

Speech: Queen's Birthday Party 2017 in Singapore

Ms Indranee Rajah, Senior Minister of State for Law and Finance, Members of Parliament Mr Ang Wei Neng and Ms Cheryl Chan, Chief of Army Maj Gen Melvyn Ong, distinguished guests, your Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen on behalf of my wife, Anne, and myself it is my honour and pleasure to welcome you all to Eden Hall this evening to celebrate the 91th birthday of HM Queen Elizabeth II.

This year is The Queen's Sapphire Jubilee, that is 65 years since she acceded to the throne to become our Head of State and Head of the Commonwealth. And even in her 92nd year, she continues to fulfil a schedule that would exhaust many people years younger than her a reflection of her steadfast commitment to the people of the United Kingdom and of the Commonwealth.

On behalf of the British community here in Singapore, I want to express our admiration and gratitude to Her Majesty and to HRH The Duke of Edinburgh, who celebrated his 96th birthday last week and we wish him a speedy recovery.

In challenging times such as our country has experienced recently with the terrorist attacks in London and Manchester and the dreadful fire last week in west London there is no doubt that the British people find comfort and reassurance in the enduring strength and stability of our institutions, which The Royal Family embodies. And The Royal Family's particular attachment to Singapore has been among the highlights in our bilateral relationship over the last 12 months.

In November last year, HRH The Princess Royal visited Singapore for the conference of the Royal Agricultural Society of the Commonwealth meeting several Ministers and supporting two charities, the Mission for Seafarers and Riding for the Disabled.

Earlier this month, HRH Prince Harry helped dispel some of the stigma that still surrounds people living with HIV/AIDS and with mental health issues when he met some remarkable young Singaporeans, committed volunteers and their supporters here at Eden Hall and he was delighted to take part in an iftar at Jamiyah's Children's home in Geylang.

And just last week, HRH The Duke of York represented The Queen at the Commonwealth Science Conference. While in Singapore he called on President Tan and ESM Goh Chok Tong, met young Singaporean entrepreneurs, and hosted the first Singapore edition of his highly successful Pitch@Palace initiative.

Of course the last 12 months has seen major changes in the United Kingdom. It is almost a year to the day since the people of Britain decided that we should leave the European Union and forge a different path for our country. No one is pretending that the negotiations on which we are now embarked will be easy there will be ups and downs along the way but our shared values, our

shared commitment to free trade and tackling global economic and security challenges our shared belief in the rules-based international system make me confident that although the nature of our relationship with Europe will change, close cooperation with our neighbours will certainly continue.

And the United Kingdom's engagement with East Asia, and with Singapore in particular, will continue to strengthen too. Visits from the Chief of the Defence Staff and the First Sea Lord have underlined the close relationship between our armed forces. Our new British Defence Staff Asia Pacific has opened in Singapore. Our exchanges on cyber-security are deepening and our economic relationship continues to grow. Dyson opened a fantastic new Research and Development Centre here in March. GIC made a huge investment in student accommodation in the UK. Trade Minister Lim Hng Kiang and International Trade Secretary Liam Fox signed a revised Economic and Business Partnership in February. The Scottish Secretary, David Mundell, promoted great Scottish food and beverages.

Deputy Prime Minister Tharman was in London in January and returns this month And in May Senior Minister of State Sim Ann took part in the meeting of Commonwealth Trade Ministers. And on almost a weekly basis, officials are travelling in one direction or the other as the network of cooperation thickens.

In science and research, Singapore has probably more collaborations with researchers in the UK than with any other country. Our first Science and Innovation Strategic Dialogue in January identified new areas for cooperation. The UK Government's Chief Scientific Adviser has come to Singapore twice in the last year and in the last two weeks we have seen dozens of the UK's top scientists here for the Commonwealth Science Conference and global gatherings of life scientists.

But this evening, we have chosen to celebrate great British design. You can hardly have missed the example of great industrial design from JCB over there. The cars on display from Jaguar Landrover are the last word in elegance and engineering. And around the house you will see examples of great British architectural design and an amazing virtual reality experience from Blippar in our Imagination Room. These reflect our uncanny ability to blend technology with creativity to make products that are useful and beautiful. Because it's not Apple's technology that sells. Anyone can do that. It's Sir Jony Ive's stunning designs.

Each year it is a pleasure for us to welcome so many friends and partners to the Queen's Birthday Party. I want to thank you for the enormous contribution you make to enhancing links between Britain and Singapore and promoting UK interests here. Particular thanks are due to our colleagues at the British Chamber of Commerce for their tremendous work in supporting British business in Singapore. And I take this opportunity to recognise the work of Brigitte Holtschneider, who is stepping down after ten years as Chief Executive. At the British Club, Sean Boyle will also be leaving after several years as General Manager and it was my honour to be able to present him earlier this year with the British Empire Medal. The British Association too continues to do great work. And there's one other group of special guests I would like to

recognise this evening. Yesterday was the red carpet opening at Marina Bay Sands of the Downton Abbey Experience. An opportunity for you all to experience firsthand life at Downton Abbey. For the next few weeks you can walk through recreations of some of the rooms up and downstairs from the world famous TV series and then enjoy some great British produce in the special tearoom.

And joining us here tonight are some of Britain's most distinguished actors from the cast: Jim Carter, Phyllis Logan, Laura Carmichael, Kevin Doyle, Michael Fox, and Sophie Shearer. You may know them better as Carson, Mrs Hughes, Lady Edith, Mr Mosely, Parker and Daisy. Thank you for joining us this evening.

Senior Minister of State, Mr Ang, Ms Chan, Maj Gen Ong, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, I would like to close by thanking the people who have worked so hard to prepare this evening's event. First, our many very generous sponsors, they are listed in your programmes and I hope you are enjoying the delicious food and beverages that several of them are providing from England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales.

The Gurkha Pipes and Drums, and the Singapore National Cadet Corps Command Band. The Corps of Drums of the 1st Battalion Welsh Guards. Niall McWilliam, some of whose paintings are displayed around the house. I want to thank my colleagues at the High Commission and the British Council and above all, thanks to all of you for helping us to celebrate Her Majesty's 91st Birthday this evening. Finally, thank you to Ms Joanna Paul who will now perform the National Anthem of the Republic of Singapore and shortly thereafter of the United Kingdom.

View photos from the event [here](#).