

The

issue #137 — JAN-JUN 2025

ALUMNUS

"[Singapore is] small no matter how you cut it, but we have always had an extensive reach because of our connectivity and openness."
PROFESSOR TAN TAI YONG (ARTS & SOCIAL SCIENCES '86, MA '89), CHAIRMAN, NUS INSTITUTE OF SOUTH ASIAN STUDIES, AND PRESIDENT, SINGAPORE UNIVERSITY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

FUTURE FORWARD

ALUMNI SHARE THEIR PERSPECTIVES AND HOPES FOR THE COUNTRY IN THE YEARS AHEAD

THE MAGIC OF FLAVOUR

MS JANA JUSMAN (SCIENCE '18)



THE SINGAPORE STORY

AN EVOLVING NARRATIVE

A LOOK AT HOW FAR WE'VE COME AND THE CHALLENGES THAT LIE AHEAD AS OUR NATION FORGES A PATH IN 'THE ASIAN CENTURY'

SAVE THE DATE!

NUS INNOVATION FORUM 2025

Join the NUS Innovation Forum, a groundbreaking initiative connecting you with fellow alumni, academic leaders and global thought influencers. Developed by NUS Alumni Relations, this international series aims to foster dialogue, strengthen University ties, and promote cross-border collaborations. This is more than a series of conferences – it's a global community where you can share insights, contribute ideas, and help shape the future.

For more information and to express interest, please email

✉ globalalumni@nus.edu.sg

We look forward to seeing you at our global forums!

2025 Schedule*

22 Feb	Shanghai
23 Feb	Beijing
28 Mar	Tokyo
24 Oct	Jakarta

*Dates are subject to change

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FIRST WORD

Geared for the Next Lap

2025 is poised to be significant in two ways: first, NUS will celebrate its 120th anniversary in July, followed by Singapore's 60th year of independence in August.

In recognition of these key milestones, we decided it was vital to showcase one of the most valuable contributions a university makes to its society: the thought leadership, historical perspectives and analytical insights that can add important context and clarity to current debate.

In our Focus article (p.16), we gathered multidisciplinary voices from NUS alumni and faculty to reflect on Singapore's progress as a country, and assess the potential strategies and pivots needed as it faces a more complex geopolitical, social and economic landscape in the years ahead. Inspiration for the article came from two thought-provoking and timely panel discussions we held during our NUS Homecoming (p.8) and Alumni Reunion@BTC (p.11) events, which brought together NUS luminaries such as University Professor Wang Gungwu, Mr Kishore Mahbubani, Emeritus Professor Tan Tai Yong and Professor Danny Quah.

We've also reached out to alumni from across generations for their vision of what a renewed Singapore Dream would look like – as well as the challenges that we face (p.24).

Other alumni featured in this issue include Mr Peh Shing Huei (p.28), a journalist-turned-author whose work is bringing new light to untold facets of the Singapore Story; Mrs Hwee Keng Maeder (p.40), whose family has recently



been in the news for making Singapore Olympic history, and Ms Jana Jusman (p.30), who is putting her food science degree to use innovating the country's culinary scene.

We also catch you up on the latest alumni events we've been busy with – including a heritage walk through Katong (p.44) – and bring you our first *AlumNUS* crossword puzzle (p.48), created by Dr Julian Lim (p.47).

Thank you for reading! As always, we welcome your feedback and suggestions at: alumnihelpdesk@nus.edu.sg.

Ovidia Lim-Rajaram
(Arts & Social Sciences '89)
Chief Alumni Officer

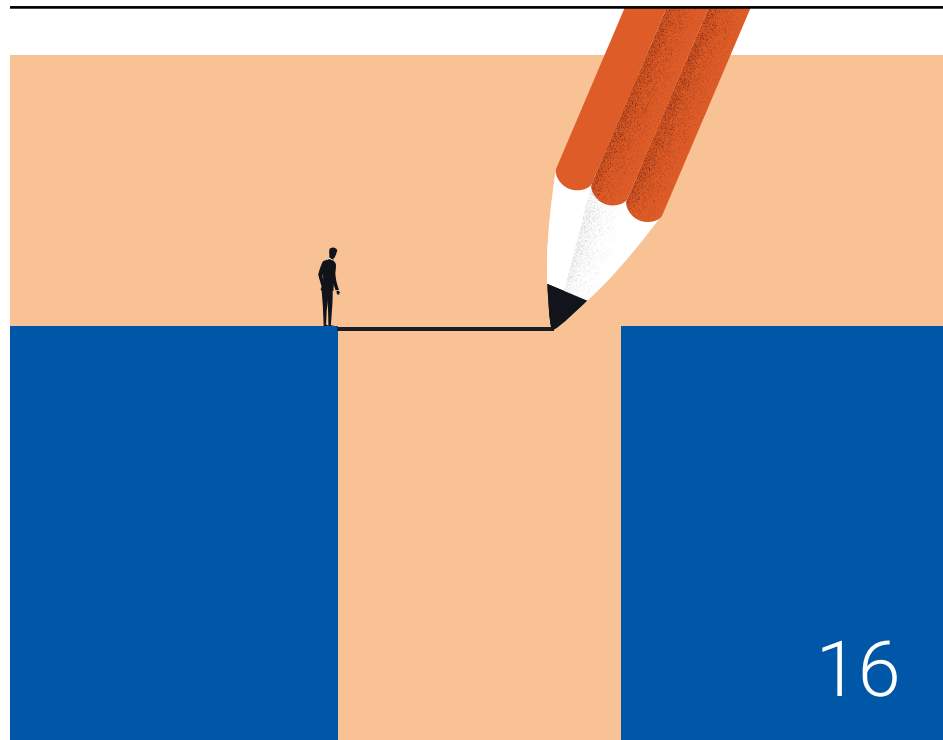


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Past & Present



Photo credit: Ministry of Information and the Arts Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore

A university tradition since 1958, the annual NUS Students' Union (NUSSU) Rag & Flag Day brings students and staff together to give back to society. On Flag Day, NUS students head into the community with tin cans to solicit donations from the public in support of local beneficiaries. The charity event culminates in Rag (Receiving and Giving) Day, where students stage spectacular performances in a show of appreciation to donors. Over the last 15 years, NUS students have raised close to S\$4.6 million in donations.



In 2024, NUS students helped to raise over **S\$212,000** for 15 social service agencies supported by the Community Chest.

For more information or to read The AlumNUS online, please visit alumni.nus.edu.sg/TheAlumNUS.



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The ALUMNUS

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From left to right: Asst Prof Jasper Tromp; Prof Abhik Roychoudhury; NUS President Prof Tan Eng Chye; Dr Teh Kok Peng; NUS Chairman Mr Hsieh Fu Hua; Mr Bilahari Kausikan; NUS Deputy President (Academic Affairs) and Provost Prof Aaron Thean; Prof Wang Linfa; Assoc Prof Peter Thomas Vail; and Asst Prof Wang Xinchao.

NUS UNIVERSITY AWARDS 2024

Eight exemplary individuals were honoured for their relentless drive towards excellence.

EIGHT OUTSTANDING EDUCATORS, RESEARCHERS AND PROFESSIONALS WERE LAUDED FOR THEIR CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE UNIVERSITY, Singapore and the global community at the NUS University Awards 2024. The annual Awards pay tribute to members of the NUS community who have raised the bar in education, research and service.

OUTSTANDING SERVICE AWARD

- **Mr Bilahari Kausikan** (Arts & Social Sciences '76), Chairman of the Middle East Institute at NUS and former Singapore diplomat
- **Dr Teh Kok Peng**, Chairman of the East Asian Institute at NUS, and a veteran in Singapore's finance and economic development

OUTSTANDING GRADUATE MENTOR AWARD

- Provost's Chair **Professor Abhik Roychoudhury**, School of Computing

UNIVERSITY RESEARCH RECOGNITION AWARD

- **Professor Wang Linfa**, Duke-NUS Medical School
- **Professor Brenda Yeoh Saw Ai**, Faculty of Arts & Social Sciences

YOUNG RESEARCHER AWARD

- **Assistant Professor Jasper Tromp**, Saw Swee Hock School of Public Health
- **Assistant Professor Wang Xinchao**, College of Design and Engineering

OUTSTANDING EDUCATOR AWARD

- **Associate Professor Peter Thomas Vail**, NUS College

SALUTING THE TRAILBLAZERS

Five NUS professors recently won the nation's highest awards for science and technology.

IN SEPTEMBER 2024, FIVE PROFESSORS FROM NUS RECEIVED THE NATION'S HIGHEST HONOURS FOR SCIENTISTS AND ENGINEERS in recognition of their outstanding achievements at the President's Science & Technology Awards, organised by the National Research Foundation.

Professor Liu Bin (Science PhD '02), Tan Chin Tuan Centennial Professor and NUS Deputy President (Research and Technology), was presented with the President's Science Award, while NUS University Professor Ho Teck Hua (Engineering '85, MComp '89) was conferred the President's Science and Technology Medal.

Three NUS research stars – Associate Professor Lu Jiong (Science PhD '12), Faculty of Science; Associate Professor Daniel Ting Shu Wei (MMed '14), Singapore National Eye Centre, Duke-NUS Medical School, and the College of Design and Engineering; and Assistant Professor Li Qianxiao, Faculty of Science – received the Young Scientist Award.



(Clockwise from top left) Prof Liu Bin; Prof Ho Teck Hua; Asst Prof Li Qianxiao; Assoc Prof Daniel Ting; and Assoc Prof Lu Jiong received the nation's top honours for their research excellence and contributions to Singapore's science and technology landscape. [Photos: National Research Foundation, Singapore, and Nanyang Technological University]

CELEBRATING EXCELLENCE

Members of the NUS community, its alumni and leaders were recognised at the 2024 National Day Awards.



Mr Hsieh Fu Hua (left), who chairs the boards of NUS and NUHS, was honoured with the Distinguished Service Order, while NUS President Professor Tan Eng Chye (right) was awarded the Meritorious Service Medal, at this year's National Day Awards.

MORE THAN 200 MEMBERS OF THE NUS COMMUNITY were recognised for their merit and service to Singapore at the 2024 National Day Awards.

Among the awardees, Mr Hsieh Fu Hua (Business '74), Chairman of the NUS Board of Trustees (BOT) and the Board of the National University Health System (NUHS), was conferred the Distinguished Service Order, while NUS President Professor

Mr Peter Ho Hak Ean (HonDLitt '24), Chairman of the Urban Redevelopment Authority, was awarded the Order of Nila Utama

(with High Distinction); Mr Phillip Tan Eng Seong, Chairman of the Board of Directors at Yellow Ribbon Singapore, received the Distinguished Service Order; and Mr Edward D'Silva (Architecture '75), former Chairman of the Public Hygiene Council, received the Meritorious Service Medal.

Other alumni honoured included Mr Niam Chiang Meng (Arts & Social Sciences '83), Chairman of Gardens by the Bay, the Maritime and Port Authority, and Mediacorp Pte Ltd; and Mr Wong Siew Hoong (Arts & Social Sciences '83), previously Director-General of Education, who both received the Meritorious Service Medal.



Through NUSOne, students can look forward to the enhanced integration of student life activities and academic pursuits, as they personalise a comprehensive and holistic university experience.

A HOLISTIC APPROACH

NUSOne seeks to provide students with a well-rounded university experience.

THE LATEST EDUCATIONAL TRANSFORMATION AT NUS HAS BEEN INTRODUCED THROUGH NUSONE,

an initiative that will enable students to achieve academic excellence, embrace a rich and immersive student life, and develop essential future-ready attributes during their time at the University.

Key elements of NUSOne include a new transition programme for first-year students to facilitate their adjustment to university life; mostly class-free Wednesday afternoons to encourage greater participation in out-of-classroom and student life activities; as well as new opportunities for students to reflect their community engagement and out-of-classroom experiences alongside their academic accomplishments.

“Student life and experiential learning are integral parts of NUS’ transformative education,” said Professor Aaron Thean, NUS Deputy President (Academic Affairs) and Provost. “Through NUSOne, we are elevating the emphasis on student life activities and out-of-classroom experiences – which will reinforce NUS’ hallmark of academic rigour and holistic education – to develop well-rounded, resilient and dynamic individuals who can thrive and flourish during and beyond their time at NUS. We are committed to giving our students the space and resources necessary to develop their potential to the fullest.”

Adult learning made more affordable

ADULT EDUCATION IN SINGAPORE HAS BECOME MORE AFFORDABLE – THANKS TO A NEW NUS INITIATIVE. In July, NUS President Professor Tan Eng Chye (Science ’85) announced that Singaporeans and Permanent Residents can enjoy a 40% tuition rebate on over 80 self-funded Master’s degree by coursework programmes offered by the University, applicable to learners enrolling in Academic Year (AY) 2024, AY2025 and AY2026.

In keeping pace with changing technology and skill-set demands, the University also announced that four new master’s programmes in artificial intelligence will be launched in 2025.



NUS now offers more than 100 master’s degree programmes, 200 micro-credentials and 1,200 courses for learners to broaden and deepen their skills in diverse areas.

This news round-up / recap of campus updates was adapted from articles on [NUS News](#). For more stories, visit [news.nus.edu.sg](#).

Dr Noorman Abdullah (Arts & Social Sciences ’02, MSocSci ’05) is a Senior Lecturer and the Assistant Dean (External Relations & Student Life) within the Department of Sociology & Anthropology and the Department of Malay Studies at the Faculty of Arts & Social Sciences (FASS). His research interests include religion and society; race relations; decolonial pedagogies; and sensory studies.

► ACADEMIC INTERESTS

“Sociology and anthropology provided me with a toolkit to understand the world we live in. That curiosity in trying to engage critically and compassionately with issues pushed me into research and teaching.”

► SENSES & SOCIETY

“I’ve been involved in Senses and Society, a thematic group of the International Sociological Association, for over 10 years. We bring together like-minded academics to discuss how our understanding of society is shaped by and through our senses. For instance, how do sight, sound and smell influence our perception of the world, our identities and our interactions?”

► JOY IN THE WORK

“Research is, of course, very illuminating and I find a lot of meaning in it. But being able to translate that research into teaching – and seeing my students grapple with and engage ideas – is incredibly gratifying.”



► ADAPTING TO CHANGE

“The world is now more uncertain and volatile; the University has undertaken significant curricular changes as a result, as well as increased its emphasis on student wellness and other issues. But at the same time, our core values have remained, including our desire to shape students who are compassionate and critical thinkers.”

► ALUMNI CONNECTIONS

“As an FASS alumnus, I find the work we do in alumni relations both gratifying and meaningful. FASS is admittedly a large and diverse faculty... harnessing and engaging a cohesive network between recent alumni and those who are well-established in their respective fields is important.”

► OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM

“I am curious about the world that we live in, and love to travel and explore new experiences. In some ways, it’s tied very closely to my discipline and research; when I do fieldwork overseas, it gives me a lens for understanding different cultures and contexts.”

CLASS NOTES

COURSE NAME: GEH1062/ GEC1024 Ghosts and Spirits in Society and Culture

SYNOPSIS: “Why, in a modern, industrialised society, are so many people still interested in the supernatural?” asks Dr Noorman Abdullah. His General Education course introduces students to the scholarly study of ghosts, spirits and other supernatural entities, demonstrating how

corresponding beliefs and practices provide a lens to the various social, political and cultural contexts in which they are situated.

For instance, the depiction of a ghost as a dead person is largely reflective of Eurocentric beliefs towards death and the afterlife. “But the category of the supernatural itself is more wide-ranging, and certain societies will make distinctions between different

kinds of ghosts and spirits through terms like *hantu*, *jinn*, *poltergeists*, *phantoms*, *wraiths* and so on.”

A fundamental objective of the class is therefore to recognise the ubiquity of supernatural beliefs across cultures, while appreciating and explaining their differences and diversity.

RECOMMENDED VIEWING: Alongside academic readings, students use ethnographic films and

pop culture to explore how representations of the supernatural reflect societal, gender, ethnic and class dynamics. This includes 1970s horror classics like *The Exorcist* and *Carrie*, as well as more modern and locally based films such as *Revenge of the Pontianak*.

► Read the full article





NUS HOMECOMING 2024

It was a day of celebration for more than 2,100 alumni and friends who gathered for NUS Homecoming on 21 September. Held at University Town, the event allowed alumni to rediscover the campus and rekindle old friendships in an atmosphere that balanced fond memories with exciting new experiences.



EVENTS LIKE HOMECOMING ARE A WONDERFUL OPPORTUNITY FOR OUR COMMUNITY TO COME TOGETHER, RETURNING TO THE CAMPUS TO CELEBRATE THEIR SHARED BOND WITH THE UNIVERSITY.

*Ms Ovidia Lim-Rajaram (Arts & Social Sciences '89),
NUS Chief Alumni Officer*



From a bouncy castle to carnival booths, movie screenings and live music, NUS Homecoming provided entertainment for the whole family.



IT'S GOOD TO COME BACK TO CAMPUS ONCE IN A WHILE, AS IT BRINGS BACK FOND MEMORIES OF MY STUDENT DAYS HERE.

Mr Dave Jalpan (Engineering '11)



At the "Legends in the Room: Turning 60 – Singapore at the Crossroads" panel, held at the Stephen Riady Centre, distinguished speakers University Professor Wang Gungwu (Arts '53, MA '56, HonDLitt '22), Mr Kishore Mahbubani (Arts & Social Sciences '71), Professor Tan Tai Yong (Arts & Social Sciences '86, MA '89) and moderator Mr Soh Yi Da (Arts & Social Sciences + USP '14) delved into Singapore's remarkable journey from a fledgling nation to a global powerhouse.



IT WAS WONDERFUL TO SHARE STORIES, NETWORK AND BUILD A STRONGER SENSE OF COMMUNITY. THE EVENT REINFORCED HOW NUS HAS BROUGHT TOGETHER SUCH A DIVERSE AND ACCOMPLISHED GROUP OF PEOPLE.

*Mr Richard D. Tan (Public Policy '13),
Chairperson of the NUS Alumni Network (Manila)*



Campus tours, technology showcases and start-up booths put the University's innovation and research on full display, while insightful panels and workshops highlighted alumni thought leadership.



Milestone anniversaries celebrated:

- 95TH ANNIVERSARY** of the Faculty of Arts & Social Sciences
- 95TH ANNIVERSARY** of the Faculty of Dentistry
- 95TH ANNIVERSARY** of the Faculty of Science
- 10TH ANNIVERSARY** of Ridge View Residential College
- 10TH ANNIVERSARY** of Residential College 4



FELLOWSHIP & FRIENDSHIP

NUS AND UNIVERSITI MALAYA CELEBRATE TIES

The National University of Singapore (NUS) deepened its longstanding relationship with Universiti Malaya (UM) last October, organising a series of events in Singapore to celebrate the universities' academic and social connections.



The NUS Golf team celebrates its victory.

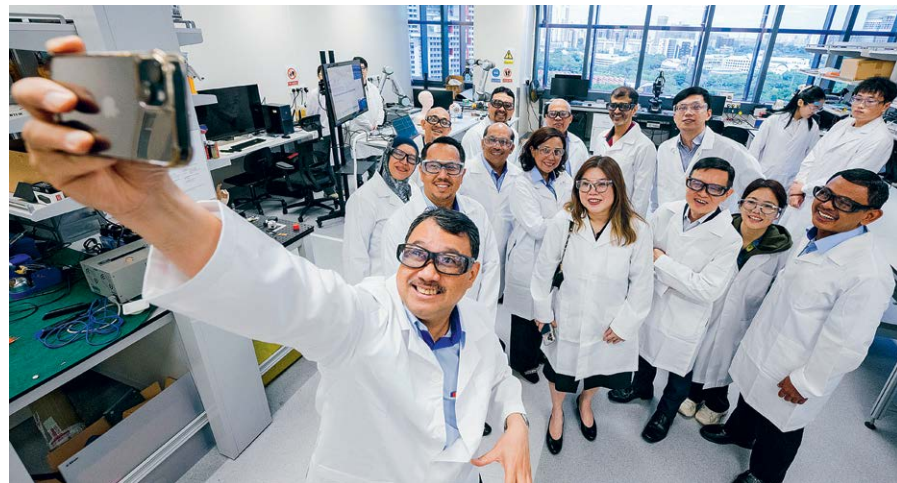
ON 15 OCTOBER 2024, THE UM-NUS JOINT WORKSHOP ON BIOMEDICAL ENGINEERING

brought together researchers, educators and scholars to discuss the latest research in the field, including the impact of the fourth industrial revolution, and the opportunities that artificial intelligence and the metaverse bring to healthcare.

In parallel, NUS hosted the 53rd UM-NUS Inter-University Tunku Chancellor Golf Tournament on 15 and 16 October. Intermittent rain did not dampen the spirits or sportsmanship of the more than 100 UM and NUS golfers, who reconnected with old friends and forged new connections while engaging in friendly competition. Led by Golf Captain Mr Bernard Toh (Architecture '84), the NUS team clinched the Tunku Chancellor Trophy for the first time since 2019.



Professor Dato' Seri Ir Dr Noor Azuan bin Abu Osman, Vice Chancellor of UM (left), and Professor Lim Chwee Teck, NUS Society Chair Professor of Biomedical Engineering and Director of iHealthTech, share a laugh during lunch at the Joint Workshop.



Participants of the UM-NUS Joint Workshop on Biomedical Engineering enjoyed a laboratory tour of the NUS Institute for Health Innovation & Technology (iHealthTech) as part of the day's programme.

To honour the universities' enduring ties, the UM-NUS Gala Dinner was held on 15 October at The Fullerton Hotel Singapore. The event was hosted by NUS Chancellor, His Excellency President Tharman Shanmugaratnam, and attended by UM Chancellor, His Royal Highness Sultan Nazrin Muizzuddin Shah, the Sultan of the state of Perak and Deputy Yang di-Pertuan Agong of Malaysia.

Speaking at the event, NUS President Professor Tan Eng Chye (Science '85) detailed the legacy of cooperation and camaraderie between the two universities, noting that "By continuing to create and encourage opportunities for collaboration and exchange, UM and NUS are both enriched."



NUS President Professor Tan Eng Chye (left) accompanies NUS Chancellor, His Excellency President Tharman Shanmugaratnam (centre), and UM Chancellor, His Royal Highness Sultan Nazrin Muizzuddin Shah, the Sultan of the state of Perak and Deputy Yang di-Pertuan Agong of Malaysia (right), at the UM-NUS Gala Dinner.

A MEETING OF MINDS

Alumni gathered at Bukit Timah Campus (BTC) to learn more about Singapore's strategies for navigating global challenges.

IN HIS OPENING ADDRESS AT ALUMNI REUNION@BTC

on 26 October 2024, NUS President Professor Tan Eng Chye (Science '85) reflected on the nostalgic significance of the campus for generations of graduates. Looking ahead, Prof Tan highlighted the upcoming celebration of NUS' 120th anniversary, which will be marked by various key events, including a fun NUS120 charity walk around campus in February 2025. His address resonated with the shared history and deep alumni connections to this iconic campus.

Some 100 alumni, students and staff attended the main event of the day, a panel discussion titled "How Can Singapore Navigate the Continuing Storms of Geopolitical Rivalry?", which brought together distinguished thought leaders to discuss how the country can navigate the complexities of a polarised world while safeguarding its national interests.

Participant Mr Chim Teng Lee (Engineering '90) found the session insightful. He shared that instead of choosing sides between the US and China, Singapore can focus on fostering collaboration by bringing together local and overseas NUS alumni to share their expertise. By doing so, he believes we can promote better relations and explore new opportunities for cooperation with ASEAN countries, to strengthen regional ties and create mutual benefit.



(From left) Professor Khong Yuen Foong, Dr Selina Ho (Arts & Social Sciences '94), moderator Professor Tan Tai Yong (Arts & Social Sciences '86, MA '89), Mr Kishore Mahubani (Arts & Social Sciences '71) and Professor Danny Quah served as distinguished speakers in the panel discussion on Singapore's pressing challenges.

Another participant, Ms Chew Tai Wen (Arts & Social Sciences '20), enjoyed the personal anecdotes that were shared by the panellists. Her key takeaway was that while Singapore must brace for uncertainties ahead, she has confidence in the country's leaders to navigate these challenges effectively.

The day's event concluded with a lunch buffet at the Oei Tiong Ham Building. Alumni caught up with old friends and made new connections, exchanging ideas and reflecting on the points raised during the panel session.



DEALING WITH THE DEEPFAKE DILEMMA

NUS Alumni Relations co-organised a spirited discussion, which centred on how society should navigate deepfakes while embracing innovation.

TEXT BY KEENAN PEREIRA
PHOTOS BY MARK LEE



The discussion touched on legislation and regulation, public trust and transparency, as well as the ethical considerations around the use of AI and generative technologies.

EARLY IN SEPTEMBER 2024, THE SINGAPORE GOVERNMENT ISSUED A CLARION CALL AGAINST DEEPFAKES, tabling a Bill in Parliament to tackle the scourge. The proposed Elections (Integrity of Online Advertising) (Amendment) Bill aims to counter deepfakes during elections.

The law comes as deepfakes increasingly become a part of everyday life — just last year, the Internet was abuzz with deepfakes of then-Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong and then-Deputy Prime Minister Lawrence Wong promoting investment platforms. The videos used artificial

intelligence (AI) to mimic their voices and facial expressions. Deepfakes sometimes also have less malicious intent. For example, de-ageing filters that enhance one's looks can — in the view of some academics — also be considered a form of deepfakes. But is this too extreme a position?

To help alumni cut through the noise surrounding the issue, the National University of Singapore (NUS) Alumni Relations partnered the Institute of Systems Science (NUS-ISS) to organise a panel discussion featuring academics, regulators and industry leaders. Themed *The Rising*

Threat of Deepfakes – Understanding the Surge and Its Implications, the session — which was held on 3 September 2024 at the Shaw Foundation Alumni House — attracted over 180 attendees, ranging from those whose work revolved around deepfakes to those who were just learning about it. Mr Martin Khoo, Principal Lecturer & Consultant, Digital Strategy & Leadership Practice, NUS-ISS, moderated the session.

BALANCING INNOVATION AND REGULATION

Dr Saurabh Lal (MTech SE '08) set the context for the evening's discussion by providing a broad overview of deepfakes and explaining how they are created. Drawing on his experience as President of cybersecurity provider CYFIRMA, he articulated the importance of clear legislation that defines the scope and impact of deepfakes, with a focus on transparency, enforcement mechanisms and victim protection. He also stressed that regulations must consider not only the publisher and the victim, but also the intermediaries involved in the distribution of deepfake



A central tenet of the discussion was the importance of considering the interests of various stakeholders while not stifling technological progress when it comes to the use of AI.



DEEPFAKES AT THE POLLS

ELECTION SAFEGUARDS: Singapore's new Bill proposes fines of up to S\$1 million for social media platforms that fail to comply with directives to remove deepfake content misrepresenting political candidates during elections.

NEW DETECTION ARSENAL: Singapore is investing S\$50 million to develop advanced detection tools as part of a broader initiative to tackle deepfakes and safeguard online trust and safety.

GLOBAL IMPACT: Deepfakes have disrupted elections worldwide, with countries like South Korea and Brazil implementing bans or restrictions on AI-generated content to protect electoral integrity.

FIRST AI ELECTION: The US election in November 2024 is widely regarded as the world's first 'AI election' due to the proliferation of deepfake videos featuring political candidates.

content. These include social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram and TikTok.

Ms Lim Ee Lin (MTech DL '24), who serves as the Deputy Director, CISO & Governance, Home Team Science & Technology Agency, pointed out the importance of a balanced approach. "There are expectations for the Government to introduce more regulations and guidelines to address the deepfake issue," she explained. "We are developing regulations, guidelines and standards that can be adopted by industry. The goal is to ensure that there is a baseline alignment across the ecosystem, where everyone is on the same page about the expectations and requirements."

However, Ms Lim acknowledged that the Government has to contextualise regulations for specific use cases across industries. She highlighted that the Government also has a duty to protect the public interest. "The Government has to balance these different stakeholder interests when developing guidelines," she said.

INDUSTRY IMPACT

Mr Kenneth Zhu, Executive Director of Data Science & AI at OCBC Bank, shared the banking sector's perspective. He highlighted the need to balance innovation with regulation, noting that open-source tools — which are often associated with the creation of deepfakes — can be both beneficial and risky. However, he cautioned against outright prohibitions of these tools. "We cannot simply say that because open-



The Q&A session provided audience members with an opportunity to share their experiences of deepfakes.

We cannot simply say that because open-source tools make these technologies easily accessible, we should prohibit any further developments. That would be akin to stifling innovation itself.

Mr Kenneth Zhu

source tools make these technologies easily accessible, we should prohibit any further developments," he said. "That would be akin to stifling innovation itself."

Mr Zhu also stressed the importance of responsible development and use, suggesting that the banking sector work together to establish policies and guidelines. He highlighted the sector's focus on protecting client data and payments, noting that even as technology evolves, the core objective of safeguarding customer interests must remain a priority.

To this, Dr Lal supported the idea of self-regulation, adding that industry players could collaborate to create associations or working groups to establish guidelines and standards. This, he argued, would help ensure that the development and use of these technologies do not harm society or unfairly target individuals or organisations.

THE AUDIENCE WEIGHS IN

The session concluded with questions and comments from the audience, who shared personal experiences of deepfakes. They also raised concerns about privacy risks from sharing data with such apps and worries about the potential misuse of AI-generated faces or voices that compromise their children's safety. Panellists suggested mitigating these risks by, for instance, training children on security protocols and understanding platform terms of use. "As a society, we cannot run away from the need to understand these technologies," said Mr Khoo, pointing out various NUS-ISS courses that were ideal for those looking to deepen their understanding of deepfakes.



TRANSFORMING AND
CREATING VALUE:

A PLAYBOOK FOR BUSINESS GROWTH

Participants gained valuable insights on business innovation, team accountability and navigating the software-as-a-service (SaaS) transition from tech CEO **Ms Jasmin Young's (Arts & Social Sciences '97)** talk at the NUS Be A-HEAD event.

TEXT BY **AUDRINA GAN**
PHOTOS BY **KELVIN CHIA**

FOR BUSINESSES SEEKING TO STAY AHEAD IN A RAPIDLY EVOLVING MARKET,

constant innovation and a willingness to challenge the status quo are key. That was the central message from Ms Jasmin Young, a tech company CEO, who spoke at the NUS Be A-HEAD event on 17 September 2024. Addressing an audience at the JustCo co-working space on Robinson Road, Ms Young



In her talk, Ms Young (right) highlighted the importance of learning from failure and embracing new ways of approaching challenges.

outlined strategies for creating value and achieving hypergrowth, offering practical insights drawn from her own experiences in leading business transformation.

"Innovation plays a crucial role in enabling companies to adapt to changing market conditions and customer preferences," Ms Young said, adding that innovation not only fuels growth but also energises and empowers teams to take control of their roles. By fostering an environment where teams feel invested in the transformation process, businesses can navigate change more effectively, she explained.

Ms Young, who led the turnaround of Netreo, a California-based IT management firm, shared her extensive experience in driving value through innovation. At Netreo, a company that monitors over 15 million devices daily, she spearheaded the shift from traditional on-premise solutions to cloud-based services, a move she likened to a contractor renovating a house. "We needed to assess which areas required attention for long-term growth. For us, this meant adding SaaS (software-as-a-service) functionalities as the industry shifts towards cloud services," she explained.

Beyond her work at Netreo, Ms Young's career at global consulting firm PricewaterhouseCoopers involved working with leading tech companies, helping them transition to subscription-based models and transforming customer experiences. Her journey from political science and European Studies undergraduate at NUS to business leader is an inspiring story of adaptability and leadership.

HOW SHE TRANSFORMED NETREO

During her four-year tenure as CEO, Ms Young grew Netreo's workforce from 30 to over 100 employees. The company shifted from selling customised solutions to offering scalable, full-stack services, which allowed them

I've always enjoyed learning over studying, and I immersed myself in the evolving body of knowledge quickly and intentionally to drive results. *Ms Jasmin Young*



to target larger clients. "We reshaped our strategy to focus on operational efficiency, honed in on an ideal customer profile and expanded our offerings to include full-stack solutions," Ms Young said. This approach – coupled with formalising project scopes and building relationships with industry analysts – elevated Netreo's market presence.

Event moderator Ms Audrey Tan, Co-founder of PlayMoolah (Arts & Social Sciences '10), asked how Ms Young led Netreo's team through such a significant transformation. Ms Young attributed her success to three principles: accountability, accessibility and authenticity. Weekly check-ins replaced annual reviews, providing opportunities to address challenges and support team members. "We allowed people to experiment and develop new features so they could grow, and we reviewed progress weekly to move forward together," she explained.

Creating a culture where failure is seen as a learning opportunity was also

crucial. "Failure can actually help us improve," Ms Young said, adding that an open-door policy was important to allow ideas to be shared without fear.

LEARNING HOW TO RIDE THE WAVE

When asked during the subsequent Q&A session about how she transitioned from a political science graduate to an IT business leader, Ms Young said that while much of her university learning was memory-based, her career demanded deeper, more practical engagement with knowledge. "I've always enjoyed learning over studying, and I immersed myself in the evolving body of knowledge quickly and intentionally to drive results," she said. Industry mentors, such as Thomas Archer and Romit Dey, also played a pivotal role in guiding her through challenges and shaping her approach to leadership – for example, by pressure-testing her ideas.

Another participant asked about the challenges of managing Netreo's sales team during its shift to a SaaS model. Ms Young explained



The session gave participants an opportunity to tap on Ms Young's insights and experiences.



Audience members interacting with Ms Young after the talk.

that guiding the sales team to sell the right mix of products was a key challenge, especially as the new SaaS product she was developing would not be ready for two years. "The margin on SaaS products is lower than on-premise services because we have to host the services, which means lower sales commissions," she said. To keep the sales team motivated, she had to think creatively about incentivising them during the transition. "Sometimes, companies even need to double-compensate their on-premise and SaaS teams during the transition," she added.

In closing, Ms Young stressed that creating value means understanding the fundamental financial aspects of a business. Attendees left the event with their own valuable insights on leading business transformation, managing sales force challenges and adapting to industry shifts such as SaaS and artificial intelligence. Ms Young's candid sharing of her journey provided practical takeaways, leaving those who attended inspired to tackle their own business challenges with confidence.



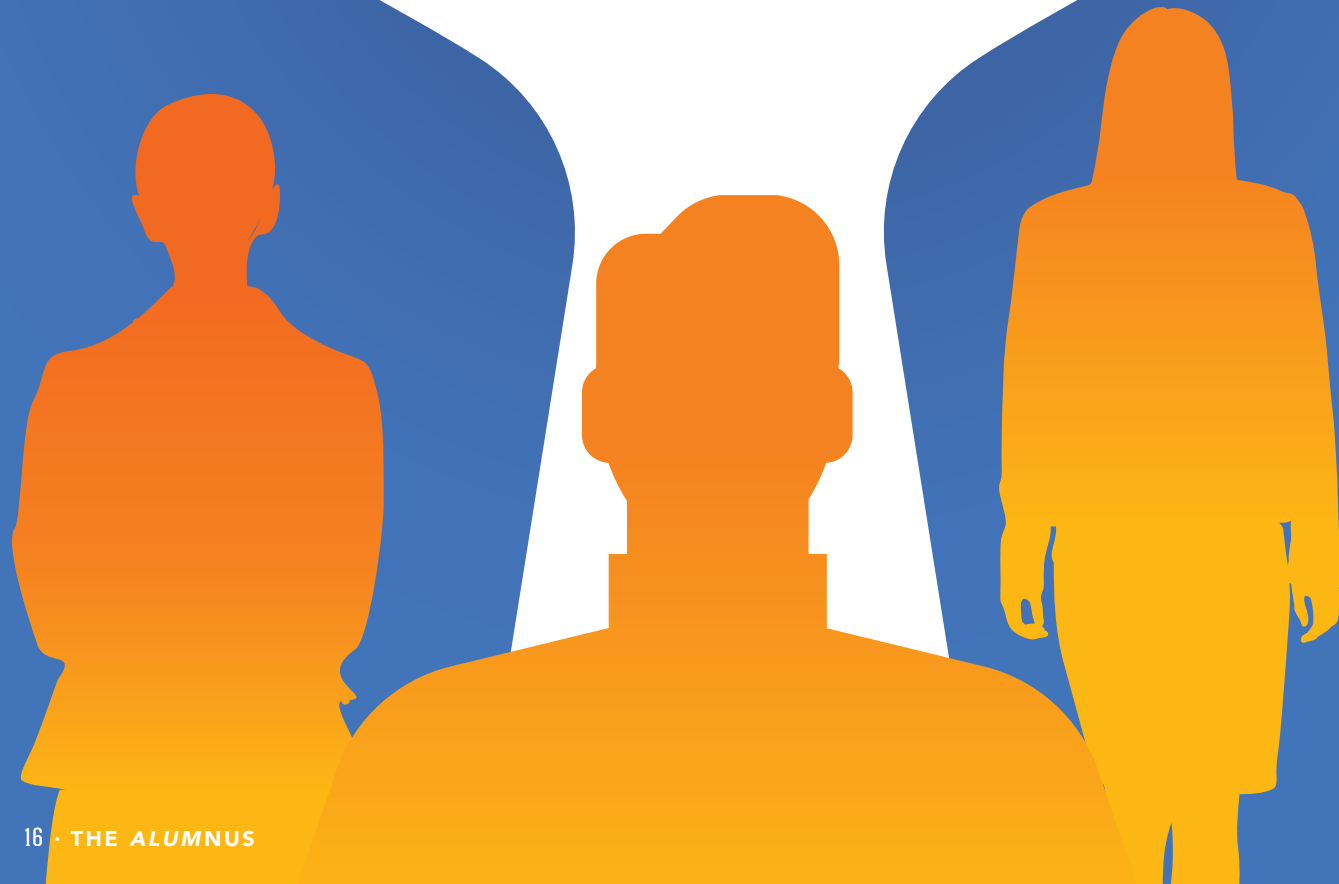
(From left): Ms Tan; Ms Young; NUS Chief Alumni Officer Ms Ovidia-Lim Rajaram (Arts & Social Sciences '89); and Mr David Ding (Engineering '10), Chairperson of NUS Overseas Colleges Alumni.



Another point emphasised during the session was the need to create an environment where teams feel invested in the transformation process so as to navigate change more effectively.

SINGAPORE AT THE CROSSROADS

TEXT BY KOH YUEN LIN



As the 'Little Red Dot' turns 60 in 2025, distinguished thought leaders from the National University of Singapore (NUS) community reflect on factors that have contributed to the nation's success and ponder how to navigate challenges for the next 60 years.

“SINGAPORE IS THE MOST SUCCESSFUL SOCIETY SINCE THE BEGINNING OF HUMAN HISTORY,” proclaimed

Mr Kishore Mahbubani (Arts & Social Sciences '71), Distinguished Fellow at the NUS Asia Research Institute. Speaking at the panel discussion, 'Legends in the Room: Turning 60 – Singapore at the Crossroads', during NUS Homecoming on 21 September 2024, he noted, “No other nation has improved the standards of living for its people faster and more comprehensively.”

Indeed, the Singapore Story is built upon unique circumstances. A speck of an island with scant natural resources, it was 'forced' into independence following separation from Malaysia in 1965. The tiny state then had to quickly find its feet in a region rife with conflict between retreating colonial powers and insurgent nationalist groups with differing ideologies — all against a larger backdrop of the Cold War.

Despite the factors against it, Singapore emerged as a peaceful nation under the stewardship of founding Prime Minister Mr Lee Kuan Yew (HonLLD '13) and former Deputy Prime Ministers Mr S. Rajaratnam and Dr Goh Keng Swee (Arts '39). “As a predominantly Chinese city-state in a region where our

neighbours distrusted the ethnic Chinese, the natural destiny of Singapore should have been that of a shrinking geopolitical space,” said Mr Mahbubani. “Yet our geopolitical space within Southeast Asia today is enormous, and the amount of respect and trust our neighbours have in us is exceptional and unusual. This is the result of the exceptional track record of our founding fathers.”

Beyond its economic and domestic progress, Singapore's reputation and sustained success are also built on the foundational values instilled in the country's key agencies by its pioneering leaders. These include incorruptibility, transparency and a recognition of the need to plan for the future, alongside a steadfast adherence to the

principles of meritocracy, pragmatism and honesty, Mr Mahbubani noted. Yet he cautioned: “While Singapore has been exceptional on many counts, one of the lessons of history is that exceptionality doesn't last.”

FROM ASIA TO THE WORLD

To 'crystal ball' what Singapore will look like in the next 60 years requires a broader view of history. “The last 60 years stand out, but it's only a small window if you put it on a 700-year timeframe,” noted fellow panellist Professor Tan Tai Yong (Arts & Social Sciences '86, MA '89), Chairman of the NUS

Singapore has built a stellar reputation and sustained success, but Mr Kishore Mahbubani cautioned that such exceptionality is not guaranteed to last.



Institute of South Asian Studies and President of the Singapore University of Social Sciences.

The co-author of landmark publication *Seven Hundred Years: A History of Singapore* highlighted that the island had always been part of a larger confederation before its independence – whether as a 13th-century trading port founded by Srivijayan prince Sang Nila Utama, a Crown Colony under the British Empire, or part of the Federation of Malaysia. Today, Singapore stands as a member of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) and the United Nations (UN). “Looking at the extended history of how the island has changed over the years allows us to find the core motif of Singapore’s identity beyond that of a nation-state,” Prof Tan told *The AlumNUS*. “We are small no matter how you cut it, but we have also always had an extensive reach because of our connectivity and openness.”

Singapore’s alliance with countries within the region will continue to be critical in the next 60 years as it navigates new geopolitical challenges. “In 2000, Japan was the world’s largest economy after the United States, and eight times bigger than ASEAN. Now, Japan is only 1.3 times bigger than ASEAN, and by 2030, ASEAN will supersede it,” he projected. With trade between Singapore and ASEAN countries on a general upward trend, amounting to

S\$295.6 billion in 2023, the Singapore economy grows with ASEAN. In this context, the regional bloc not only boosts the country’s trade connectivity but also strengthens its standing as a neutral party on the wider geopolitical landscape. “Singaporeans must be aware that ASEAN gives us a buffer,” stressed Mr Mahbubani, speaking to *The AlumNUS*. “Within the 10 countries, there is a consensus that we will not take part in the contest between the US and China – Singapore is not alone.”

Maintaining this neutrality becomes increasingly important for Singapore to move forward amid escalating conflicts around the world, and rising tensions between the US and China, highlighted Dr Selina Ho (Arts & Social Sciences ’94), Assistant Professor in International Affairs and Co-Director of the Centre on Asia and Globalisation at the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy (LKYSPP).

Dr Ho shared that Singapore’s foreign policy “is guided by principles important to small countries: an independent foreign policy, being friends with all, growing economically so that we stay relevant to others, being an honest broker, and upholding international law”. She was speaking at the Alumni Reunion@BTC dialogue session, “How Can Singapore Navigate the Continuing Storms of Geopolitical Rivalry?” on 26 October 2024, where she added that Singapore’s relations with both the US and China are

substantive and well-rounded, with high-level exchanges, economic and security cooperation, and people-to-people ties. “It is an even-handed approach,” she said. “For example, when we renewed our Memorandum of Understanding allowing US armed forces to use our air and naval facilities in September 2019, we also upgraded our defence agreement with China in October the same year.”

Her observations echo the findings of Professor Khong Yuen Foong, Co-Director of the Centre on Asia and Globalisation and Li Ka Shing Professor of Political Science at LKYSPP. His ongoing research project, *The Anatomy of Choice: Southeast Asia between the Superpowers*, tracks the strategic alignments among ASEAN countries. Looking at Singapore’s neutral stance from 1995 to 2021, Prof Khong proposes that Singapore could serve as a successful hedger within the region. “We have done remarkably well straddling the two superpowers in a truly middling position... By successfully positioning ourselves between China and the US, we can make hay while the sun shines.”

NAVIGATING THE NEW GEOPOLITICAL ORDER

However, Mr Mahbubani – who served as Singapore’s Permanent Representative to the UN and was President of the UN Security Council – stressed that the rules of engagement for the next 60 years will change.

Citing the US’ weak response to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, its disregard for the UN’s resolution against Israeli occupation, and its blocking of the appointment of new judges to the World Trade Organization’s (WTO) Appellate Body (thus paralysing the organisation), he opined that the world is moving from “a functional to a dysfunctional Western-led world order”.



Prof Khong Yuen Foong stressed why it is vital for Singapore to take a ‘middle position’ in the ongoing US-China rivalry.



Dr Selina Ho similarly highlighted the importance of neutrality, which boosts Singapore’s profile on the world stage.

“All our policies are based on the assumption that the leading power in the world will act responsibly – but what do we do when the responsible stakeholder becomes irresponsible?”

ALL OUR POLICIES ARE BASED ON THE ASSUMPTION THAT THE LEADING POWER IN THE WORLD WILL ACT RESPONSIBLY – BUT WHAT DO WE DO WHEN THE RESPONSIBLE STAKEHOLDER BECOMES IRRESPONSIBLE?

Mr Kishore Mahbubani

In the past, we might say, ‘the US is losing its way, let’s turn to the EU’. But while the EU is still a significant economic power, geopolitically, it has become a dwarf... Singapore has to start thinking about how to manage a very different world order.”

Amid a shifting global landscape where traditional security and trade frameworks may no longer be reliable, Singapore could face significant economic challenges,

Looking at the extended history of how the island has changed over the years allows us to find the core motif of Singapore’s identity beyond that of a nation-state. We are small, but we have also always had an extensive reach because of our connectivity and openness.

Professor Tan Tai Yong, Chairman, NUS Institute of South Asian Studies, and President, Singapore University of Social Sciences





WHAT IS IT THAT ALLOWS SINGAPORE TO NAVIGATE THIS TREACHEROUS LANDSCAPE? MULTILATERALISM. A COMMITMENT TO PEACEFUL RESOLUTION OF DISPUTES. A PRINCIPLE THAT YOU SHOULD BE TREATED AS YOU TREAT OTHER NATIONS.

Professor Danny Quah, Dean and Li Ka Shing Professor in Economics, LKYSPP

conceded Professor Danny Quah, Dean and Li Ka Shing Professor in Economics at LKYSPP. Speaking at the Alumni Reunion@BTC discussion, Prof Quah stressed that while economic resilience is paramount for small nations like Singapore, complete isolation would be an impractical solution, leading to higher living costs and diminished access to essential goods such as food and technology. Instead, Singapore could bolster its economic security while remaining open to global trade — an essential strategy given its limited resources. The nation can navigate these challenges by embracing multilateralism, ensuring it maintains beneficial relationships with various trading partners without aligning too closely with any single power. This nuanced approach will help Singapore thrive in an increasingly unpredictable world, Prof Quah said, emphasising the importance of strategic choice in global economic engagement.

To navigate this new world order, Prof Quah proposes that Singapore could embrace pathfinder multilateralism, which involves forming flexible coalitions such as the Multi-Party Interim Appeal Arbitration Arrangement (MPIA) that operates under existing WTO frameworks. This approach allows for

collaboration on trade and dispute resolution, even in the absence of major players like the US. By championing inclusive agreements and fostering partnerships, Singapore can enhance its economic resilience and maintain a leading role in global trade despite challenges in traditional multilateral institutions.

INTEGRAL STRENGTH THROUGH SOCIAL COHESION: THE IDEA OF SINGAPORE

Apart from strengthening its external ties, Singapore also needs to brace for future challenges by strengthening itself from the inside out. The country's comprehensive Total Defence strategy includes job-seeker allowances and support for lifelong learning and upskilling

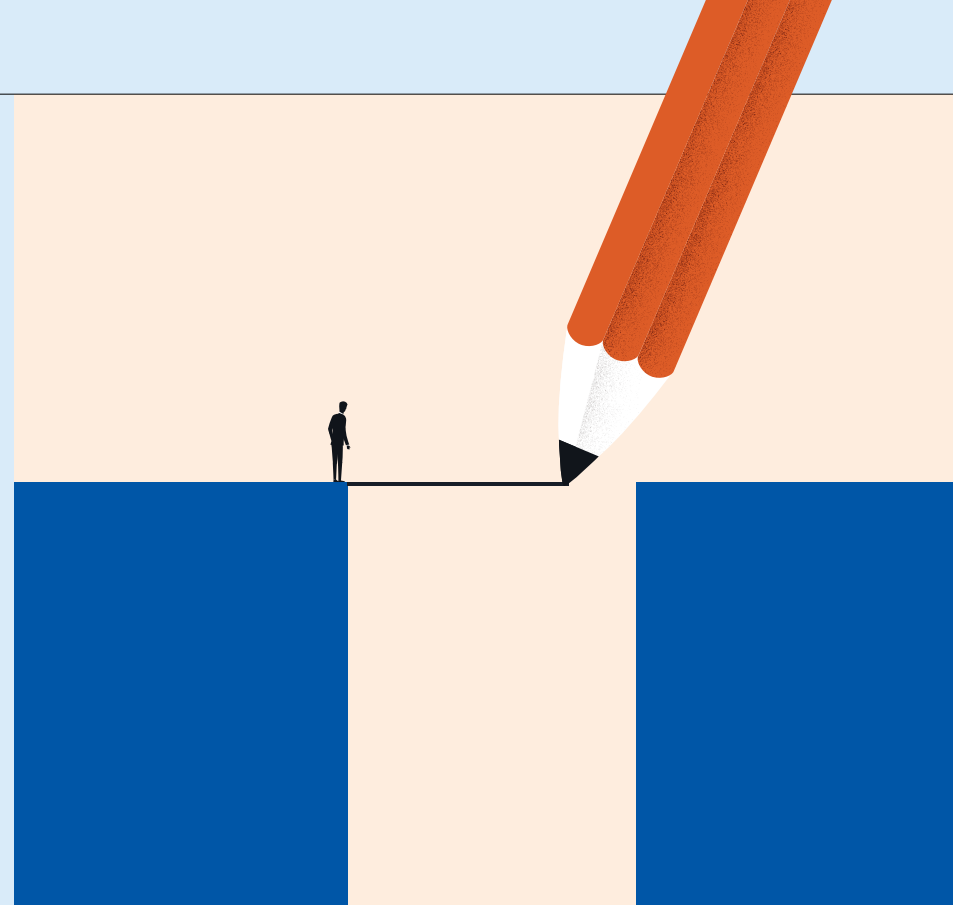
The values that guide how we do things are what make us feel like Singaporeans: meritocracy that protects social equality; multiculturalism that is a fundamental part of our diversity; and respect for law and order, conveyed through our government agencies and policies.

Dr Mathew Mathews, Principal Research Fellow, Institute of Policy Studies (IPS) and Head, IPS Social Lab, LKYSPP

schemes that allow both the economy and society to weather shocks and disruptions, Prof Quah pointed out. Yet social cohesion could prove to be the biggest challenge for Singapore.

Sharing that the proportion of locally-born Singaporeans is projected to be around 30 per cent in the next 30 to 40 years, Prof Tan stressed that how we identify with and articulate the Singaporean identity needs to change as the country's social makeup evolves through immigration and inter-racial marriages. Referring back to his perspective on finding Singapore's core characteristics through the island's historical evolution, he proposes that the Singaporean identity should go beyond race and religion, to be anchored in the values that have shaped the country. Openness, inclusivity and meritocracy have historically guided Singapore toward progress, and in a time when multiculturalism blurs the lines of distinct racial categories, a collective ethos that transcends individual backgrounds could cultivate a robust identity. The challenge would be to protect these values from eroding.

Dr Mathew Mathews (Arts & Social Sciences '99, MSocSci '02, PhD '08), a Principal Research Fellow at the Institute of Policy Studies (IPS) and Head of the IPS Social Lab at LKYSPP, echoed Prof Tan's point. "The values



that guide how we do things are what make us feel like Singaporeans: meritocracy that protects social equality; multiculturalism that is a fundamental part of our diversity; and respect for law and order, conveyed through our government agencies and policies," he said. However, all these could come under threat — whether in the form of social tensions arising from a widening income gap, or from foreigners who challenge the country's ways — and, in turn, threaten the cohesion of Singapore society.

"Past research by IPS has suggested that social class — not race or religion — may be the most important fault line in Singapore society," shared Dr Elvin Ong, Assistant Professor at the NUS Department of Political Science, and a Social Science and Humanities Research Fellow. While Dr Mathews pointed to a robust public education system as an equaliser, bridging the gap between the 'Haves' and 'Have-Nots', Dr Ong cautioned that technological shifts changing the future of work are likely to exacerbate the problem. "Tech-

adjacent workers who could exploit new innovations — such as those in finance or marketing — are likely to see exponential growth in their income," he said. "Skilled workers in more labour-intensive professions, unable to leverage new technologies simply by the nature of their work, are likely to see their wages grow more slowly or stagnate."

NATION BUILDING 4.0: WIELDING THE DOUBLE-EDGED SWORD OF TECHNOLOGY

To close the gaps among different segments of the population, Dr Carol Soon (Arts & Social Sciences PhD '12), Associate Professor at the NUS Department of Communications and New Media, and Vice Chair of Singapore's Media Literacy Council, proposes a whole-of-society effort focused on helping people harness technology effectively for social and economic mobility.

"Increasingly, we see a need to uplift competencies so that people go beyond being safe

consumers of technology to become productive, effective producers of content, so that everyone — regardless of background — can fully and effectively use technology for individual and community good," said the Adjunct Principal Scientist at the Centre for Advanced Technologies in Online Safety, and member of the Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth's Co-Governance Community of Practice.

Importantly, Dr Soon highlighted that Singapore's diverse society could be susceptible to fissures arising from hate speech and insidious propaganda disseminated online. Waning digital trust could also be a key threat in the future. "The declining trust people have in technology has huge repercussions for the individual and society," she said. "Much of our interactions happen online, and negative experiences in this space can erode the trust people have among themselves; between



Dr Carol Soon believes that technology is key to bridging the gaps between different social groups.



According to Dr Elvin Ong, social class is the biggest cause of division within Singapore society.



users and platforms such as social media apps and networking sites; and between people and institutions, such as in the event of data breaches." More than a roadblock on the country's Smart Nation journey, such sentiments could also translate to a general state of distrust, weakening the bonds within community and country.

Yet when put in the right hands, technology can facilitate positive change. "In recent years, we have seen more ground-up initiatives leveraging the connectivity of technology to try

to raise the awareness of social issues — be it the plight of gig workers, climate change or raising political literacy, among others," said Dr Soon. She also noted a greater emphasis placed by the government on supporting ground-led initiatives, underscoring the importance of activating people, the private sector and academia through technology, and, in turn, strengthening social cohesiveness and public trust in institutions.

A GOOD GLOBAL CITIZEN

But the best might have yet to come for Singapore. Mr Mahbubani is of the opinion that Singapore, given its strong multilateral ties and

strong multicultural society, has the potential to become the progressive capital of the Asian Century that he foresees. Former diplomat Emeritus Professor Tommy Koh (Law '61, HonLLD '22) also believes that Singapore can be "a source of new ideas for ASEAN", citing the Initiative for ASEAN Integration, launched in 2000 at the Fourth ASEAN Informal Summit in Singapore, with the aim of bridging gaps between ASEAN member countries and enhancing the region's competitiveness.

Singapore's reputation as one of the best-planned cities in the world — with a commitment to both liveability and sustainability — also provides a model to others and serves as a

strong foundation for its rise on the world stage in the next 60 years. "Singapore takes very seriously the threat of climate change and sea-level rise," said Prof Koh. "We have committed ourselves to the goal of achieving net zero emissions by 2050. Internationally, we play a positive and facilitative role in negotiations on climate, biodiversity and the oceans."

However, Prof Koh stressed that, as a small, non-aligned state, Singapore might punch above its weight at international gatherings — but it knows its place when it comes to international relations. "Singapore does not have an agenda to be a peacemaker," commented Prof Koh, who served as the UN Secretary-General's Special Envoy to make peace between Russia and its three Baltic neighbours, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, in 1993. "However, we are happy to play host to talks between rivals, such as the Wang-Koo talks in 1993, the meeting between China's leader Xi Jinping and Taiwan's then-President Ma Ying-jeou in 2015, and the summit between US President Donald Trump and North Korea's Kim Jong Un in 2018."

Mr Mahbubani concurred, remarking that the country has always been very active on the global stage, with Prof Koh chairing the UN's 1982 Conference on the Law of the Sea and the 1992 Rio Earth Summit. Singapore's former Permanent Representative to the UN, Mr Chew Tai Soo, also founded the Forum of Small States (FOSS) within the UN in 1992. To date, Singapore still serves as Chair of FOSS. In more recent years, Singaporean Mr Daren Tang (Law '97) has also been appointed Director General of the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), and Singapore Management University professor Winston Chow (Arts &



We have to think of ourselves as part of humanity, working towards a world where we do not have to fight with one another.

University Professor Wang Gungwu

Social Sciences '02, MSocSci '05) was elected Co-Chair of Working Group II for the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC).

Singapore's active participation stems not just from a need to protect national interests. It is also rooted in a belief that the country could play the role of a good global citizen. This might sound lofty but could very well be the 'north star' for Singapore's journey ahead. As University Professor Wang Gungwu (Arts '53, MA '56, HonDLitt '22) shared in his concluding statement at NUS Homecoming 2024, "The very idea of a nation-state is essentially very exclusive," he said. "It is 'our nation' against other nations." Noting that the concept of the nation-state emerged only in the late 18th century, Prof Wang remarked that it has led to the illusion that all nations should be equally sovereign and important. "If every country, big or small, only thinks of its national interest, the world will always be in trouble," cautioned

the 12th S R Nathan Fellow for the Study of Singapore. "We have to think of ourselves as part of humanity, working towards a world where we do not have to fight with one another."

Prof Wang highlighted the fact that Singapore's unique position as both a nation-state and global city is what has saved the country from suffering the fates of other small nation-states. "Singapore has proven and shown our neighbours how we deal with all the different values within our society. Our role is not for each of us to fight for nationalism, but always to think about what we have in common, to make an effort to understand each other's problems, and share with one another. These lessons become more urgent as the world becomes smaller," he said. "We can instil in our young to believe that our primary purpose is to serve the world. This is our global responsibility as part of humanity." **A**



SINGAPORE TAKES VERY SERIOUSLY THE THREAT OF CLIMATE CHANGE AND SEA-LEVEL RISE. WE HAVE COMMITTED OURSELVES TO THE GOAL OF ACHIEVING NET ZERO EMISSIONS BY 2050. INTERNATIONALLY, WE PLAY A POSITIVE AND FACILITATIVE ROLE IN NEGOTIATIONS ON CLIMATE, BIODIVERSITY AND THE OCEANS.

Emeritus Professor Tommy Koh

WHAT DOES A REFRESHED SINGAPORE DREAM LOOK LIKE TO YOU?

"[It] is one where Singapore becomes a global, Southeast Asian city. It is a home to Singaporeans where each of us has opportunities to strive for a meaningful and satisfying life. Yet, we will be more integrated into Southeast Asia, bringing the best of the region together. At the same time, we will welcome those who have come here to build for themselves and contribute to Singapore's growth."

KEITH YAP (Yale-NUS '21, Public Policy MPP '21)

"Achieving the delicate balance between maintaining the economic and developmental success that has made Singapore a global marvel, and fostering empathy, inclusivity and fairness — hallmarks of advanced societies — will require ongoing effort and calibration. The key challenge ahead is to sustain our growth engines while ensuring Singapore remains the best home for its people. We must support diverse career and life aspirations, and provide the resources for all citizens to achieve their personal best in every field."

BENJAMIN LEE (Arts & Social Sciences + USP '06)

"[It] is about maximising each person's potential, regardless of the path chosen or season of life. Even if we are no longer part of the workforce, we can still make a meaningful impact by fostering a growth mindset and engaging in community projects that go beyond ourselves. Though times may change, there remain valuable life lessons to pass on to the next generation — stories of resilience that inspire and uplift others."

CHEONG LAI SIONG (Arts & Social Sciences '86)

"[It] is one that embraces sustainable development, inclusivity and quality of life, inspiring us to pursue our passions and become the ideal versions of ourselves. Success will be determined by our unique yardsticks, through the purpose and meaning we derive from our chosen pursuits. We will see a society inclusive of all talents and abilities, facilitating social mobility and leading with empathy."

KUN SHAN SUM
(Engineering '07, MSc (Environmental Engineering) '11)

"[It] would centre on building a society that values resilience, where social and economic mobility are accessible to all, and where innovation drives solutions for sustainable urban living. It would emphasise a community that thrives through collaboration, where environmental consciousness and social inclusivity are core to our identity, ensuring a quality of life that meets both present and future needs."

VEERAPPAN SWAMINATHAN
(Engineering '11, MSc (IPM) '21)

WHAT ARE THE BIGGEST CHALLENGES SINGAPORE FACES TODAY?

"To me, [it] is the growing social divide. Social mobility is reduced when the gap between the 'haves' and 'have-nots' grows bigger and bigger, subsequently reinforcing the notion that 'the rich get richer, while the poor get poorer'. Over time, this can damage our social cohesion, potentially leading to increased social tensions and conflicts."

LIM ZONG HUI
(Arts & Social Sciences '22)

"In the international context, Singapore must navigate the complexities of many inter-country tensions, ongoing global conflicts, protectionism, rising nationalism and the climate crisis. Domestically, we have to maintain our delicate social fabric while dealing with the challenges of an ageing population, rising costs and partisan politics."

AKANKSHA BATURA PAI
(Business + USP '14, MSc (Management) '14)

"One of the biggest challenges... is [the] ageing population. With a very low and declining birth rate, alongside rising life expectancy, we are confronted with a) a shrinking workforce, which affects economic growth; b) increased demand for labour, creating tensions around immigration; and c) growing pressure on healthcare and social services, which strains our limited resources."

LOH CHEE KIN (MBA '99)

"Our biggest challenges are a combination of our resilience and our ability to respond to the many uncertainties in the global environment. Being a small country, we need to be positive and optimistic, whilst being prepared for contingencies that can threaten Singapore's existence should scenarios change. This continual state of being on our toes and staying nimble whilst remaining inclusive, gracious and big-hearted is not an easy balance to maintain."

LIM SWEE KIM (Computing '88, MBA '98)



FUTURE FORWARD

We asked alumni to share their perspectives on the pressing challenges facing Singapore in the years ahead — and their vision for a brighter future.



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LEVELLING THE FIELD

Broadening the prospects of students across different disciplines through the gift of education continues to be a priority for **Mr Geoffrey Yu (Arts & Social Sciences '69)**.



A

S A YOUNG SOCIOLOGY UNDERGRADUATE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF SINGAPORE (NOW NUS) in the late

1960s, Mr Geoffrey Yu may not have envisioned the far-reaching impact his education would have on his life. Now, decades later, Mr Yu is a dedicated supporter of his alma mater, giving generously to ensure that future generations can benefit from the transformative power of education. Central to his giving philosophy is legacy giving, which allows Mr Yu to make an enduring impact on the University and its students.

After graduating, Mr Yu embarked on a distinguished career in Singapore's foreign service, with postings in Hong Kong, Tokyo and New York. He later held roles as Senior Specialist Advisor to the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Law; Deputy Chairman of the Board of Governors of the Intellectual Property Academy of Singapore; and Deputy Director General at the World Intellectual Property Organization in Geneva. His professional journey reinforced his commitment to the ideals of education and public service.

A HEART FOR THE ARTS

Legacy giving has become the cornerstone of Mr Yu's philanthropic approach. Through gifts to various faculties, Mr Yu has contributed to an array of student-focused initiatives, including bursaries, scholarships and prizes. His aim is to support students who may lack the financial means to pursue higher education but show potential and dedication. "Education is a powerful equaliser," Mr Yu explained. "It opens doors and has the power to transform lives. Legacy giving allows me to be part of that transformation for years to come."

Recently, Mr Yu established the Geoffrey SK Yu Prize for Cello Performance at the Yong Siew Toh Conservatory of Music (YSTCM). This annual endowed prize — awarded to an exceptional graduating cello student — reflects Mr Yu's commitment to the arts, a cause close to his heart. "As a long-time supporter of YSTCM, I've delighted in witnessing the growth of its talented students," he said. "I hope the Prize encourages young musicians at a pivotal moment in their careers."

His dedication to legacy giving extends to a broad appreciation for the arts, which he sees as vital to society. "The arts foster community, express the soul of a nation, and encourage intercultural understanding," he reflected. "It's essential to support young artists and give them the tools to flourish."

GIFTS FOR GENERATIONS

Mr Yu's generosity reaches beyond the arts, impacting students in sociology and history. By establishing long-term support structures, Mr Yu's contributions will shape both current and future generations of students across fields. Through his legacy gifts, Mr Yu exemplifies thoughtful giving that will shape lives for years to come. "Education shaped who I am," he shared. "I want to help others realise their potential." **A**

📌 **If you have questions on how to make a legacy gift to NUS, please call 6516 8000 or email legacygift@nus.edu.sg. You can also scan this QR code for more information.**



YOUR LEGACY THEIR FUTURE

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A legacy gift is a planned gift, often made through wills, trusts or insurance. In Singapore, you can also make a planned gift by nominating the charitable organisation of your choice to receive your CPF savings.

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➔ WHO HE IS

Mr Peh Shing Huei is a Singaporean author and journalist. He has penned several acclaimed works, including *When the Party Ends: China's Leaps and Stumbles after the Beijing Olympics*, the winner of the 2016 Singapore Literature Prize (non-fiction); and bestsellers *Tall Order: The Goh Chok Tong Story*, a biography of Emeritus Senior Minister Mr Goh Chok Tong (Arts '64, HonLLD '15); and *Neither Civil Nor Servant: The Philip Yeo Story*. He is a founding partner of content and communications agency *The Nutgraf*.

EXPANDING THE SINGAPORE STORY — One Pioneer At A Time

Award-winning author **Mr Peh Shing Huei (Arts & Social Sciences '00)** is on a mission to contribute to the nation's historical record by sharing new perspectives on the lives of its most notable figures.



AFTER HIS FIRST INTERVIEW WITH ONE OF SINGAPORE'S MOST COLOURFUL CIVIL SERVANTS, Mr Philip Yeo (Engineering MSc '74, HonDLitt '11), Mr Peh Shing Huei found himself desperately searching for paracetamol tablets to cure a pounding headache. Mr Yeo — a former Permanent Secretary known for his maverick ways — had spoken so fast and jumped from topic to topic so quickly that Mr Peh was left physically and mentally drained after the encounter. "It was the most difficult interview I had ever done," Mr Peh, 49, recalled. But it was exactly this kind of larger-than-life personality that made the former Economic Development Board and Agency for Science, Technology and Research chairman such a compelling subject for a book — and Mr Peh knew he was onto something special.

Published in 2016, *Neither Civil Nor Servant* kickstarted Mr Peh's journey from journalist to one of Singapore's most respected biographers. With a career that has seen him profile the nation's leaders and captains of industry, Mr Peh now tells the stories that shaped Singapore.

FROM SCRIBE TO STORYTELLER

Having graduated from the National University of Singapore (NUS) in 2000, Mr Peh joined *The Straits Times* as a reporter. After spending 15 years in the newsroom — covering a range of beats from sports to politics — he felt it was time for a change. He still loved writing, but was ready to step out of the daily grind of the newsroom. "I didn't know exactly what I wanted to do next, but I knew I still wanted to be involved in what I was good at — interviewing and writing," he said. As fate would have it,

just as he was preparing to leave *The Straits Times*, his former boss asked if he would be interested in writing a book about Mr Philip Yeo. Intrigued by the project and the man, Mr Peh said "yes" almost immediately.

Mr Peh already had experience writing a full-length non-fiction book. His debut effort, *When the Party Ends: China's Leaps and Stumbles After the Beijing Olympics*, was published in 2013 and came about during his time as the China bureau chief for *The Straits Times*. "It is quite common for foreign correspondents to write a book after their stint in China," he explained. "I was inspired by that and thought it would be interesting to do something similar — and that's how *When the Party Ends* came about." The book explored China's evolution and the challenges it faced after the global spotlight of the Olympics faded.

Photos courtesy of Peh Shing Huei

There are so many stories about Singapore out there that haven't been told yet, and I'm excited to keep finding new ways to share them.

A PASSION IGNITED

The jump from journalism to books felt natural for Mr Peh, especially given the depth of research, interviewing and writing skills he had honed at NUS and at *The Straits Times*. Majoring in political science and sociology, Mr Peh became fascinated by the world around him and the way societies function. "NUS gave me a foundation in understanding how the world works, and that curiosity led me to pursue a career in journalism," he explained.

It was at NUS that Mr Peh first realised he had a flair for writing in English. Coming from a Mandarin-speaking family, he was not particularly confident in his English skills when he started university. But over time, he developed a love for words and storytelling. "I discovered that I enjoyed writing essays and doing research," he said. "It was a turning point for me."

This foundation proved invaluable when Mr Peh started working on books. But writing a book proved a new kind of challenge, especially when it involved sitting down for months at a time, structuring thousands of words into a coherent, engaging story. "It's like



Mr Peh with Emeritus Senior Minister Goh, who is Chairman of the Governing Board of the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, during a dialogue at NUS about the books *Tall Order* and *Standing Tall*.



Mr Peh's bestsellers include his first biography *Neither Civil Nor Servant*; *Tall Order: The Goh Chok Tong Story*; *When the Party Ends*, detailing the challenges faced by China following the 2008 Beijing Olympics; and children's book *Pineapple, Let's Roll!*

writing a really long news feature, but with tens of thousands of words!"

TALES OF TITANS

Since *Neither Civil Nor Servant: The Philip Yeo Story*, Mr Peh has written several more books, including the best-selling two-volume biography of Singapore's second Prime Minister, *Tall Order: The Goh Chok Tong Story* and *Standing Tall: The Goh Chok Tong Years*. Each project has allowed him to dig deep into the lives of some of Singapore's most significant figures. In their own way, Mr Peh's books have helped to enrich the nation's historical record by plugging gaps in the narrative. Through his research, he uncovers the personal anecdotes and behind-the-scenes moments that bring these public figures to life. "I want to tell a good story as objectively as possible," he emphasised. "I'm not here to write about Superman, but rather a person who has had his share of failures, mistakes and inglorious moments."

A recent project, *The Last Fools*, profiles eight civil servants who worked closely with Singapore's founding Prime Minister Mr Lee Kuan Yew (HonLLD '13). These were the often-overlooked individuals who executed the policies that transformed the nation, from cleaning up the Singapore River to building public housing.

What keeps Mr Peh motivated is the excitement of discovering new stories to tell — but only ones that he feels deeply for. "I need to be interested

in the person's story before I agree to write about them. We are going to be spending a lot of time together, so we need to be comfortable with each other," he said. That interest shines through in his body of work. Whether it is navigating the complexities of Mr Goh Chok Tong's career or the family dynamics of billionaire businessman Mr Kwek Leng Beng, his books are filled with rich, engaging stories that bring these personalities to life.

SPREADING THE WORD

It is not just political and business leaders that Mr Peh is interested in. His recent foray into children's literature shows his versatility as a writer. One of his latest projects — a children's book featuring a pineapple — was inspired by Singapore's presidential elections, where he was a member of Mr Tharman Shanmugaratnam's campaign team. "I thought it would be a fun way to translate some of the positive messages from the election into lessons for kids," he explained.

As a founding partner of content and communications agency *The Nutgraf*, Mr Peh splits his time between running the business and working on book projects. As always, he is on the lookout for new tales to tell. "There are so many stories about Singapore that haven't been told, and I'm excited to keep finding new ways to share them," he said. "It would be meaningful to keep contributing chapters to the Singapore Story." **A**

➔ WHO SHE IS

Ms Jana Jusman's culinary adventures have taken her from the halls of NUS to the bustling kitchen of Tanjong Pagar's hottest new restaurant, Ingleside. With a deep passion for food science and a relentless drive to push the boundaries of traditional dining, Ms Jusman is someone to watch in Singapore's bustling F&B scene.

The Magic of Flavour

Ms Jana Jusman (Science '18) melds ancient fermentation techniques with modern culinary creativity. In the process, she is redefining what it means for something to taste good.

T ANJONG PAGAR HAS GAINED A REPUTATION AS A HOTSPOT FOR INNOVATIVE DINING CONCEPTS.

A recent addition is Ingleside, a trendy eatery that has put a fresh, modern twist on fermented foods.

"Fermentation has been used for centuries to create Asian staples like kimchi, miso and soy sauce," says Ms Jana Jusman, who is the restaurant's Head Fermentation Specialist. "These foods not only preserve ingredients but also develop rich, umami flavours essential to Asian culinary traditions."

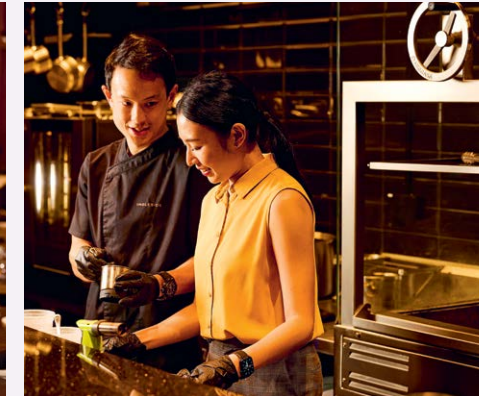
The team at Ingleside incorporates these classic elements of fermentation into modern dining: dishes they whip up include a miso made from the trimmings of the restaurant's brioche and their take on *garum*, a fermented fish sauce, using alternative

ingredients. These ferments are used extensively across the menu at Ingleside to bring out the flavours of their dishes. "We do not serve these ferments on their own, but without them, the dishes just wouldn't taste the same," she emphasised.

Early reviews of Ingleside have been overwhelmingly positive, with *The New Paper* summing it up best, writing, "Ingleside isn't just a restaurant; it's a dare to the culinary world — a declaration that tradition and innovation can coexist, and the results are absolutely electrifying."

FINDING FERMENTATION

It can be easy to write off fermentation as a passing fad. But one just has to look at the level of rigorous study and precision that goes into the process to realise that it is anything but. Ms Jusman



Together with her husband, Ingleside's Head Chef Louis Chan, Ms Jusman has embarked on a journey of discovery and culinary experimentation that is underpinned by a strong commitment to sustainability.

WHAT'S COOKING

As Ingleside continues to evolve, Ms Jusman's role has expanded from fermentation to include education. She now plays a crucial part in briefing the restaurant's staff on the fermentation processes, ensuring that they can confidently explain the unique flavours to customers. "It's important to me that everyone on the team understands the story behind the food we serve," she said. "Fermentation can be a bit of a mystery to some people, so we want to educate and engage our guests, and not just impress them with the end-result."

Looking ahead, Ms Jusman and her husband have ambitious plans to further integrate fermentation into their culinary offerings, including the possibility of incorporating fermented elements into their cocktail menu. There's more innovation to come, she promises. "The possibilities are endless. We're just scratching the surface of what can be achieved with these ancient techniques." **A**

points to her time at NUS, where she first studied the culinary form as a food science major. "Each agent reacts with its base differently, and things like temperature and humidity all play a part in how a ferment will turn out," she explained. "There's a real precision to the process that takes time to perfect."

She had the chance to put theory to the test during her Honours programme, where she worked on Sachi, the world's first wine made from soy whey. "Working on that project was a game-changer for me," she recalled. "I was captivated by the way a simple microbiological process could transform the flavour and properties of a product."

That experience made Ms Jusman realise that fermentation was her calling. Following work stints at food companies, she decided to join forces with her husband, Chef Louis Chan, and they opened Ingleside together in May 2024. Here, the duo has seamlessly blended their expertise, with Ms Jusman overseeing the fermentation process,

and her husband crafting innovative dishes that showcase the depth and complexity of these unique flavours. "We wanted to create a restaurant that celebrates the art of wood-fired cooking, dry-ageing, and, of course, fermentation," she explained. "It's not just about the end-product, but the entire journey of transformation that fascinates us."

One of the standout dishes on their menu is the Heirloom Tomato Salad. "We serve the salad with both fresh and fermented tomatoes," described Ms Jusman. "This allows our guests to experience the interplay of flavours and textures, and really understand how fermentation can enhance the natural qualities of an ingredient."

The magic of Ms Jusman's ferments takes place in a dedicated room in Ingleside, tucked away within the kitchen. Housed in here are specialised equipment like fermentation vessels and temperature and humidity controls, alongside jars of fermentation agents like yeast and sugars. The team that works in this room is fuelled not only by creativity but also by a commitment to sustainability.

"We're always looking for ways to repurpose ingredients that would otherwise be discarded," Ms Jusman said. "Whether it's coffee grounds or bread trimmings, we try to find creative ways to incorporate them into our ferments and dishes."

Fermentation can be a bit of a mystery to people, so we want to educate and engage our guests, and not just impress them with the end-result.



WATCH

Ms Jusman tells us more about the use of fermentation techniques in a video. Scan this QR code.



An example of Ms Jusman's culinary alchemy: Spanish Carabinero Prawn flambadou with dry-aged beef fat, brushed with shrimp rose garum. (Photo courtesy of Ingleside.)

WHO HE IS

Mr Anuj Jagannathan is the CEO of Propelurs Consulting. The following is an adaptation of his talk on negotiation strategies delivered at NUS Homecoming on 21 September 2024.



NEGOTIATION IS A NUANCED SKILL – COMBINING BOTH ART AND SCIENCE – that plays a pivotal role in business and personal interactions. While it is a vast topic, mastering just a few key strategies can significantly improve your ability to achieve positive outcomes and long-term success. Do these well, and you can handle even the most challenging negotiations with confidence, helping you secure better agreements and build stronger relationships.

Consider a scenario where a department manager requests a detailed 20-page report on employee engagement within five business days. You believe that meeting this deadline might be unrealistic. By applying the following five strategies, you can navigate this negotiation effectively.

MASTERING NEGOTIATIONS: 5 ESSENTIAL STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS

Learn what it takes to achieve positive outcomes, from expert **Mr Anuj Jagannathan (EMBA '16)**.

1 Preparation: The Key to Success

Preparation is crucial for a successful negotiation – it equips you with the knowledge to make informed decisions, anticipate objections and generate creative solutions. As the saying goes, “Failing to prepare is preparing to fail.”

Steps for effective preparation:

- **Research and Gather Information:** Collect relevant data about the manager’s requirements and any constraints. Understand the context and specifics of the report.
- **Understand the Other Party:** Learn about the preferences, leadership styles and goals of the manager and other decision-makers involved. This will help tailor your approach.
- **Develop a Plan:** Create a negotiation strategy that includes alternatives, key points and logistical considerations. Rehearse various scenarios to be prepared for different directions the negotiation might take.

2 Understand the ‘Why’: Digging Deeper

An appreciation of the underlying reasons behind the manager’s request is crucial. This approach allows you to address specific interests and find mutually beneficial solutions.

How to explore the ‘Why’:

- **Ask Open-Ended Questions:** Inquire about the flexibility of the deadline, the necessity of the 20-page length and the type of content expected. For instance, ask if the report can include photos of team events.
- **Active Listening:** Pay close attention to the manager’s responses. Paraphrase and summarise their points to ensure that you have understood their needs accurately. For example, why is there a need to submit this in five days?
- **Reflect and Process:** As you gather information, formulate potential solutions and ask additional questions to clarify and support your ideas. This shows that you value their perspective and fosters open communication.

For example, you might discover that the report needs to be reviewed by a peer before submission and that the manager is aiming for an award for the best report. Understanding these details can help you customise your approach.



Mr Anuj touching on the finer points of negotiating during his talk at NUS.

3 Assess Alternatives: Your Backup Plan

Having a ‘Plan B’ is crucial. This strengthens your negotiating position by providing options if the current negotiation does not meet your needs.

Possible alternatives in this current scenario could include:

- **Travelling for an important client meeting**
- **Preparing for a crucial project stakeholder meeting with executives, or**
- **Taking leave from work**

Having viable alternatives gives you the confidence to negotiate from a stronger position and walk away if the terms are not favourable.

4 Be Creative: Craft Innovative Solutions

Displaying creativity when negotiating can lead to mutually beneficial outcomes that might not be immediately obvious. By thinking outside the box, you can address the needs of both parties effectively. Such an approach can also foster a collaborative atmosphere.

Creative solutions might include:

- **A Kick-off Meeting:** Arrange a meeting with the manager and peer reviewer to clarify requirements and expectations from both sides.
- **Reviewing Criteria:** Examine past award-winning reports to understand what made them successful. Align your report with these criteria.
- **Reprioritising Tasks:** Consider postponing less-critical meetings or tasks to focus on the report.
- **Staggering the Submission:** Send parts of the report for review in stages, so that you can manage feedback more effectively and reduce last-minute pressure.

- **Delegating and Giving Recognition:** Distribute tasks among team members and consider offering recognition or rewards for their contributions. This can improve morale and efficiency.

5 Close Properly: Finalise the Agreement

Closing the negotiation properly ensures that all parties are clear about the final agreement and their respective commitments, and helps to avoid potential future disputes. It involves summarising key points and confirming a mutual understanding.

Steps for closing effectively:

- **Summarise and Confirm:** Recap all agreed points and actions. Ensure that both you and the manager are on the same page regarding what has been decided.
- **Document Terms:** Create a formal written record of the agreement. Share this document with all stakeholders for review to ensure everyone is clear about the terms.
- **Sign-Off:** Obtain acknowledgement from all parties involved. Outline any immediate actions required, set deadlines, and schedule follow-up meetings to ensure smooth implementation and address any issues.

Negotiation is a daily part of personal and professional life – whether you are discussing a new contract with a client, clarifying project requirements and expectations with your manager, seeking funding from your boss or debating a new furniture purchase with your spouse. Mastering these five strategies can help you navigate negotiations more effectively and achieve results that benefit all parties involved. **A**

➔ WHAT IT IS

Designed by a pair of NUS alumni, Lingosnap is a learning platform that makes mastering languages engaging, effective and fun. Combining interactive exercises with real-life scenarios, Lingosnap also fosters a vibrant community, allowing users to connect with native speakers.

A Shot at Learning

Pictures are now worth a thousand words (in another language), thanks to **Lingosnap**, an innovative instructional platform for mastering new tongues.

PICKING UP A NEW LANGUAGE CAN BE VERY CHALLENGING FOR PEOPLE WITH DIFFERENT

LEARNING NEEDS. Traditional language learning methods often rely on static curricula and rote learning, which can be disengaging and ineffective for many learners.

Lingosnap, a cutting-edge language learning app by Lalia Private Limited, is making waves in the world of education with the clever use of generative AI. Lingosnap is designed to make learning languages more engaging and interactive. Through its

innovative app, users can take photos of objects or landmarks of interest to them, which are then converted into vocabulary used in the context of a sentence.

Additionally, the app colour-codes sentences to help Lingosnap users learn sentence structures and grammar rules. This method not only personalises the learning experience but also keeps users motivated by integrating their everyday experiences and interests into the language learning process.

Mr Phang Wei Jun (Design and Environment '20), CEO of Lingosnap, explained, "We want to make learning a new language as enjoyable as possible for the users so that they won't feel the pain they had in the past through traditional methods."

Setting a new standard for language education by prioritising engagement and practicality, Lingosnap's AI-driven features create a learning environment that adapts to the learner's individual experiences and preferences. "By using the technologies that we have today, we can give agency to the learner to customise their learning and make the experience more personal," shared Mr Francis Lee (Computer Engineering '20), CTO of Lingosnap.

HOW 'SPEED DATING' SPARKED SUCCESS

The founders, who met through a 'speed dating' session within the NUS Graduate Research Innovation Programme (GRIP),

Lalia co-founders Mr Francis Lee (left) and Mr Phang Wei Jun at BLOCK71 Singapore.



explored the idea for Lingosnap from shared personal struggles with language learning and a desire to solve learning roadblocks using technology. The session paired entrepreneurs with similar ideas and complementary skills to take the next steps in their entrepreneurial journey.

During the initial stages of their company, the founders visited schools in Japan — not just in major towns but also in rural areas — where they taught English to children. "We travelled to a small town east of Nagoya and climbed 30 minutes up a mountain to teach in a small school," Mr Phang recounted. "When we got there, the children were learning English using Singapore landmarks. It was fascinating to see how excited they were when they understood the context of their learning through our presence there as Singaporeans." This experience made the pair realise the importance of 'context' in language learning and inspired them to create a tool that allows learners to create their own context to learn a language.

This blend of experiences and motivations set the foundation for Lingosnap's mission: to bridge the gap between struggling language learners and fluency.

"In the app, users can take pictures, which will be converted into vocabulary and learning points in their learning album," Mr Lee shared. "Over time, they can use these key phrases to practise, and we can generate more material with sentences or related vocabulary to interact with the material better."

NO ONE CAN PREPARE YOU TO BE AN ENTREPRENEUR

Starting a tech-driven language learning company comes with its challenges. The founders shared that the journey involved overcoming numerous hurdles, from product development to scaling the solution. They emphasised the importance of mentorship and collaboration within the NUS ecosystem, which helped them navigate the complexities of running a start-up. The diverse skill sets within their team — balancing technical and business expertise — were crucial in building a sustainable and scalable company.

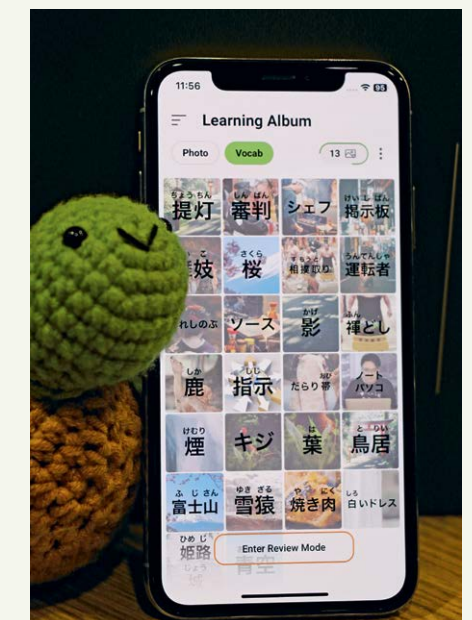
Our goal is to make language learning enjoyable and accessible for everyone.

Mr Phang Wei Jun, CEO of Lingosnap

Lingosnap has also benefitted from THE HANGAR, NUS Enterprise's on-campus incubator, and the Generative AI Accelerate Programme launched by NUS Enterprise (through BLOCK71) and Microsoft.

"No one can prepare you to be an entrepreneur. We received quite a bit of mentorship and workshops that gave us a crash course on all the jargon and technicalities of the company," Mr Lee noted. "We're glad to have received support from the ecosystem, which we still benefit from today."

Lingosnap is continuously evolving, with plans to add more languages to their suite and new features such as speaking practice, which will teach users how to speak naturally, modelled after native speakers. This feature, developed with insights from experienced language lecturers at NUS, aims to enhance users' pronunciation and long-term retention, making the learning experience even more effective. ▲



Lingosnap's learning album stores images and vocabulary, making it easy for users to review and reinforce their new language skills.

This article first appeared in Issue #43 (Oct - Dec 2024) of SPARKS, a publication of NUS Enterprise.

Ridge View Residential College Celebrates 10 Years

 30 August 2024

The Ridge View Residential College (RVRC) 10th Anniversary Gala Dinner was a heartfelt celebration bringing together past and present members of the college community to reflect on a decade of shared memories and growth. The event honoured RVRC's journey, evoking nostalgia as alumni, faculty and staff reminisced about the pivotal moments that defined their time at the college.

The evening kicked off with a commemorative speech by RVRC College Master Associate Professor Sim Tick Ngee

(Arts & Social Sciences '90), who paid tribute to the college's achievements. "From expanding our community to celebrating our first ticketed musical, the college has achieved so much," added Mr Cyrus Lim Lek Wee (Science '21). "It was truly heartwarming to witness RVRC's remarkable growth over the past decade!"

Following this, the audience was treated to musical performances by RVRC's music interest group Jukebox, and the winners of the RV10 Song Writing competition, Mr Gaston Liew and Mr Aaron Lim. Speeches by RVRC Rector

Dr Noeleen Heyzer (Arts & Social Sciences '71, MSocSci '73) and RVRC's inaugural Director of Studies, Associate Professor Lee Kooi Cheng (Arts & Social Sciences MA '94), highlighted the college's impact over the years. Guests were further entertained by a vibrant dance performance from the NUS Dance Ensemble.

A video message from the founding College Master, Professor Adekunle Olusola Adeyeye, reminded everyone of the hard work, challenges and perseverance that went into building the strong foundation upon which the college has flourished.

"Witnessing the different generations of the RVRC community come together to honour the college that has served as our home away from home has been a truly heartwarming experience," said Mr Brandon Lau, Project Director for the RV10 Gala Dinner.

The evening culminated in a joyful cake-cutting ceremony, uniting staff and students in celebration. To end the night, a special video montage showcased cherished memories from both current and past staff, as well as alumni.

Reflecting on the evening, Mr Zhang Xiangyu Oliver (Business '24) said, "It was great to reconnect with the people who made my 4-year journey in RVRC memorable, and to celebrate the countless milestones of the college since its inception."

The college thanks the Student Organising Committee for their hard work in planning the event, as well as the event attendees for commemorating the wonderful journey. Here's to another amazing 10 years and beyond!



Alumni Advocates Connect

 23 October 2024



Professor Bernard CY Tan (Computing '89, Science MSc '91, Science PhD '95), Senior Vice Provost (Undergraduate Education), discussed recent curricular changes at NUS that will better prepare students for a changing workforce, emphasising the University's push for interdisciplinary learning.

The event also included presentations from Associate Professor Wong Mun Loke (Dentistry '99, EMBA '11), Vice Dean (Academic Affairs) at the Faculty of Dentistry, on the NUSOne initiative, and Adjunct Professor Virginia Cha (Engineering PhD '11), on the new NUS Distinguished Seniors Fellowship Programme.

The evening concluded with an Ask-Me-Anything session with NUS President Professor Tan Eng Chye (Science '85), moderated by AAB member Mr Soh Yi Da (Arts & Social Sciences + USP '14). The insightful discussion covered a range of subjects, from the importance of experiential learning and the informal curriculum to the encouragement of alumni support for current students and University initiatives.

NUS Alumni Relations held its first Alumni Advocates Connect event on 23 October, bringing together University leaders and alumni advocates to share insights and explore new ideas to strengthen the NUS alumni network. Held at the Shaw Foundation Alumni House, the networking and information-sharing session was attended by approximately 100 guests, including NUS Alumni Advisory Board (AAB) members, alumni group representatives, class ambassadors, student leaders, Deans, Masters and Heads of Departments.

During the gathering, Chief Alumni Officer Ms Ovidia Lim-Rajaram (Arts & Social Sciences '89) provided an overview of the NUS alumni community and previewed upcoming events to look forward to, including more iterations of the global NUS Innovation Forum and the NUS120 celebrations.



The AlumNUS thanks all contributors for the articles and photos in Alumni Happenings, showcasing our vibrant alumni community.

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<p>Zam : dessertbar</p> <p>10% DISCOUNT on drinks, savoury, and desserts</p>	<p>Poke Theory</p> <p>10% OFF total bill – redeemable at Poke Theory, One@KentRidge</p>	<p>Sourbombe Bakery</p> <p>10% OFF total bill – redeemable at the One Holland Village outlet</p>
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	<p>Shaw Foundation Alumni House</p> <p>50% OFF venue rental and complimentary use of Wi-Fi</p>	



Scan to view more **merchants**



WHO SHE IS

Mrs Hwee Keng Maeder (née Teng) serves on the board of Wakatobi Resort and Liveboard Yacht. Before Wakatobi, Mrs Maeder was a relationship manager with AIG Private Bank and Credit Suisse. She is the mother of three sons, including Singapore's youngest Olympic medallist, Maximilian Maeder.

MOTHER KNOWS BEST

Mrs Hwee Keng Maeder (Arts & Social Sciences '94) learnt to think differently at university, a quality she has applied to her life — and when parenting a world champion.

TEXT BY THERESA TAN
PHOTOS COURTESY OF HWEE KENG MAEDER

When Maximilian Maeder emerged as Singapore's Olympic medallist on National Day last year — taking home the bronze in the Men's Formula Kite — all eyes fell on him and his parents, and their unusual approach to raising children. NUS alumna Mrs Hwee Keng Maeder, 52, and her Swiss-German husband Valentin Maeder, 60, had chosen to homeschool their three sons.

Max wowed Singaporeans when he spoke fluently in four languages in interviews: English, Mandarin, German and French. "We're not a typical family, in that we don't sit down to meals together regularly, for example," Mrs Maeder shared with *The AlumNUS*. "But because of our earlier choices — all those years we never outsourced the raising of our kids — they are very close to us now," she added. Max, 18, speaks to his parents daily, no matter where



The Maeder family, (from left) Hwee Keng, Max, Karl, Valentin, and (front) Valentin Jr.

he is in the world. His brother, Karl, 15, who lives and trains in Switzerland, does likewise. Then there is Valentin Jr, 8, who is the baby of the family.

Charting Their Own Course

While homeschooling today still raises some eyebrows, it was virtually unheard of when the Maeders had Max. "We followed what we wanted to do, and we wanted the same things: we wanted them to be close to us, we wanted happy children, we wanted to equip them with certain skills. It's not about content learning, but meta-learning," Mrs Maeder explained. "We were not anti-establishment. We just wanted content that wasn't available." Max did online learning from the age of 8, while Karl began at 6. "The hardest part is not the choice, but the opinions you face," said Mrs Maeder.

The couple faced resistance from her parents as well as his — Mrs Maeder's late mother-in-law was a schoolteacher. But for the Maeders, it boiled down to what they both defined as 'education'. "People think of education as a milestone, a certification. But education comes in



Mrs Maeder with a younger Max.

many forms," she said. "The value of school is in shaping the thought process and analytical thinking, to have a certain way to solve problems. With home education, we teach values and manners, so you get children who are considerate." She added that her husband instilled self-confidence in their children. "It's a foundation on which to build any education. I think these are the basics: tenacity and grit. That's the number one thing you need."

The fruit of their unorthodox choice is obvious in Max, whose



A world champion kitefoiler, Max has benefitted from his parents' approach to learning.

homeschool journey began when he chose to master kiteboarding, then kitefoiling. Being homeschooled afforded him the time needed to train.

Some have mistaken Mrs Maeder for a 'tiger mum'. She is, in fact, the very opposite of one. When asked how it feels to raise a champion, she said with a smile, "You can ask me 10 years later." She chooses not to define success by output. "I am not outcome-oriented — I only worry about his safety," she revealed to *The AlumNUS*. "Max just happens to be a champion. You can't raise all your kids the same way — we need to parent according to what the child needs. All parents are proud of their kids. It's just that my pride gets a public platform. I was proud of Max before he became an Olympian."

Learning By Doing

Mrs Maeder graduated from NUS in 1994 with a degree in sociology and social work. "I wasn't a super student. I never went to any jam and hop," she recalled. "I lived in the East, so by the time the jam and hop started, I'd have to leave or risk missing the feeder service to catch my bus home."

Growing up with a "very strict father", her NUS experience may not have been filled with adventures in the halls of residence, but Mrs Maeder remembers some things that made her undergraduate years special. "I didn't get to stay in the hall, but I did get to attend the orientation camp," she said. "It was really fun, and I made some very good friends.

Let kids have a chance at childhood, let them build strong mental health for the rest of their lives. Just be that safe space for your children.

I'm still very much in touch with one of them, Elsa." Mrs Maeder was also in the NUS Lifeguard Corps. "Lifeguard training was very fun. We were a close-knit group," she recalled. "We would run marathons together as a group — once, I outran some boys."

What left a big impact on Mrs Maeder from her undergraduate days was studying under Emeritus Professor Chua Beng Huat from the Department of Sociology. "He was very interesting; he did a lot of not-very-typical things," she said. "He would give us 'excuses' to go to bars for research, for example. When we approached a topic, he wouldn't just present the theory; he would say 'Let's go out and do it'. Prof Chua made a difference to how we think today. He contributed a lot to my mindset. He taught me how to think out of the box and to question things."

Mrs Maeder recently reconnected with Prof Chua, thanks to Elsa. "When I came back to Singapore, we met up, and we discussed current issues," she said with a grin. "I enjoyed it very much — he is very dear to us."

Building Safe Spaces to Thrive

'Out of the box' is a good term to describe Mrs Maeder. "We have a complex way of living," she said. "I've always had a connection to Singapore; I'm always coming and going. We have a Swiss family and then we have Indonesia, where Wakatobi Dive Resort is located." The Maeders work in the family-owned resort in Southeast Sulawesi. "In the early years of Max and Karl's sporting careers, I would go with them to their competitions — we had a very mobile lifestyle," she shared. "Now with Max competing for

Singapore, we spend a lot more time here." Meanwhile, because Karl represents Switzerland in Formula Kite, he lives with family there.

"If there's one thing I want to say, it's that our society has advanced to the point parents can say, 'Let's get back to basics,'" she shared. "Let kids have a chance at childhood, let them build strong mental health for the rest of their lives. Just be that safe space for your children."

Mrs Maeder's hope for her boys is that they will achieve what they set out to achieve, and take something away from their journeys, so that they can share the joy, as well as motivate and inspire others. "I hope my children will be remembered as good, considerate and kind," she said. "And that they impact as many lives as they can."



Mrs Maeder during her time at NUS, where she experienced many happy memories and was encouraged to venture beyond her comfort zone.

Ms Janice Hu (right) pictured with her husband and children on the Chao Phraya River. Following work stints in China and the United States, Ms Hu has made a new home with her family in Bangkok.



As a city, Bangkok brims with colour and energy.

BEHIND BANGKOK'S BUZZ

Recent transplant **Ms Janice Hu (Arts & Social Sciences '04)** takes us into the heart of Thailand's vibrant capital.

TEXT BY **KATHERINE CHINN**
PHOTOS COURTESY OF **JANICE HU**

As a General Manager at L'Oréal, Ms Janice Hu has circled the globe for her career, having worked in cities from Shanghai to New York.

But when the opportunity came to relocate closer to home, the National University of Singapore (NUS) alumna and former NUS Students' Union BIZCOM chairperson jumped at the chance. "I've always wanted to work in Southeast Asia, and Thailand is a familiar place to many Singaporeans."

Based in Bangkok since August 2023, Ms Hu now spends her spare time exploring the dynamic city with her husband and three young children.

"Bangkok stands out due to the friendliness and helpfulness of the people. It's also such an exciting environment," said Ms Hu, pointing to



A cruise along the Chao Phraya River provides a new view of the city and its changing hues at sunset.



Photo: Shutterstock

Dating back to the 17th century, the Wat Arun temple is one of Bangkok's most striking landmarks.



Brunch at Luka wins approval from the entire family.

the city's blend of culture, nightlife, markets and spas. "You can always find something to do – from night market shopping to chilling at a rooftop bar."

While the city enjoys sunshine throughout the year, travellers are advised to avoid the extreme heat of April and May, as well as the tropical rain and floods of July and August. Instead, Ms Hu recommends visiting in either June, September or October. Bangkok will be warm at these times, but comfortable, making it easier to navigate.

For those who enjoy walking, consider wandering through the **historic back alleys of Chinatown** to view the local street art and Thai-Chinese architecture. Martial arts enthusiasts can soak in the energetic atmosphere of **Lumpinee Stadium to watch Muay Thai**, an iconic Thai sport. And to escape the bustle, a **sunset cruise along the Chao Phraya River** provides a new perspective on Bangkok, enabling visitors to view sights such as the Wat Arun temple while relaxing with a cold drink in hand.

Travellers should also not miss out on the city's famous – and affordable – **street food culture**. To get a taste of the local cuisine, Ms Hu suggests trying the *Som Tum* (Thai papaya salad) with anchovies; *Som Tum Khao Pod* (Thai spicy corn salad); *Laab* (a spicy meat salad); or *Laab Tod* (*laab* fried into little balls and eaten as a snack). "I also love the Boat noodles from Thong Smith – they're very tasty and have great flavour!"

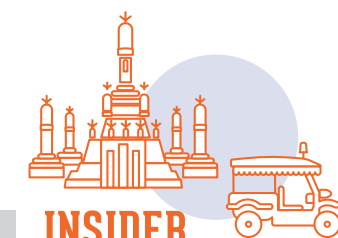
To pick up a souvenir before departing, visitors can head to the city's **Siam area**, home to both Siam Paragon – one of the largest malls in Thailand – and small local shops. The Chatuchak Market is another great option, with over 15,000 stalls spread across 35 acres.

"I like Yu, which is a local aromatherapy shop that does their own essential oil blends and room sprays," said Ms Hu. "The **EM District** is also a great place for shopping – EmSphere, EmQuartier and Emporium are all in this zone."

CONTINUED CONNECTIONS TO NUS

Despite a job that has taken her away from Singapore, Ms Hu's ties to her alma mater remain strong.

"In fact, four of my seven teammates at my first L'Oréal position were from NUS and one was my junior at the Faculty of Arts & Social Sciences!" explained Ms Hu. "And I still keep in touch and hang out with many friends from NUS."



INSIDER RECOMMENDATIONS

➤ Fuel your morning with a local Thai breakfast at **Ega** in Sathorn 12, or café-hop to **Babyccino** for a Western-style brunch in a cosy atmosphere.

➤ For a day of pampering, head to **White Wood Green Spa and Wellness** for head-to-toe relaxation or visit **Merry Day Nail Care** for their signature mani-pedi.

➤ Need an afternoon pick-me-up? Stop by **Luka, Roast** or **Charlotte Doughnuts** in the Sukhumvit area for coffee and snacks.

➤ Listen to live music while sipping a cocktail at **Iron Fairies** or **Charm**. Both options also offer sharing platters and snacks if you get hungry.

➤ For dinner, **Sri Trat** offers crisp flavours and unique Thai-inspired cocktails. Or try **Baannok** for Michelin-starred Thai cuisine and delectable desserts.



For top Thai cuisine, try the extensive fare at Sri Trat.

UNVEILING PERANAKAN HERITAGE: A JOURNEY THROUGH CULTURE, SIGHTS AND TRADITION

More than 20 NUS alumni explored the rich and colourful world of Peranakan heritage, uncovering hidden gems, stunning architecture and time-honoured traditions on this immersive cultural tour.

TEXT BY AUDRINA GAN PHOTOS BY ROY YAP

EVENT: Appreciating our Heritage: Peranakan Culture and Food Tour

VENUE: A walking tour starting from Ceylon Road Interim Park (adjacent to the Eurasian Heritage Gallery/Community House at 139 Ceylon Road) and ending at Straits Enclave

DATE: 24 August 2024



The tour's guide, Ms Jasmine Tan, is deeply passionate about Peranakan culture and is committed to preserving this rich heritage.

Meet Ms Jasmine Tan Chin Chwee (Arts & Social Sciences MA '01),

a sixth-generation Peranakan who brings her deep-rooted heritage to life as a tour guide. After two decades in law and co-running a design and architecture firm with her late husband, Ms Tan's love for culture led her to NUS for a master's degree in Southeast Asian studies, where she studied languages, culture and religion, as well as world cultures.

Ms Tan has since become a respected voice in the Peranakan community, contributing to *The Peranakan* magazine and co-editing the book *Heritage Food of the Peranakan Indians*. Since earning her licence



as a tour guide in 2016, Ms Tan has been passionately sharing her knowledge and love for Peranakan culture, making each tour a rich and personal experience.

Starting Point:

📍 Ceylon Road Interim Park

The tour kicked off at the serene Ceylon Road Interim Park, a charming green space adjacent to the Eurasian Heritage Gallery. This area is steeped in history, and offered the 24 alumni participants the perfect backdrop to start their adventure.

📍 Joo Chiat Road

The next stop was a yellow shophouse along Joo Chiat Road. This building dates back to 1928 and stands as a vibrant reminder of the Peranakan community's prosperity during the early decades of the 20th century, which was largely driven by profits made through their involvement in various businesses such as running rubber plantations during the First World War. Its architectural style blends Straits Chinese and Rococo elements, reflecting the Peranakans' fondness for all things British.

📍 Koon Seng Road

At Koon Seng Road, the facing rows of shophouses create a fascinating contrast in architectural styles. On one side, you will find shophouses adorned with classic Peranakan elements — vibrant tiles and intricate floral designs that reflect the community's rich heritage. The houses directly opposite are more reflective of Chinese traditions, featuring Taoist symbols such as deer and crabs, which are believed to bring good fortune.



A tour participant admiring the intricate tiles on the facade of a house at Koon Seng Road.



The distinctive yellow shophouse along Joo Chiat Road, whose design features a blend of Chinese and Western elements.



At Straits Enclave, guests can learn the art of intricate Peranakan beadwork.



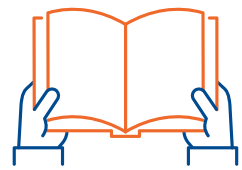
📍 Straits Enclave

The tour's final stop was Straits Enclave, a private museum established four years ago to promote Peranakan culture. Here, the group was warmly welcomed by host Mr Clarence Chia, a fourth-generation Peranakan and a licensed tourist guide. Mr Chia is a passionate collector of Peranakan antiques, some of which have been in his family for generations.

At Straits Enclave, guests can join a four-month workshop that teaches the traditional craft of making beaded Peranakan shoes. Some workshop participants have even made shoes for their weddings. As Mr Chia shared, back in the old days, Peranakans believed that a young woman's beaded shoes could reveal a lot about her character. Matchmakers and the groom's family would examine her work to see if she was patient, meticulous and good at planning — qualities highly valued in a bride.

📷 For more photos and trivia about Katong's Peranakan past (and present), read the online version of this story by scanning this QR code.





BOOK CORNER

> A DIVE INTO SINGAPORE'S SEAFOOD CULTURE

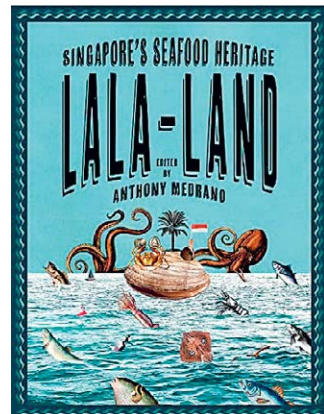
The *AlumNUS* recently caught up with Assistant Professor Anthony Medrano, the National University of Singapore (NUS) Presidential Young Professor of Environmental Studies at Yale-NUS College and the Editor of *Lala-Land: Singapore's Seafood Heritage*. Part cultural history, part cookbook, *Lala-Land* compiles essays written by Yale-NUS students and alumni on familiar seafood dishes and the marine life behind them.

Can you tell us about the book's background and how it came into being?

The book came to be because of a pair of Cs: COVID-19 and closure. In 2020, I was teaching a module titled 'Asia's Edible Ocean', focused geographically on Southeast Asia and Japan. I had a plan to take the class to Sabah to visit fish markets, but overseas travel became impossible because of the pandemic. So I refocused the class, in real-time, around Singapore. We managed a few field trips to hawker centres and

fish markets, and the final assignment became a biography of an edible ocean dish narrated across the themes of history, culture and ecology. In subsequent iterations, the final assignment had to be about a dish consumed locally or an 'ocean' element within local food culture.

The announcement of Yale-NUS' closure was another driver behind the book. Members of the Singapore community had been involved in the module, leading guided walks, sharing their time and expertise, and meeting with my students. When it was announced that our college would be closing in 2025, food writer and chef Pamela Chia

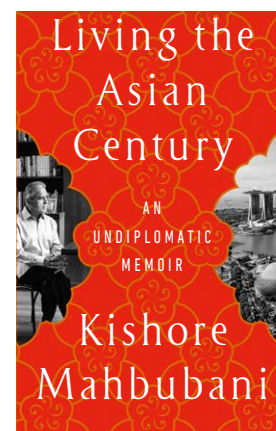


(Science '15) floated the idea of a book to Edmund Wee at Epigram. I saw the book as a way to archive the kinds of teaching, learning, sharing, collaborating and community-building that happen at our college.

Available now – scan the QR code.



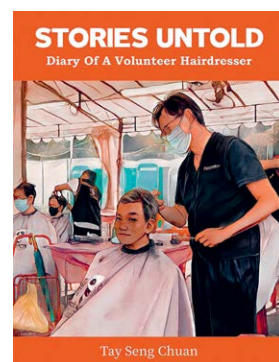
> NEW FACULTY AND ALUMNI BOOKS



In *Living the Asian Century*, Mr Kishore Mahbubani (Arts & Social Sciences '71), Distinguished Fellow at the Asia Research Institute and former Dean of the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, chronicles his journey from childhood poverty to an illustrious diplomatic career. Set against the backdrop of a changing Singapore, the memoir presents a compelling narrative of both his personal rise and the nation's progress.



Available now – scan the QR code.



Stories Untold: Diary of a Volunteer Hairdresser by Associate Professor Tay Seng Chuan (Science '85, Computing MSc '94, Computing PhD '99) details the author's experience of providing haircuts to the marginalised. Chronicling conversations with beneficiaries across hospitals, hospices, nursing homes, migrant worker dormitories and HDB estates, Assoc Prof Tay details the adversity and inspiration found at the fringes of society.

Read the author's interview with *The AlumNUS*:



Available at the NUS Co-op or by contacting pvotaysc@nus.edu.sg. S\$1 from every purchase made will be donated to Community Chest.



Dr Julian Lim pictured with his first New York Times crossword.

GAME FOR WORDS

Dr Julian Lim demonstrates the creativity of thinking inside the grid.

TEXT BY KATHERINE CHINN
PHOTOS COURTESY OF DR JULIAN LIM

Every week, *The New York Times* (NYT) reportedly receives more than 200 submissions from crossword constructors vying to see their work published in the newspaper's storied pages. Given that a single puzzle is issued daily, Dr Julian Lim's feat is all the more remarkable. Over the past 15 years, the adjunct psychology professor at the National University of Singapore (NUS) has had more than 150 of his puzzles printed by leading publications, including NYT, the *Los Angeles Times*, *The Wall Street Journal* and *The Chronicle of Higher Education*.

A VERY GOOD PLACE TO START (9 LETTERS)

"I've always enjoyed wordplay and trivia," said Dr Lim, who is also the co-founder of Somnus Sleep Wellness. Although familiar with British-style cryptics from his secondary school days, the path from puzzle solver to

constructor came via an American education. As an undergraduate at Duke University, Dr Lim learnt to solve crosswords from the campus newspaper. "I realised how clever the American-style crosswords could be," said Dr Lim. "Not only are there many different ways to clue ordinary words, but you also see several cultural touchpoints side by side. The same puzzle could include pop culture, Shakespeare, sports and politics."

The 2006 documentary *Wordplay* led to Dr Lim's discovery that newspapers often solicit puzzles from freelancers, prompting him to try submitting his own. "A difficulty is that the big publications don't like obscurity, so everything has to be 'in the language': solid phrases, simple words or proper, commonly-known names," he shared. "Getting it all to interlock in the grid and still be accessible turned out to be hard." His breakthrough came in 2009, when the *Los Angeles Times* accepted his work. The next year, he made his NYT debut.

CREATIVE SPARK (11 LETTERS)

Ideas for Dr Lim's crossword clues and themes come from everyday life. A museum visit to view Van Gogh's *The Potato Eaters* led to a potato-themed puzzle, while a meal gave rise to one of his favourite clues (Game's turning point? Answer: rotisserie).

Other clues contain a more personal nod. "My mum loves puzzles, but she was especially enchanted when I started publishing them," said Dr Lim. "So I sometimes drop in Easter eggs referencing a shared memory or moment we spent together."

CHANGE OVER TIME (9 LETTERS)

Despite the decline of print media, crossword puzzles have maintained, if not grown, their global popularity in recent years. Online platforms and mobile apps feature innovations

such as hints, checks, timers and collaborative solving, resulting in a more dynamic form of play. Digitalisation has also fuelled a proliferation of forums and online communities, enabling constructors to share feedback, resources and mentorship across geographies. It has also spurred independent sites that stand as an alternative to the major newspapers, granting constructors more control over – and increased revenue from – their work.

These changes, along with the push for more global and minority voices to be represented within crosswords, have created new opportunities for constructors. "When I started out, I shopped my puzzles around to the local media and was nearly universally rejected," said Dr Lim. But commissions from independent ventures locally, such as Jom Media, point towards a more hopeful future. "For the first time, I can make a puzzle that is more in the language and references of what I grew up with," said Dr Lim.

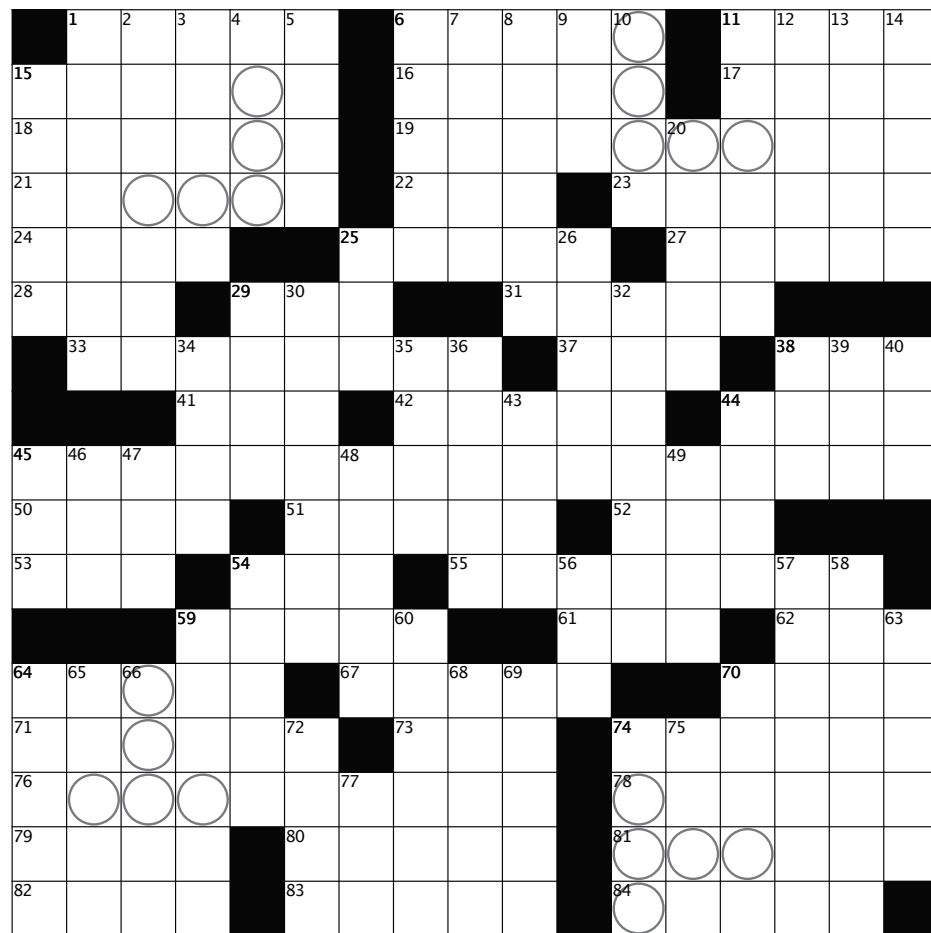
One takeaway from his experience? "If anybody has a quirky thing they enjoy doing, I encourage them to go for it. It makes Singapore a more interesting place when people pursue their interests, even ones that are not very mainstream."



Dr Lim constructs a crossword on the train in the Czech Republic in 2022. Crossword construction software has provided puzzle makers a more efficient alternative to graph paper.

Subheadings: beginning; inspiration; evolution

THE ALUMNUS CROSSWORD BY JULIAN LIM



ACROSS

- 1 Unbeatable grade
6 Jokes around
11 Gym bro's count
15 Homework for mathematics majors
16 Sound from the allergic
17 CFO or COO
18 Key of Dvorak's *New World Symphony*
19 The Tanegashima Space Center, for one
21 Ngee Ann ____ (charitable organisation)
22 Georgette Chen's field
23 Vegetable often stir-fried with roast pork belly
24 Contract loopholes
25 Asian Bronze Age civilisation
27 Prepared to propose
28 Real estate agency since 1982
- 29 "On top of that..."
31 Summits
33 First phase of an MRT line opening
37 Iga Swiatek's organisation
38 Physics lecture unit
41 Honey, to Zoomers
42 Follow
44 "What a shame!"
45 Like NUS degrees that cross faculties — as depicted four times in this puzzle
50 ____ prep (healthy eating practice)
51 Private response?
52 Job in the SCDF
53 Have a bawl
54 Bed for a newborn
55 Helicopter parent's trait
59 Sticky food at a barbecue?
61 Tan Cheng Bock's party: Abbreviation

- 62 *Never ____ Me Go* (Kazuo Ishiguro novel)
64 Treatment for cardiac arrest, briefly
67 "Mmmm...shio!"
70 "Hell ____ no fury..."
71 Lacking ethics
73 Crowd around, as a celebrity
74 More intimate
76 Work-from-home lunch option
78 "I'm over here!"
79 Low-level worker
80 Goes to the bed?
81 Figure in the "24 Hours in Singapore" installation
82 Process for renewing old HDB estates
83 Slightly off
84 '____ in Heaven' (Eric Clapton classic)

DOWN

- 1 Fortifies
2 Indicate with a finger
3 Hungers (for)
4 Night lights?
5 Psychiatrist's prescription
6 Word on many street signs
7 Virtual greeting
8 "Diam lah!"
9 Whole lot, metaphorically
10 ____ puppet
11 Plant secretions used to make adhesives
12 Cast out
13 Flower feature
14 Flower feature
15 'Orange' tea that isn't orange
20 Like the martial art Southern Praying Mantis
25 Vow at the altar
26 Close, as a deal
29 When doubled, ingredient in some Southeast Asian cakes
30 Has no obligation to
32 Cut down on calories
34 Biblical victim of Cain
35 Loch ____ monster
36 Term of address for a warrant officer
38 ____ carte menu
39 School holidays month
40 Major for an aspiring therapist
43 iPhone speaker?
44 Not pro
45 Contacts via WhatsApp, say
46 Actress (and NUS alum) ____ Swee Lin
47 Key above caps lock
48 Minimal amounts
49 "It's my turn!"
54 Group that plots in secret
56 uNivUS, e.g.
57 Halloween movie selection
58 The Leonids, for instance
59 Police car warnings
60 Like the dish chicken mandi
63 Spasm of pain
64 Adds some moisture to
65 Dinner and dance host
66 Travel writer Eugene
68 Not the cool kids
69 With "The", 1989 sci-fi movie directed by James Cameron
70 To-do
72 Blackpink member born in Thailand
74 Dermatologist's diagnosis
75 Leisurely stride
77 Get-up-and-go

▶ [Scan here to play online or view the answers.](#)



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- Rendered exemplary volunteer service to NUS and/or the community

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