische Afdeling van de Nederlandse Ambassade. Die verleent (voornamelijk MKB) bedrijven hulp bij het zoeken van de weg in Singapore, maar is evenmin expliciet een belangenbehartiger voor het bedrijfsleven. De ambassade voert beleid uit dat wordt bepaald door de (Haagse) politiek en niet in eerste instantie door de noden van Nederlandse bedrijven in Singapore. Ook mist de ambassade een klankbord om zijn diensten beter aan te kunnen laten sluiten bij de noden van het bedrijfsleven.

Waarom er geen Nederlandse KvK is in Singapore, is niet bekend en we weten ook niet zeker of dit een gemiste kans is of dat we er simpelweg geen behoefte aan hebben als Nederlands bedrijfsleven. De ADB en de Ambassade hebben zich afgevraagd waarom die KvK niet is opgericht en willen graag zakelijk actieve Nederlanders omtrent deze kwestie raadplegen: Moet er een KvK komen, moeten we iets anders organiseren/ oprichten of zijn we tevreden met de status quo?

Dit is geen triviale vraag en we willen hierover met een groep Nederlandse zakenmensen (en speciaal mensen die hier met een kleiner bedrijf actief zijn) dan ook goed nadenken.

Met dat als doel organiseren de ADB en de Ambassade op zaterdag 9 juni aanstaande op de Hollandsche Club een workshop van enkele uren.

Het idee is dat we een aantal sprekers hun ervaringen met dergelijke organisaties laten toelichten en de voordelen -en eventuele problemen (effectiviteit, nut)- laten aanduiden. De sprekers zullen we recruteren uit KvK's van andere landen, andere 'business associations' en het bedrijfsleven. Vervolgens zullen we de aanwezige Nederlanders in kleine groepjes bijeen brengen om te discussiëren en op die manier een aantal goed overwogen meningen en ideeën verzamelen.

Op basis daarvan zullen vervolgens de ADB en de Ambassade overleggen en concluderen wat er moet gebeuren. Dit kan vele vormen hebben: misschien moet de ADB zijn doelstellingen verruimen, misschien zou de Ambassade zich anders of breder kunnen opstellen, of misschien moeten we mensen en bedrijven motiveren een Kamer van Koophandel op te richten.

Bent u geïnteresseerd in deze vraagstelling, heeft u een duidelijke mening (voor of tegen) het nut van gezamenlijke representatie van het Nederlandse bedrijfsleven, of heeft u nog geen mening maar zou u die willen vormen met ons, dan nodigen wij u uit voor de workshop. We streven naar een minimum aantal deelnemers tussen de 20 en 30 personen.

Geeft u zich zo spoedig mogelijk op door een e-mail te sturen naar: [adb@pacific.net.sg](mailto:adb@pacific.net.sg)

Zaterdag 9 juni

10:00-13:00 workshop

13:00- Lunch, aangeboden door de Nederlandse Ambassade

June event

July - No event  
25 August - Black Tie Dinner

## What does it take to set up a business in Singapore and/or the region?

Have you always wondered what it takes -besides guts- to set up your own company, to realize your dreams or to be sent off by your employer to venture into new geographical realms?

On Monday 11 June we have invited a selection of Dutch entrepreneurs in Singapore, presented in a panel, who will both be sharing their own experiences as well as taking questions and discussions from the floor. What did they have to do to come so far and what not? How did the Singapore government support their ideas and in what way? Has 'being Dutch' been an advantage? What are easy mistakes to avoid? What business entity of form should you choose and how does registration works? What does it take to penetrate clients such as MNC's?

To hear the answers to these questions and to listen to stories which might secretly feed into your own desires, we hereby recommend this ADB event, so come and have a beer with us at 19:00 hrs at the Hollandse Club on Monday 11 June.

Date : 11 June 2007  
Time : 19:00 Drinks  
19:30 Start  
Venue : Main Hall, Hollandse Club

### New Members

Geer Langezaal  
Ingur Dellevoet, *Fortis Clearing*  
Jan-Arie Bijloos, *ABN AMRO*  
Joe Cheung, *Sovereign Trust*  
Lennart van der Beek, *Innotion*  
Marc Kramer, *HVS International*  
Marie-Helene Piederiet, *Past Perfect Collection*  
Nu To Van, *Pricewaterhouse Coopers*  
Peter-Paul Nijsten, *Princeton Executive Resources*  
Pieter van Houten, *Past Perfect Collection*  
Richard Vincent, *Robert Half International*  
Sipke Mennes, *Shell*  
Zimin Chen, *Network Hardware Resale*



### Leaving Member

Richard Klitsie, *Siemens*

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