



Press Release

Official Opening of the Istana Heritage Gallery

President Tony Tan Keng Yam officially opened the Istana Heritage Gallery on Friday, 7 October 2016. Located at the Istana Park along Orchard Road and opposite the Istana, the Istana Heritage Gallery offers visitors the opportunity to understand the history and heritage of the Istana.

2 Gazetted in 1992 as a National Monument along with Sri Temasek (formerly the Colonial Secretary's house), the Istana mirrors the growth and development of Singapore from a colony to sovereign state. The Gallery explores the role and significance of the Istana, and captures the Istana's transition from being the Colonial Governor's House to its current role as the official Residence of the President. It also seeks to provide visitors with a glimpse into the Istana's rich history through a specially curated range of heritage displays including state artefacts, artwork and state gifts received from foreign dignitaries by our past and present Presidents and Prime Ministers.

3 The state gifts are a highlight of the Gallery as this is the first time they are placed on permanent display for visitors to enjoy. They are lasting testimonies of Singapore's friendship with other countries. The current display of 18 state gifts includes:

- A silver cigarette box, which is one of the earliest recorded gifts in the Istana's collection. This was presented by His Excellency Raja Tun Uda Al-Haj bin Raja Muhammad, Governor of Penang, to Yang di-Pertuan Negara Encik Yusof bin Ishak in 1961;
- A bronze bust of an Induna, presented to President Ong Teng Cheong by His Excellency Nelson Mandela, President of the Republic of the South Africa, during his first state visit to Singapore in 1997;
- A pair of silver goblets which bears Singapore's Coat of Arms and the Royal Cypher of Queen Elizabeth II – symbolising the longstanding friendship between these two countries. This was presented by Queen Elizabeth II to President S R Nathan in 2006; and
- A bronze medal presented to President Tony Tan Keng Yam by His Holiness Pope Francis of the Holy See to mark the 35th anniversary of bilateral relations between Singapore and the Holy See and the first State Visit by a Singapore President to the Vatican City in 2016.

4 The Istana Heritage Gallery will complement the annual calendar of Istana Open House days and guided tours, and provide the public greater access to Istana's rich heritage. It will also showcase the President's constitutional, ceremonial and community roles, and the Istana's special place in these aspects of the Singapore story. Members of the public may start visiting the Gallery from 8 October 2016.

5 The Istana Heritage Gallery is a collaboration between the President's Office, the National Parks Board, the National Heritage Board and the National Library Board. More information about the various features and exhibits of the Istana Heritage Gallery can be found in the accompanying Media Factsheet.

PRESIDENT'S OFFICE
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National Archives of Singapore

AN OVERVIEW OF THE ISTANA HERITAGE GALLERY

The Istana, completed in 1869, is a symbol of Singapore's independence and sovereignty. The Istana Heritage Gallery, curated by the Preservation of Sites and Monuments division of the National Heritage Board, presents the Istana's history and heritage, and a brief account of its transformation from a colonial governor's house to the official residence of the President of the Republic of Singapore. On 14 February 1992, the Istana, together with Sri Temasek, was preserved as a National Monument. These are the two key structures within the 43 hectares of land that constitute the Istana domain.

The idea of a heritage gallery for the Istana was mooted by President Tony Tan in 2015, and a decision was made to convert an open-sided shelter at the Istana Park (opposite the Istana) into the heritage gallery. The total space of the Istana Heritage Gallery is 254 sqm, and of this, about 240 sqm is usable for the exhibition which features the following:

- a. Exhibition panels that provide an account of the Istana's transformation and the important functions it serves today;
- b. Displays of artefacts and State Gifts, and a replica of a signing-in table that is used during state visits;
- c. iPad stations to allow visitors to view digitised guestbooks that complement the information on state visits as well as videos of the grounds of the Istana;
- d. A photo opportunity corner; and
- e. A station for visitors to "DIY" an embossed stamp of the Presidential Crest.

The Gallery is located at Istana Park (35 Orchard Road) and admission is free.

1. Exhibition Panels

Panel 1: Sri Temasek

Completed in 1869, Sri Temasek was originally the colonial secretary's house. Its name recalls Singapore's ancient name, *Temasek*, which means "sea town" in Javanese. Although the building was designated as the Prime Minister's official residence after Singapore's independence in 1965, then-Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew and his family never lived there. Instead, the building served as a venue for high level government meetings.

Panels 2 and 3: Early Years (1869-1942)

Istana, constructed between 1867 and 1869, was originally known as the Government House. It was built for the colonial governor, Sir Harry Saint George Ord, who felt it befitted his status as the governor of Singapore as a Crown Colony to have a permanent residence.¹ As a result

¹ Singapore became a Crown Colony in 1867

of Ord's request, the British colonial government purchased a tract of land which had been a nutmeg plantation until a blight in the 1860s destroyed plantations in Singapore.

The house was designed by Colonial Engineer and Comptroller of Convicts, John F.A. McNair and constructed by 3,000 convict labourers who offered better workmanship at lower prices. The house was completed on 8 October 1869 at the cost of 190,000 Straits dollars.

The formal stateliness of the house is derived from the symmetry, restrained embellishments and proportions which are characteristics of the Neo-Palladian style. After Ord moved in, he hosted his first guest, the Duke of Edinburgh who arrived in December 1869.

Panel 4: The War Years (1942-1945)

During the Second World War, Singapore suffered heavy island-wide bombardment. Then-governor Sir Shenton Thomas and his wife escaped to the Singapore Club at the Fullerton Building while staff hid in the cellar of the house which had a tunnel leading out of the Government House domain. They eventually fled to Kampong Java and remained in hiding until the Japanese Supreme Commander Count Hisaichi Terauchi invited them back to the house. During the Occupation years, the House continued to be well maintained but the domain was no longer accessible by the public at will, as an iron perimeter fence was installed by Australian Prisoners-of-War during that period.

This panel offers an aerial view of the Government House domain, a view which would have been caught by planes flying over Singapore during the war.

Panel 5: Emblems of Change

The Government House was returned to the British after the war. In the following decade, desires for independence grew stronger and were championed by many. These, amidst the political developments, resulted in the eventual end of colonial rule with Singapore attaining full internal self-government status in 1959.

As a result of this change, the ceremonial post of Yang di-Pertuan Negara ("Head of State") replaced the colonial governor. Sir William Goode served as the Yang di-Pertuan Negara from 3 June 1959 to 2 December 1959. On 3 December 1959, Encik Yusof bin Ishak was sworn in as the first Malayan-born Yang di-Pertuan Negara at the City Hall, and Singapore's national symbols were unveiled to the public on that very same day.

The Government House was likewise transformed. It was renamed Istana Negara Singapura ("Palace of the State of Singapore") and colonial symbols were replaced by Singapore's State Crest, the Presidential Standard and Presidential Crest. The Istana's tableware began carrying the State Crest or the Presidential Crest; three objects are displayed on this panel, offering a glimpse of the changing emblems of the Istana and Singapore over the years.

Panel 6: Garden within a City

The rich flora and fauna of the Istana exemplifies Singapore's Garden City image. The lush and undulating grounds include more than 150 species of trees including the nutmeg which was re-introduced to the grounds in 1989. The history of the grounds as a nutmeg plantation is remembered in the naming of Orchard Road. With four to five open house days a year, the public is invited to explore the lush landscape and go on a guided tour of the monument.

This panel offers a view of Edinburgh Road, the winding path which goes through the Istana domain, leading towards the building. Attractions of the domain are also presented on this panel.

Panel 7: Functions of the Istana

Since Singapore's independence in 1965, the Istana became the President's official residence and has come to perform many functions that are tied to the President's multi-faceted roles. The three key aspects of the President's roles are: Constitutional, Ceremonial and Community. From this panel, visitors can view the different functions played by the Istana over the years, presented in the following sections:

a. Visits and State Gifts

The Istana has welcomed many important foreign dignitaries over the years. This panel complements

- The display of the table, which the dignitaries sign the guestbook on;
- The iPad station which contains the digitised guestbook for visitors to flip through; and
- The state gifts on display.

b. Swearing-in Ceremonies of Singapore's Key Appointment Holders

This important event has been held at the Istana over this years. Photographs of the swearing-in ceremonies of all seven Presidents as well as the three Prime Ministers are shown in this panel. Visitors can also catch a glimpse of the "Yusof Room" – the East Wing which takes its name from the bust of Singapore's first president, Encik Yusof bin Ishak, displayed there. A reference piece of the bust is displayed with this panel.

c. President's Scholarship

The President, under his community role, lends his name to awards that recognises excellence such as the President's Scholarship. This prestigious scholarship was inaugurated in 1966, replacing the Queen's Scholarship which had been initiated by the colonial government to offer the best student of the year the opportunity to study

abroad. The first award ceremony was hosted at the Istana and this prestigious award continues today.

d. Ceremonies and Meetings with the Community

The Istana's ceremonial function is wide ranging, from hosting important award ceremonies in honour of individuals and their achievements, to holding consultative meetings with community representatives. The Changing of Guards at the Istana's main gate is one of the Istana's highlights. This ceremony, which takes place on every first Sunday of the month (except for July and August), is a tradition which the Singapore Armed Forces Military Police Command (formerly the Singapore Armed Forces Provost Unit) has continued since 1969, from President Yusof bin Ishak's term.

e. Garden Parties

The Istana and its grounds have been the venue for countless garden parties held in honour of outstanding or long-serving civil servants, volunteers from charitable organisations and people from professional backgrounds. Guests include teachers, nurses, and grassroots organisations.

f. Istana Open House and Art in the Istana

The Istana's tradition of being "open" to the public on a regular basis started on New Year's Day in 1960, and continues today with the Istana Open House held four to five times annually. Highlights of the open houses include the cultural offerings for the day, the Istana Art Event which began in 2002 as a *plein-air* event, and guided tours of the monument and the domain's nature.

Sub-sections d-f complement the second iPad station which offers glimpses of the domain, the Changing of Guards and the Istana Open House.

2. About the Displays and State Gifts

The displays at the Gallery include artefacts (some of which are replicas) from the Istana. They are

- The *mandor* (a fibre-glass replica);
- Bust of President Yusof bin Ishak;
- A replica of the table on which guests to the Istana sign the guestbook; and
- A teapot, a set of cup and saucer, and a plate which carry the crest of the Straits Settlements, the royal cypher of King George V or King George VI ("GRI" which stands for Georgius Rex Imperator) and the Presidential Crest respectively.

A selection of State Gifts, which are lasting testimonies of Singapore's friendship with other countries, will also be showcased in the Gallery. A larger selection of gifts will be displayed on rotation at the Istana Open House, which is held four to five times a year.

3. About the Interactive Features

There are two iPad stations in the Gallery:

- The first iPad station is near the photo opportunity corner and the displayed table. It carries the digitised guestbooks which visitors can flip through; and
- The second iPad station is near the *Ceremonies, Garden Parties* and *Istana Open House* panels. It carries an interface that will allow visitors to select videos that offer glimpse of the Istana domain, a preview of the Istana building guided tour and the changing of guards. This interface is produced in collaboration with Republic Polytechnic.

Visitors can also create their own souvenirs to commemorate their visit to the Istana Heritage Gallery:





- Visitors can take a group photo with the East Wing of the Istana as the background in the photo opportunity corner;
- Visitors can emboss the Presidential Crest onto a souvenir bookmark at an activity station.

There are plans to launch school programmes in future, with learning journeys planned for students aged 10 onwards. This programme will be designed to complement the Humanities and National Education curriculum.






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List of State Gifts in Current Display (In the sequence of display)

<p>1</p>	<p>Silver tea set</p> <p>A gift from Tun Abdul Razak, Prime Minister of Malaysia to President Benjamin Henry Sheares in 1973</p>	
<p>2</p>	<p>Miniature Brandenburg Gate</p> <p>A gift from His Excellency Klaus Wowereit, Governing Mayor of Berlin, Germany to President Tony Tan Keng Yam in 2012</p>	
<p>3</p>	<p>A pair of silver goblets</p> <p>A gift from Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II of the United Kingdom to President S R Nathan in 2006</p>	
<p>4</p>	<p>Crystal bowl</p> <p>A gift from President George W. Bush of the United States to President S R Nathan in 2003</p>	

<p>5</p>	<p>Silver box</p> <p>A gift from Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, Chairperson of the Lower House Committee for Rule of Law, Peace and Tranquillity, Myanmar Parliament and Chairperson of the National League for Democracy, Myanmar to Emeritus Senior Minister Goh Chok Tong in 2013</p>	
<p>6</p>	<p>Silver boat</p> <p>A gift from President Suharto of Indonesia to President Wee Kim Wee in 1987</p>	
<p>7</p>	<p>Silver cigarette box</p> <p>A gift from His Excellency Raja Tun Uda Al-Haj bin Raja Muhammad, Governor of Penang to Yang di-Pertuan Negara Encik Yusof bin Ishak in 1961</p>	
<p>8</p>	<p>Bone China bowl</p> <p>A gift from His Excellency Hu Jintao, President of the People's Republic of China to President S R Nathan in 2009</p>	
<p>9</p>	<p>Ceramic plate</p> <p>A gift from His Excellency <i>François Hollande, President of the French Republic</i> to Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong in 2013</p>	

<p>10</p>	<p>Cast iron kettle</p> <p>A gift from His Excellency Shinzo Abe, Prime Minister of Japan to President Tony Tan Keng Yam in 2013</p>	
<p>11</p>	<p>Blue glassware</p> <p>A gift from Mr Harry Jenkins, Speaker of the House of Representatives of Australia to Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong in 2010</p>	
<p>12</p>	<p>Bronze medal</p> <p>A gift from His Holiness Pope Francis of The Holy See to President Tony Tan Keng Yam in 2016</p>	
<p>13</p>	<p>Rooster-shaped ornament</p> <p>A gift from His Excellency Benigno S. Aquino III, President of the Republic of the Philippines to Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong in 2011</p>	
<p>14</p>	<p>Bronze bust of an Induna</p> <p>A gift from His Excellency Nelson Mandela, President of the Republic of the South Africa to President Ong Teng Cheong in 1997</p>	

<p>15</p>	<p>Mangosteen-shaped trinket boxes</p> <p>A gift from His Majesty Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah of Brunei Darussalam to Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong in 2000</p>	
<p>16</p>	<p>A pair of wooden swords</p> <p>A gift from His Excellency Phan Van Khai of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam to Senior Minister Lee Kuan Yew in 2004</p>	
<p>17</p>	<p>Niello cigarette box</p> <p>A gift from His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej and Queen Sirikit of Thailand to President S R Nathan in 2005</p>	
<p>18</p>	<p>Silver container</p> <p>A gift from His Excellency Atal Bihari Vajpayee, Prime Minister of India to President S R Nathan in 2002</p>	

Factsheet for Istana Heritage Gallery

Size of Gallery: 254 sqm, and of this, about 240 sqm is usable for the exhibition

Location: 35 Orchard Rd, Singapore 238902, Istana Park (directly opposite main gate of the Istana)

Opening Hours: Daily from 10 am-6 pm, except Wednesdays when it is closed for maintenance

Getting there: Nearest MRT station is Dhoby Ghaut which connects to the Circle Line, Northeast Line and the North South Line. Take Exit C to Istana Park

Admission charges: Free

For general enquiries: Email gallery_enquiry@istana.gov.sg

For group visits: Email gallery_enquiry@istana.gov.sg at least 2 weeks before the visit. Do also note that the maximum capacity for the gallery is 40-45 visitors at any one time. Visitors may be asked to return at a later timeslot if the gallery is full.

For guided tour: There is currently no guided tour of the gallery available.

Maximum capacity: 45 pax

Exhibits for viewing: Information panels of the Istana's history and heritage, State Gifts, artefacts and artwork. A digitised copy of the Istana guestbook will be made available for viewing on one of the iPad stations.

Other museums nearby: National Museum of Singapore (93 Stamford Road, S178897) and the Singapore Art Museum (71 Bras Basah Rd, S189555)

Nearest amenities: Nearest dining and washroom facilities are at My Art Space opposite the Istana Heritage Gallery or Plaza Singapura or The Cathay

Nearest alighting point: Hotel Innotel along Penang Lane or Plaza Singapura Atrium Wing Porch along Oldham Lane

Note: The Istana Heritage Gallery will be officially opened by President Tony Tan Keng Yam on 7 Oct 2016. Members of the public may start visiting the gallery on 8 Oct onwards.

About the National Heritage Board

The National Heritage Board (NHB) was formed on 1 August 1993. As the custodian of Singapore's heritage, NHB is responsible for telling the Singapore story, sharing the Singaporean experience and imparting our Singapore spirit.

NHB's mission is to preserve and celebrate the shared heritage of our diverse communities, for the purpose of education, nation-building and cultural understanding. It manages the national museums and heritage institutions, and sets policies relating to heritage sites, monuments and the national collection. Through the national collection, NHB curates heritage programmes and presents exhibitions to connect the past, present and future generations of Singaporeans. NHB is a statutory board under the Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth. Please visit www.nhb.gov.sg for more information.

About the National Parks Board

National Parks Board (NParks) is responsible for providing and enhancing the greenery of our City in a Garden. Beyond building green infrastructure, NParks is actively engaging the community to enhance the quality of our living environment.

NParks manages over 350 parks and 4 nature reserves. Adding to this is the extensive streetscape, or roadside greenery, that forms the backbone of our City in a Garden. An island-wide Park Connector Network is also being developed to link major parks, nature areas and residential estates.

As the lead agency on biodiversity conservation, NParks has developed an urban biodiversity conservation model, which aims to conserve representative eco-systems in land-scarce Singapore. NParks also monitors and coordinates measures to enhance the presence of biodiversity in our urban landscape.

NParks is working closely with partners in the landscape and horticulture industry to increase productivity, and provide training for all levels of the workforce. Enhancing competencies of the industry will support Singapore's vision of being a City in a Garden.

For more information, visit www.nparks.gov.sg and www.facebook.com/nparksbuzz

About the National Library Board

The National Library Board (NLB) nurtures Readers for Life, Learning Communities and a Knowledgeable Nation. Through the National Library and its network of 26 public libraries, NLB promotes reading, learning and information literacy. By forging strategic partnerships to cultivate knowledge sharing, the libraries also encourage appreciation and awareness of Singapore's history through their wide range of programmes and collection on Singapore and regional content. The National Archives of Singapore, an institution of NLB, oversees the collection, preservation and management of public and private archival records, including government files, private memoirs, maps, photographs, oral history interviews and audio-visual materials. NLB also uses innovative technology to provide access to its digital library resources and services, and archival collection. Established on 1 September 1995 as a statutory board, NLB is now under the Ministry of Communications and Information (MCI).

For more information on NLB, please visit www.nlb.gov.sg

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