

National Symbol of Singapore

The National Symbols of Singapore consists of:

- National Flag
- National Anthem
- National Coat of Arms
- National Pledge
- Lion Head Symbol
- National Flower

National Flag



It is Singapore's most visible symbol of statehood, it reflects the ideals, beliefs and values of our nation. The creation of a new National Flag was therefore a vital task for Singapore's newly elected Cabinet in 1959. The National Flag consists of two equal horizontal sections, red above white. A white crescent moon occupies the upper left red section. Next to the moon are five white stars arranged in a circle.

Each feature of the Flag bears a unique symbolic meaning. Red stands for universal brotherhood and equality of man. White symbolises pervading and everlasting purity and virtue. The crescent moon represents a young nation on the ascendant, and the five stars depict Singapore's ideals of democracy, peace, progress, justice and equality.

Deputy Prime Minister Dr Toh Chin Chye was placed in charge of a committee to create a new flag to replace the British Union Jack, which had flown over the island for nearly 140 years from 1819 to 1959.

He had firm ideas about the design of the flag. There were to be five stars, which would stand for the five core principles of democracy, justice, peace, prosperity and equality. A crescent moon would serve to signify Singapore's status as a young nation.

To ensure that the flag would not be confused with those of other nations, Dr Toh studied the flags of countries represented in the United Nations and showed the Cabinet various designs for their consideration. He was initially not in favour of a red and white colour scheme, as he explained in an oral history interview with the National Archives of Singapore:

"I had produced prototypes with different colours for the Cabinet to decide. I explained to them why we cannot use red and white, white and red. White above red is the flag of Poland. Red above white is the flag of Indonesia."

But after careful deliberations, the Legislative Assembly endorsed the red and white flag on 18 November 1959, together with the State Crest and National Anthem.

The National Flag was unveiled on 3 December 1959 at the installation of the first Malayan-born Yang di-Pertuan Negara (Head of State), Encik Yusof bin Ishak. The ceremony was held in the City Hall Chambers. The Flag was publicly unveiled for the first time at the City Hall steps. The Flag was later adopted officially as Singapore's National Flag upon her independence in 1965.

F=1
4/4

MAJULAH SINGAPURA! Chiptaan ZUBIR SAID.

Mari kita ra'yat Singapura,
 Bangun dengan bersatu sama-sama,
 Rukon damai dan bantu membantu,
 Supaya kita sama-sama maju.
 Kita hidop aman dan sentosa,
 Kerja sama menuju bahagia!

Chita-chita kita yang mulia:
BERJAYA SINGAPURA!
 Mari-lah kita bersatu,
 Dengan semangat yang bahru.
 Samua kita berseru:
MAJU-LAH SINGAPURA!
MAJU-LAH SINGAPURA!

National Anthem

It has a stirring melody and lyrics that echo the enduring hope and spirit of Singaporeans for progress, the National Anthem, "Majulah Singapura" (meaning "Onward Singapore"), is a musical expression of Singapore's identity as a nation.

"Majulah Singapura" was composed in 1958 by the late Encik Zubir Said. Then Mayor of the City Council of Singapore, Mr Ong Eng Guan, approached Encik Zubir Said to write an official song for the City Council to commemorate the newly renovated Victoria Theatre. It was first played by the Singapore Chamber Ensemble. It was performed again on 3 December 1959 as Singapore's National Anthem.

Recounting his thoughts on writing the Anthem, Encik Zubir Said said:

The difficulty is in such a short melody, I have to put in all the words in very simple... it must be very simple, understandable for all the races in Singapore. So that takes long. Not the music but the words take long. I got to be very careful. So, I consulted also an author in language, in Malay language so that I can do it in proper Malay language but not too deep and not too difficult.

In 1959, when Dr Toh Chin Chye was searching for an anthem for Singapore, he expressed interest in Encik Zubir Said's composition, but requested the composer to make some changes. "I told him that for a National Anthem it must be brief, to the point, which people can remember easily and can be sung." Dr Toh also wanted the Anthem to be in Malay, as this is the indigenous language of the region. "A Malay version of the National Anthem would appeal to all races," he stated.

In response to Dr Toh's feedback, Encik Zubir Said made adjustments to shorten the lyrics of the original City Council song and tweaked its melody to create the National Anthem that we sing today.

On 19 January 2001, the current official recording of "Majulah Singapura" was launched. It was re-arranged by composer and Cultural Medallion winner, Mr Phoon Yew Tien, in the musical key of F. This arrangement was "grander and more inspiring" in order to make the anthem "more accessible to all Singaporeans".



National Coat of Arms

Also known as the National Coat of Arms, the State Crest serves as a symbol of Singapore's status as a self-governing and independent state.

The State Crest of Singapore is formed by a shield emblazoned with a white crescent moon and five white stars against a red background.

Red is used to symbolise universal brotherhood and the equality of man, while white signifies pervading and everlasting purity and virtue. The five stars represent the national ideals of democracy, peace, progress, justice and equality. This motif is also found on the National Flag.

Supporting the shield are a lion on the left and a tiger on the right. A banner below the shield is inscribed with the Republic of Singapore's motto, 'Majulah Singapura' (meaning 'Onward Singapore' in Malay). The lion embodies Singapore itself while the tiger represents Singapore's historical ties with Malaysia.

Like the National Flag, the State Crest was conceived by a committee led by then Deputy Prime Minister Dr Toh Chin Chye. The five stars and crescent moon in the centre were Dr Toh's idea, as were the lion and tiger that stand on each side. Explaining his thinking then, Dr Toh said in an oral history interview with the National Archives of Singapore:

"Now in the case of the State Crest, again we got the five stars and the new moon. The ideas were mine. A lion next to a tiger. Tiger, of course, is a more local animal than the lion. What we did not have of course was a crown. You'd find that with the British national crest they have a crown, because they have a history of monarchy. We were a republic, no crown. So it looks empty. That, from the artistic point of view, something is missing. But what can we replace? Well, the old City Council had the Raffles Crest, I think it was a castle or something like that. And a lion. It did merge with our own ideas of self-governing Singapore."

Together with the National Flag and the National Anthem, the State Crest was passed by the Legislative Assembly on 18 November 1959 and unveiled during the installation of Encik Yusof bin Ishak as the Yang di-Pertuan Negara on 3 December 1959.

The Singapore pledge

We, the citizens of Singapore, pledge ourselves as **one united people, regardless of race, language or religion**, to build a democratic society based on justice and equality so as to achieve happiness, prosperity, and progress for our nation.

National Pledge

Initially, the National Pledge was recited with the right hand raised above shoulders while one stands facing the National Flag. The current practice is to recite the Pledge with the right fist clenched at the heart. This change came about in 1988 as the Ministry of Defence wanted to create a more uniform mode for taking the Pledge. The Pledge continues to be an integral part of Singaporean life and is recited by students during flag-raising and flag-lowering ceremonies as well as on important occasions such as the National Day Parade and National Day Observance Ceremonies.

Singapore became an independent nation on 9 August 1965. The 1950s and 1960s were a time of communal tension and racial riots. Hence, there was a pressing need for the young nation to forge a common identity and sense of belonging among citizens of different races and religions.

"When we separated from Malaysia, we were trying to inculcate national consciousness that we are now independent from Malaya. So, I thought we need to have something to gel the people together."

In October 1965, Mr William Cheng, Principal Assistant Secretary of Administration of the Ministry of Education, mooted the idea of a pledge to inculcate national consciousness and patriotism in schools. The idea gained the support of then Minister for Education, Mr Ong Pang Boon, who gave the task of drafting the pledge to Mr Philip Liau, Advisor on Textbooks and Syllabuses, and Mr George Thomson, Director of the Political Study Centre.

Mr Ong sent the two drafts to the late Mr S. Rajaratnam, then Minister for Foreign Affairs, for his comments. After that, the draft underwent another round of revisions by Ministry officials as well as then Prime Minister Mr Lee Kuan Yew before submission to the Cabinet for final approval.

From August 1966 onwards, students began reciting the National Pledge before the start of each school day. As not many schools then had open areas for morning assemblies, the Pledge was initially recited mainly in classrooms. Since then, the National Pledge has been recited during National Day occasions, the National Day Parade and school assemblies. The original English text was also translated into Chinese, Malay and Tamil.

According to the late Mr S. Rajaratnam, the Pledge emerged against the backdrop of a vital struggle to forge a sense of nationhood and build "a Singapore we are proud of". He believed that language, race and religion were potentially divisive factors and used the Pledge to emphasise that these differences could be overcome if Singaporeans were united in their commitment to the country.



The Lion Head Symbol

The Lion Head is a distinctive and easily recognisable National Symbol of Singapore. Less formal than the other symbols such as the National Flag and the State Crest, the Lion Head symbol can be freely used by individuals, organisations and corporations to promote a sense of national identity.

The Lion Head symbolises courage, strength and excellence. It is in solid red against a white background - the colours of the National Flag. The mane has five partings that represent the same five ideals embodied in the five stars of the National Flag, namely democracy, peace, progress, justice and equality. The lion's tenacious mien symbolises the nation's single-minded resolve to face and overcome any challenges.

This National Symbol was introduced in 1986 as the Government wanted an alternative symbol that people and organisations could use to express their loyalty and commitment to the nation. As the National Flag and the State Crest are governed by legal restrictions which restrict their use for commercial or non-governmental purposes, the then Ministry of Communications and Information embarked on a search for a symbol that people could readily identify with.

The Ministry invited local art schools and advertising agencies to produce a new symbol that best exemplifies the characteristics of the nation. Many designs were submitted using motifs such as HDB flats, palm trees and various lions. The winning entry was a lion head by a young designer named Mr Michael Lee, who offered his design as a gift to the nation.

The lion was chosen as it is a powerful and historic symbol of Singapore's status as the Lion City and symbolises three national values: courage, excellence and strength. Singapore's name is itself derived from 'Singa Pura' (which means "Lion City"). According to the Malay Annals, Sang Nila Utama, a prince from Palembang, gave this name to the island after he came ashore and saw a creature, he believed to be a lion.

The National Flower



Papilionanthe Miss Joaquim also known as Vanda Miss Joaquim, the Singapore orchid and the Princess Aloha orchid and incorrectly as Vanda 'Miss Agnes Joaquim', is a hybrid orchid cultivar that is Singapore's national flower.[1] For its resilience and year-round blooming quality, it was chosen on 15 April 1981 to represent Singapore's uniqueness and hybrid culture.

The orchid was known for a long time by its synonym Vanda Miss Joaquim. Ashkhen Hovakimian (Agnes Joaquim) hybridised this orchid which bears her name. It was recognised as a hybrid not only by orchid expert Henry Ridley in 1893 and again in 1896, but by other contemporary orchid growers as well as orchid journals including the *Orchid Review*. Sander's Complete List of Orchid Hybrids, which distinguished between natural and artificial hybrids, listed Vanda 'Miss Joaquim' as an artificial hybrid.

Vanda 'Miss Joaquim' is a cross between the Burmese *Vanda teres* (now called *Papilionanthe teres*) and the Malayan *Vanda hookeriana* (now called *Papilionanthe hookeriana*). It was not known which of the two species produced the seeds and which one provided the pollen. The hybrid was shown to Henry Ridley, the director of the Singapore Botanic Gardens.

Ridley examined it, had it sketched and sent a description to the *Gardeners' Chronicle* writing that: 'A few years ago Miss Joaquim, a lady residing in Singapore, well known for her success as a horticulturist, succeeded in crossing *Vanda hookeriana* Rchb. f., and *V. teres*, two plants cultivated in almost every garden in Singapore.'

On 15 April 1981, Singapore Minister for Culture S. Dhanabalan proclaimed the species to be Singapore's national flower.

The Vanda Miss Joaquim is also the first registered plant hybrid from Singapore.

Researched and Completed by Isaiah Teo

Date of Completion: 3 November 2019