ABOUT THE INDIAN HERITAGE CENTRE

The Indian Heritage Centre (IHC), a heritage institution managed by the National Heritage Board (NHB), traces the history of the South Asian community in Singapore and Southeast Asia. When launched on 7 May 2015 (in conjunction with Singapore’s 50th anniversary celebrations) by Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong, the IHC will be a focal point for the Indian community, and a platform to learn more about the diverse Indian heritage in Singapore.

Located in the heart of Little India, IHC will also serve as a springboard for visitors to explore the historic precinct. The Centre will be housed in a brand-new four-storey building, comprising permanent galleries featuring five themes, a special exhibition gallery, educational and activity spaces, as well as other facilities.

The Centre will be opened to the public on 8 May 2015, and will also feature a month-long IHC CultureFest (8 - 31 May 2015) comprising various programmes celebrating different aspects of Indian heritage and culture for visitors to enjoy. For more information, please visit www.indianheritage.org.sg

Mission
To develop IHC into a leading heritage institution and a focal point for the Indian (i.e. South Asian) community.

Vision
A sustainable destination of historical and cultural significance for visitors and the community.

Key Objectives

1. To establish IHC as a respected heritage institution through museum excellence;
2. To connect and collaborate with key stakeholders to promote Indian culture and community rootedness;
3. To conduct research to promote a deeper understanding of IHC and its values;
4. To establish strategic partnerships with regional and international counterparts.
**Background of IHC**

In 2008, then-Ministry of Information, Communications and the Arts (MICA) announced the repositioning of heritage institutions – Sun Yat Sen Nanyang Memorial Hall, Malay Heritage Centre and the proposed IHC – as platforms to showcase key aspects of the respective communities and to highlight the Malay, Chinese and Indian communities’ links to their wider cultures.

Work on IHC began in 2009 when NHB signed Memorandums of Understanding with representatives from the Chinese, Malay and Indian communities to provide its management and professional expertise to three heritage institutions in areas such as operations, curatorial support, programming, marketing and promotions.

The repositioning of the three heritage institutions was conducted under a co-funding framework between the Government and the three communities. It entailed the appointment of NHB as the operator of the three heritage institutions in order to raise the standards of these institutions to those of the national museums under NHB.

Even during the period of the Centre’s development, the IHC team organised off-site exhibitions and programmes to generate public awareness about Singapore’s Indian heritage and the Centre, and connected and collaborated with key stakeholders such as community veterans, academics, community organisations, stakeholders in Little India, cultural associations, as well as Indian art and heritage practitioners from various fields.
Timeline of the IHC Project
Since the official announcement of IHC’s planned development in 2009, the IHC Steering Committee (under the chairmanship of the late Dr Balaji Sadasivan and subsequently Mr S Iswaran), the three Sub-Committees, and NHB have been working closely together towards the establishment of this iconic heritage institution. Below are some of the milestones:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Key Milestones</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>25 January 2011</td>
<td>Launch of IHC’s architectural design competition</td>
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<tr>
<td>21 April 2011</td>
<td>Launch of public exhibition of shortlisted designs for IHC’s architectural design competition</td>
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<tr>
<td>13 July 2011</td>
<td>Announcement of winner of IHC’s architectural design competition</td>
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<tr>
<td>16 August 2011</td>
<td>Site dedication ceremony and unveiling of foundation plaque</td>
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<td>10 April 2013</td>
<td>Ground-breaking ceremony</td>
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<tr>
<td>20 May 2014</td>
<td>Preview of artefacts contributed by the community, as part of IHC’s Artefact Collection Drive which commenced in June 2011</td>
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<tr>
<td>2 March 2015</td>
<td>Second preview of artefacts contributed by the community, as part of IHC’s Artefact Collection Drive</td>
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<tr>
<td>7 May 2015</td>
<td>Official opening of IHC</td>
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<tr>
<td>8 May 2015</td>
<td>IHC opens to the public, with its inaugural <em>IHC CultureFest</em></td>
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IHC Building Design Concept

Embodying IHC’s vision, the four-storey IHC building is an iconic, unique and sustainable building that blends both traditional Indian as well as modern architectural elements. The architectural design for the facade of IHC is inspired by the “Baoli” (or Indian stepped well), and seeks to create an urban forum for the celebration and appreciation of Indian culture.

The diversity and multi-faceted nature of Indian culture is also captured in the use of a translucent shimmering façade to create an impression of IHC as a “shining jewel” in the day, and the transformation of the IHC into a “glowing lantern” of the Indian community with the lighting of the colourful façade mural at night.
GALLERIES AND CONTENTS

Storyline of Permanent Galleries

The chronological and historical perspectives of IHC’s storyline represent periods in Asian history when South Asians established contact with Southeast Asians and East Asians since the pre-modern era. However, during the period of the Straits Settlements when Singapore rose to importance as a penal colony, the contact between India and Singapore entered an intense period of interaction under the British rule. Much of the present migration began during the early 19th century and has continued since then.

IHC has adopted an inclusive curatorial approach under the guidance of the IHC Concept and Content Sub-committee, and defines Indian in the pre-modern context of the subcontinent. Thematic permanent displays and/or special exhibits, as well as its programmes, will showcase various communities from the subcontinent with ‘lived histories’ in Singapore. In addition, memories and accounts of the community have also been captured.

IHC’s permanent galleries’ storyline revolves around five themes (elaborated below), arranged chronologically, to span the time period 1st century CE to the 21st century. The themes present, through artefacts and interactive displays, the long history of interactions between South and Southeast Asia, as well as the experiences of South Asians in Southeast Asia (especially Malaya), and Singapore in particular. They narrate the history of the migrant community and their contributions to Singapore.

Please refer to Annex A for the floor plan of the permanent galleries, which are spread over two levels.

- **Theme 1: EARLY CONTACT: INTERACTIONS BETWEEN SOUTH AND SOUTHEAST ASIA**  
  1st century CE – 19th century

  This first gallery illustrates interactions between South and Southeast Asia in pre-colonial and colonial periods to set the stage to visually illustrate how South Asians have long and uninterrupted relations in the region through trade, religion and other diplomatic means. It serves as a preamble to the Singapore experience of Indian migrants, establishing their long and uninterrupted association in the broader context of Southeast Asia. Exchanges between the regions in terms of religion and trade are explored in this gallery. One such instance is the constant juxtaposition of South and Southeast Asian Hindu-Buddhist icons, Ramayana and Mahabharata related performing arts material, as well as Islamic and Christian materials bringing to the fore their respective and perhaps mutually inspired stylistic repertoires.
• **Theme 2: ROOTS AND ROUTES: ORIGINS AND MIGRATION**  
19th century – 21st century

Indians in Singapore and Southeast Asia trace their origins to numerous waves of migration – pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial. A complex history of migration has produced a vibrant and dynamic community, made distinct by their ability to adapt and integrate with local cultures. The Roots section of this gallery highlights their rites of passage, attire, language, religious affiliations and festivals. The Routes section revisits the gruelling journeys undertaken by migrants from their villages or cities to port towns, and journey by ship to Singapore. Through a large interactive map, this gallery also draws attention to the diverse places of origin of Singapore’s Indian community, past and present.

• **Theme 3: PIONEERS: EARLY INDIANS IN SINGAPORE AND MALAYA**  
19th century – mid-20th century (pre-World War II)

The establishment of the Straits Settlements of Penang, Malacca and Singapore (1786 – 1824) was followed by a steady influx of Indians from the subcontinent – from mainly Madras and Calcutta. Among the early Indians were Sangara Chetty, Naraina Pillay, Mohamed Hassan and Mohamed Lebar who were appointed as counsels to manage the Indians by William Farquhar in 1822. Since then, Indians arrived in diverse capacities, either under the auspices of the colonial government or otherwise, and settled in Singapore and Malaya. This gallery revisits the activities of early Indians in diverse fields. It also emphasises the chronology and role of early institutions established by the community.

• **Theme 4: SOCIAL AND POLITICAL AWAKENING OF INDIANS IN SINGAPORE AND MALAYA**  
Mid-20th century

In the first half of the 20th century, communities from the Indian Subcontinent continued their strong political, sentimental and economic ties with their home country. Anti-colonialism resonated in the region. This gallery reflects on the impact of nationalist and sub-ethnic nationalist movements on the Indian community in the region; their response to such dissemination through print and broadcast media; their interactions with visiting leaders; and their participation in the Indian National Army. Furthermore, this gallery also brings to the fore reformist activities and the revitalisation of Tamil language and identity by leaders of the community such as Thamizhavel G.Sarangapany.

• **Theme 5: MAKING OF THE NATION: CONTRIBUTIONS OF INDIANS IN SINGAPORE**  
Late 1950s – 1980s

This gallery showcases the post-war contributions of Indians to the making of Singapore as a modern nation. Evocative of the curatorial experience in documenting these contributions, this section is organised like a scrap book
allowing visitors to engage with artefacts, audio and video interviews, photo albums and other ephemera from the personal collections of such pioneers.

### Snapshot of Artefacts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total No. of Artefacts at the IHC: 443</th>
<th>No. of Artefacts from the National Collection on Display:</th>
<th>No. of Artefacts from the IHC Collection on Display:</th>
<th>No. of Artefacts from the Community on Display:</th>
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<tr>
<td>Total No. of Artefacts on Display for the First Time:</td>
<td>308</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>126</td>
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<tr>
<td>(70% of artefacts)</td>
<td>(26% of artefacts)</td>
<td>(28% of artefacts)</td>
<td>(46% of artefacts)</td>
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Breakdown:
- 165 loaned artefacts on display (out of 210 loaned artefacts received)
- 38 donated artefacts on display (out of 158 donated artefacts received)

No. of artefacts received through IHC’s Artefact Collection Drive: 368

IHC’s display consists of artefacts from the National Collection, from the local community (donations and loans), as well as institutional loans. IHC also engaged contemporary artists and graphic designers to create commissioned artworks in collaboration with its curators for the IHC collection drawing on Indian diaspora’s history, culture and philosophy, as well as IHC’s permanent collection.
**Design Approach**

IHC’s galleries assume a more traditional look and feel at the beginning with showcases and open displays, followed by more interactive installations related to travel, photography and modern communications. Large examples of ‘built heritage’ are displayed side by side with objects of bespoke adornment which underscore identity, origins and rites of passage of the various diverse Indian communities in Singapore today.

Visitors’ experience will gradually shift from material based to digital based content where they can access much of the intangible heritage documented through research and interaction with the community. This will culminate in a full-width projection of moving images. The design style changes with each theme, offering visitors a unique experience inside each zone. Each of the thematic atmospheres are more suggestive than literal, evocative of emotions and memories, to provide contemplative environments where the collection always remains the focus.

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<tr>
<th>Theme 1: EARLY CONTACT: INTERACTIONS BETWEEN SOUTH AND SOUTHEAST ASIA</th>
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<tr>
<td>Mid-20th century</td>
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<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Late 1950s – 1980s</td>
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Interactive Experiences

IHC utilises intuitive and interactive IT based displays in its galleries to (a) communicate content that cannot be accommodated within the limited physical space of the galleries; (b) make the content relevant to younger audiences who appreciate technology based experiences. Other than three large interactives and over 20 touch screen interactives, IHC also offers visitors an immersive and novel experience with an Augmented Reality enabled audio guide.

Commencing with an introductory film, which offers a curated perspective on the five themes in the permanent galleries, the interactive experience is geared towards engaging both group and individual visitors.

The film introduces the five themes covered in the Centre’s storyline, which trace the histories, progress and achievements of the South Asian diaspora in Singapore and Southeast Asia. The background musical score to the film, created with this storyline in mind, is specially composed by world renowned composer-vocalist Shankar Mahadevan for IHC. The 10-minute score reflects the multicultural aspects of Singapore, and fuse pan-Asian traditional and contemporary sounds to capture the essence of each theme and its visual narrative.
IHC’S PROGRAMMES

During its development phase since 2011, IHC has introduced various outreach initiatives to build its artefact collection and raise awareness of the Centre. These include the Artefact Collection Drive, off-site exhibitions, seminars, workshops and lectures featuring the diverse history, heritage and culture of the Indian community in Singapore.

Exhibitions such as Adoring Vishnu explored Vishnu’s origins in South Asia and his presence in Southeast Asia, while Our Indian Forefathers and their Trades in Singapore explored the many significant roles of the Indian community in the historical, economic, cultural and political development of modern Singapore.

IHC has also organised seminars on the migration and settlement of various Indian communities in Singapore, as well as the Tamil community’s contribution to the arts. Beyond the various workshops on the heritage and living traditions of Indian culture, IHC has been partnering and collaborating with the Indian Activity Executive Committees of People’s Association, Indian organisations, and educational institutions by providing travelling exhibition panels, traditional Indian games and various cultural activities so that visitors can discover and experience more diverse elements of Indian heritage.

Upcoming Programmes
As part of its opening celebrations, IHC will be organising its inaugural IHC CultureFest 2015, featuring street fairs on Campbell Lane, performances, workshops, lectures, and outdoor film screenings.

Beyond the festival, IHC will be organising a series of themed programmes for all age groups, including monthly outdoor performances, hands-on workshops, lectures, specialised tours and events in partnership with educational institutions, arts organisations and schools, Indian organisations and members of the Little India precinct. The Centre will also work with NHB to launch a new Little India Heritage Trail to highlight the history of the precinct and its historical landmarks.
DETAILS OF THE IHC

Indian Heritage Centre

Address: 5 Campbell Lane, Singapore 209924

Tel: 6291 1633

Opening hours: Tuesdays – Thursdays: 10.00am to 7.00pm,
Fridays – Saturdays: 10.00am to 8.00pm,
Sundays/Public Holidays: 10.00am to 4.00pm,
Closed on Mondays

Admission Fee: $4
Free Admission for all Singaporeans and Permanent Residents,
and overseas visitors aged 6 years and below

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Overseas Visitors</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adults:</td>
<td>S$4.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior above 60 years old:</td>
<td>S$2.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students:</td>
<td>S$2.00</td>
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</tbody>
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For group visits, please email us at NHB_IHC@nhb.gov.sg

Website: www.indianheritage.org.sg
ANNEX A

Floor Plan of IHC’s Permanent Galleries

Level 4: IHC Permanent Gallery 1
Level 3: IHC Permanent Gallery 2
Level 2: IHC Temporary Exhibition Gallery, Activity Room, VIP Room
Level 1: Lobby, Shop, Back of House

National Archives of Singapore