

MEDIA RELEASE

Overseas Singaporeans in UK and Europe Reconnect With Home

LONDON, 25 April 2009 – Overseas Singaporeans came together today to relive the Singapore experience at Singapore Day 2009 in London. Singaporeans living, working and studying in the United Kingdom and other parts of Europe, including Switzerland, France and the Netherlands gathered at the Hampton Court Palace in London for the annual signature event brought to Singaporeans by the Overseas Singaporean Unit and its partners from the public, people and private sectors. The Guest-of-Honour was Mr Wong Kan Seng, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Home Affairs.

“Singapore Day is a heartwarming opportunity for Overseas Singaporeans to come together with friends to enjoy the authentic flavours of Singapore away from home, and to catch up with what’s happening back home. I decided to take a weekend trip to London for Singapore Day, and to take the chance to meet my friends who are here,” said 30-year-old Mr Chew Chee Keong, who is working for the World Health Organisation Headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland.

Adrian Pang and Michelle Chong hosted the concert for the day, which also saw performances by home-grown talents. Mr Eric Khoo, the Creative Director for Singapore Day 2009 said, “I want to create a happy fun-filled environment that Overseas Singaporeans could connect to - local icons re-fashioned in a pop art sort of way.”

The authentic local delights ranging from chicken rice, char kway teow and satay by hawkers specially chosen by Makansutra added to the air of nostalgia and camaraderie at the event, as Singaporeans young and old shared the familiar delights of home.

“Being in a foreign land often deprives you of what you've always had in Singapore - the food, your own people, the familiar sights and sounds, and more. Singapore Day brings Overseas Singaporeans together in a space with familiar celebrities and the kind of Singapore food that is hard to find in the UK. As always in a Singaporean's heart, it is the food that binds us together,” said Mr Norhakim Shah, a law student studying in Liverpool, United Kingdom.

Compared with previous years, Overseas Singaporeans in the UK played a bigger role in the event. In a first for Singapore Day, the seven-member Acapella Ini, a group of Singaporeans university students studying in London, performed a series of medleys of rock, jazz, classical and even bubblegum pop numbers with a Singaporean flavour. “I decided to participate in Singapore Day 2009 because I knew it was a very significant day on the calendar and that many of my peers would be involved. I think the experience of being able to perform, especially to such a large audience of fellow Singaporeans, is a tremendous experience, and I

think my fellow group members would agree!” said Mr Nicholas Foo, a member of Acapella Ini and President of the UK Singapore Student Council. More than 300 Overseas Singaporeans have signed up as volunteers.

“Singapore Day is a collaborative effort brought together by the people, private and public sectors. Even in this economic downturn, we should not overlook Overseas Singaporeans as they are part of our larger Singapore family. Some of them are also affected by the crisis, or are anxious about the effect on them. Irrespective of the economic situation, we need to continue to engage them, so that they can strengthen their ties back home, regardless of where they are. Through Singapore Day, our Singaporeans overseas can have a good feel of the latest developments at home. I hope that through experiencing all things Singaporean here today, our Overseas Singaporeans will find a deeper and more passionate connection with Singapore, and with their fellow Singaporeans overseas,” said Deputy Prime Minister Wong Kan Seng.

Despite the gloomy weather at the start of the day, about 12,000 Overseas Singaporeans, families and friends attended Singapore Day 2009 in London. A signature event organised by the Overseas Singaporean Unit (OSU) in the Prime Minister’s Office, Singapore Day 2009 saw Singaporeans living, studying and working in the United Kingdom and Europe come together to reconnect with familiar Singapore sights, sounds and tastes, and reaffirm their Singaporean identity.

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