

THE STRAITS CONNECT 2026



ISA Organising Team with the Guest of Honour Minister of State Mr Dinesh Vasu Dash

The inaugural The Straits Connect (TSC) 2026 brought together leaders, entrepreneurs, academics, professionals, policymakers, students, and transformational leaders for a day of meaningful conversations, new connections and possibilities for collaboration.

Organised by the Indian Scholars Association (ISA), TSC was founded on a simple belief: Singapore's strength lies in its ability to bring people, ideas and opportunities together. The theme, Building Bridges, reflected that belief.

PROGRAMME

09:00 - 09:30 AM

Registration, Tea & Coffee

09:30 - 09:45 AM

Welcome Address

Mr Rahul Singh

President, Indian Scholars' Association

09:45 - 10:00 AM

Keynote Address

Mr Dinesh Vasu Dash

Minister of State

Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth &

Ministry of Manpower, and

Mayor of South East District

10:00 - 10:15 AM

Address by the High Commissioner of India

Dr Shilpak Ambule

High Commissioner of India to Singapore

10:15 - 10:30 AM

Tea & Coffee Break

10:30 - 11:00 PM

Inspiring Stories (8 minutes each)

Mr Surendar Chandramohan

International Cricketer, Team Singapore

Mr Matthew Spacie

Founder, Magic Bus

Mr Nitin Jaiswal

Founder & CEO, AgeTech Leadership Labs

11:00 - 11:45 AM

Leadership with Purpose - Panel Discussion 1

Moderator: Ms Kaveri Khullar

SVP Consumer Marketing & Sponsorships,

Asia Pacific, Mastercard Asia Pacific

Speakers:

Mr Ajit Mohan

Chief Business Officer, Snap Inc

Ms Cindy Lim

CEO, Infrastructure, Keppel Ltd.

Mr Amit Sadana

Partner, Head of India Desk, KPMG in Singapore

11:45 - 12:30 PM

Shifting Geopolitics - Panel Discussion 2

Moderator: Prof Kishore Mahbubani

Former President,

United Nations Security Council

Speakers:

Dr Shilpak Ambule

High Commissioner of India to Singapore

Mr Paul Thoppil

High Commissioner of Canada to Singapore

Mr Nik Mehta

British High Commissioner to Singapore

12:30 - 02:00 PM

Networking Lunch

02:00 - 02:15 PM

Building a We-First Mindset

Mr James Suresh

Senior Lieutenant Colonel (Ret)

02:15 - 03:00 PM

Inspiring Stories (8 minutes each)

Mr Sudhanshu Tewari

Co-Founder & CEO, Rewardz

Mr Chander Agarwal

Managing Director, TCI Express Limited

Dr Jack Sim

Founder & Director, World Toilet Organisation

Mr Gummi Ram Reddy

Chairman & Managing Director, Ark Group

03:00 - 03:30 PM

Tea & Coffee Break

03:30 - 04:15 PM

Careers of the Future - Panel Discussion 3

Moderator: Mr Prantik Mazumdar

President, TiE Singapore

Speakers:

Mr Vinod Kannan

Senior Vice President SIA

Ms Pooja Dhanothia

Director, Head of APAC, Large Customers, LinkedIn

Mr Gorthi S S Rao

CEO, CIA & GIG International Schools Singapore

4:15 - 5:00 PM

Innovation, Technology & Society -

Panel Discussion 4

Moderator: Mr Shadab Taiyabi

Former President, Singapore Fintech Association

Speakers:

Mr Sopnendu Mohanty

Group CEO, GFTN

Prof Christian Wolfrum

Executive Chairman, AISG

Deputy President and Provost, NTU

Dr Madan Oberoi

Former Executive Director

(Technology and Innovation), Interpol

05:00 - 05:50 PM

Fireside Chat

Mr Piyush Gupta

Chairman of SMU, Keppel Ltd. &

Mandai Wildlife Group

5:50 - 6:00 PM

Closing Remarks & Vote of Thanks

Mr Abhinav Singh

Indian Scholars' Association

6:00 - 7:30 PM

Networking Cocktails

THE STRAITS CONNECT AT A GLANCE

DATE

22 August 2026

VENUE

Amara Sanctuary Sentosa, Singapore

PARTICIPANTS

350+

SPEAKERS

25+

FORMAT

Leadership, business, policy, careers and social impact

THEME

Building Bridges

ORGANISER

Indian Scholars Association

THE CONVERSATIONS

- Leadership and purpose
- Geopolitics and the changing global order Careers of the future
- Technology and innovation
- Business and entrepreneurship Singapore-India relations
- Intergenerational leadership
- Social impact and community development
- Personal stories that inspire



A community of leaders, professionals, students and partners.

THE INAUGURAL EDITION

The response exceeded expectations

01

Shared
Ambition

25+

Distinguished
Speakers

350+

Participants



The Guest of Honour Mr Dinesh Vasu Dash, Minister of State, Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth & Ministry of Manpower and Mayor, South East District, highlighted the scale of Singapore-India economic ties. "Economic treaties and capital flows provide the framework, but people-to-people relationships provide the substance for the soul of our bilateral ties", he said.

Dr Shilpak Ambule, High Commissioner of India to Singapore noted, "Youths and students are the biggest bridge today between Indians in the world."

WHY THE STRAITS CONNECT

Conversations become connections. Connections become collaborations. Collaborations become contributions.



Singapore has always been a meeting point for trade, ideas, and people. As Singapore's relationship with India deepens across business, education, technology, innovation, and talent, ISA saw an opportunity to bring these communities together.

Rather than focus on one industry or sector, the conclave created a cross-sector platform: a business leader could engage with an academic, an entrepreneur could meet a policymaker, and a student could learn directly from leaders shaping the future.

BUILDING THE THREE BRIDGES

The Straits Connect was designed around three interconnected bridges.

01 INTERNATIONAL

Connecting Singapore, India and beyond

Business, investment, technology, education, talent and public policy.

02 GENERATIONAL

Connecting experience with aspiration

Creating direct access between established leaders, students and early-career professionals.

03 SOCIO-ECONOMIC

Connecting success with responsibility

Extending opportunity, participation and progress through community impact.

THE INTERNATIONAL BRIDGE

Connecting Singapore,
India and beyond



Panellists included veteran Singapore diplomat Kishore Mahbubani, India High Commissioner Shilpak Ambule, Canada High Commissioner Paul Thoppil and British High Commissioner Nik Mehta.

TSC brought together individuals and organisations connected to Singapore and India, reflecting the increasingly deep relationship between the two countries.

- Business and investment
- Technology and innovation
- Education and research
- Talent and careers Entrepreneurship
- Leadership and public policy

WHAT CAN WE BUILD TOGETHER NEXT?

THE GENERATIONAL BRIDGE

Connecting established
leaders and students



Students engaged directly with industry leaders

The poster is for 'THE STRAITS CONNECT Student Career Talk'. It features the Indian Scholars' Association logo at the top left. The event is scheduled for '22 AUGUST, 2026' at 'FICUS ROOM, LEVEL 3, AMARA SANCTUARY SENTOSA'. It lists 'SINGAPORE AIRLINES' as the 'PLATINUM SPONSOR' and several 'PARTICIPATING COMPANIES' including 'accenture', 'EY', 'KPMG', 'LinkedIn', 'NANYANG TECHNOLOGICAL UNIVERSITY SINGAPORE', and 'snowflake'. The poster has a red and white color scheme with a dotted pattern on the left side.

The parallel Career Talk connected students with leading organisations and professionals

A central feature of TSC was the conscious inclusion of the next generation. Alongside senior leaders and established professionals, the programme created opportunities for students and early-career participants to engage directly with industry leaders. The Careers of the Future session offered practical perspectives on employability, emerging opportunities and the changing world of work. Students also heard from organisations including Singapore Airlines, Accenture, EY, KPMG, LinkedIn, India Ready Talent Programme, and Snowflake.

THE FUTURE IS NOT BUILT BY ONE GENERATION ALONE

IT IS BUILT WHEN EXPERIENCE MEETS AMBITION

THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC BRIDGE

Connecting success
with responsibility

THE STRAITS CONNECT.COM



Singapore's success creates both an opportunity and a responsibility: to ensure that progress opens pathways for others. TSC therefore connected professional success with social impact, including support for SINDA.

The ambition is to create opportunities for people who may have had fewer pathways to participate, progress and prosper.

LEADERSHIP WITH PURPOSE



Panel discussion at The Straits Connect 2026

DISCUSSION FOCUS

- Leading through uncertainty
- Building organisations with purpose
- Balancing performance with responsibility
- Developing future leaders
- Creating lasting impact

MODERATOR

Ms Kaveri Khullar - SVP Consumer Marketing & Sponsorships, Asia Pacific, Mastercard Asia Pacific

SPEAKERS

Mr Ajit Mohan - Chief Business Officer, Snap Inc

Ms Cindy Lim - CEO, Infrastructure, Keppel Ltd.

Mr Amit Sadana - Partner, Head of India Desk, KPMG in Singapore

SHIFTING GEOPOLITICS



Panel discussion at The Straits Connect 2026

DISCUSSION FOCUS

- The changing geopolitical landscape
- Multilateralism & international cooperation
- The role of middle powers
- Economic security, trade realignments, & technology competition
- Opportunities for like-minded countries

MODERATOR

Prof Kishore Mahbubani - Former President, United Nations Security Council

SPEAKERS

Dr Shilpak Ambule - High Commissioner of India to Singapore

Mr Paul Thoppil - High Commissioner of Canada to Singapore

Mr Nik Mehta - British High Commissioner to Singapore

CAREERS OF THE FUTURE



Panel discussion at The Straits Connect 2026

DISCUSSION FOCUS

- How technology and AI reshape work
- Skills that will grow in importance
- Career transitions and reinvention
- Resilience and adaptability
- Opportunities across industries and markets

MODERATOR

Mr Prantik Mazumdar - President, TIE Singapore

SPEAKERS

Mr Vinod Kannan - Senior Vice President, SIA

Ms Pooja Dhanothia - Director, Head of APAC, Large Customers, LinkedIn

Mr Gorthi S S Rao - CEO, CIA & GIG International Schools Singapore

INNOVATION, TECHNOLOGY & SOCIETY



Panel discussion at The Straits Connect 2026.

DISCUSSION FOCUS

- Emerging technologies and society
- Opportunities created by AI responsible innovation
- Technology, people and communities
- Inclusive and sustainable impact

MODERATOR

Mr Shadab Taiyabi - Former President, Singapore Fintech Association

SPEAKERS

Mr Sopnendu Mohanty - Group CEO, GFTN

Prof Christian Wolfrum - Executive Chairman, AISG; Deputy President and Provost, NTU

Dr Madan Oberoi - Former Executive Director (Technology and Innovation), Interpol

A WE-FIRST SOCIETY

**LEADERSHIP IS
ALSO ABOUT**

**WHAT WE
ENABLE
OTHERS
TO ACHIEVE
TOGETHER**



Senior Lieutenant Colonel (Ret) James Suresh on collective purpose and shared success.

Building a We-First Mindset explored the importance of placing collective purpose, collaboration and shared success ahead of individual interests. James Suresh showed how this mindset can strengthen teams, build trust and create cultures in which people support one another.

INSIGHTS IN EIGHT

Short, focused stories showed that powerful ideas do not always require long speeches. Sometimes, eight minutes is enough to make people stop, think and see something differently.

- Surendar Chandramohan - International Cricketer, Team Singapore
- Matthew Spacie - Founder, Magic Bus
- Nitin Jaiswal - Founder & CEO, AgeTech Leadership Labs
- Sudhanshu Tewari - Co-Founder & CEO, Rewardz
- Chander Agarwal - Managing Director, TCI Express Limited
- Dr Jack Sim - Founder & Director, World Toilet Organisation
- Gummi Ram Reddy - Chairman & Managing Director, Ark Group

CALLING HOME

Talent, togetherness and tomorrow's Singapore



Fireside chat: Mr Rahul Singh, President of ISA, with Mr Piyush Gupta.

The grand-finale of the conclave was a fireside chat between ISA President Mr Rahul Singh and Mr Piyush Gupta, Chairman of SMU, Keppel Ltd. and Mandai Wildlife Group.

The Road Ahead - building tomorrow's Singapore

The duo discussed issues that will shape Singapore's future - integration, opportunity, talent and skills, and how these intersect with public policy. What stood out was the importance of building a Singapore where talent can thrive, communities can integrate, and everyone has a role in shaping tomorrow.

NETWORKING & COCKTAILS

Talent, togetherness and
tomorrow's Singapore



Fireside chat: Mr Rahul Singh, President of ISA, with Mr Piyush Gupta.

The conclave concluded with band performance by the Indian Cultural Society of the Singapore Management University and networking cocktails.

Networking Cocktails



THE POWER OF PARTNERSHIP



Sponsors and institutional partners made meaningful participation possible.

The Straits Connect would not have been possible without the support of its sponsors and institutional partners. Every partnership represented more than financial or institutional support; it reflected a shared belief in bringing people together to create something larger than themselves.

WITH SINCERE APPRECIATION TO

Singapore Airlines • GIG International School • Accenture • LinkedIn • Olam Agri • Singapore Global Network • SBI Singapore • Rewardz • Lavella • EY • FICCI • IIM Alumni Association • KPMG • NTU • SG Defence • SICCI • SINDA • SMU • TIE



BEYOND THE STAGE



Informal conversations created space for relationships, mentorship and collaboration.

The value of a conclave is not measured only by its formal programme. Coffee, lunch, conversations between sessions and networking created opportunities for:

- New professional relationships
- Cross-sector collaboration
- Mentorship and career conversations
- Deeper Singapore-India connections
- Business introductions

FIVE TAKEAWAYS

- 01 RELATIONSHIPS MATTER** Trusted human relationships remain one of the most valuable forms of capita
- 02 THE FUTURE BELONGS TO THE ADAPTABLE** Learning, adaptability, and cross-disciplinary work will grow in importance.
- 03 SINGAPORE AND INDIA CAN DO MORE TOGETHER** Opportunities span talent, education, research, innovation and entrepreneurship
- 04 LEADERSHIP REQUIRES PURPOSE** Impact increasingly matters alongside organisational performance.
- 05 THE NEXT GENERATION NEEDS ACCESS** Talent needs exposure, networks, opportunities and people willing to open doors.

LOOKING AHEAD

The inaugural TSC was a beginning.



Our ambition is for The Straits Connect to grow into a signature Singapore-India leadership and ideas platform, bringing together increasingly diverse communities each year.

- Singapore-India collaboration
- Future talent and careers
- Innovation and entrepreneurship
- Leadership and public policy
- Cross-sector partnerships
- Social impact
- Opportunities for students and young professionals

We also hope to deepen the bridge between conversations and action - creating mechanisms through which relationships formed at TSC can translate into tangible collaborations and opportunities.

To our speakers, sponsors, partners, students, young professionals, participants, volunteers and the entire ISA community: thank you for the time, ideas, belief, curiosity and countless hours that made the inaugural TSC possible.

THE JOURNEY HAS JUST BEGUN

The Straits Connect was founded on the belief that bridges are built by people - people willing to listen, connect, share and create opportunities for others.

FROM CONVERSATIONS TO CONNECTIONS
FROM CONNECTIONS TO COLLABORATIONS
FROM COLLABORATIONS TO CONTRIBUTIONS

**WHERE THE SHARPEST MINDS MEET
TO THINK, CONNECT, AND BUILD
WHAT IS NEXT**

Integrating communities. Creating impact.

EVENT RESOURCES & MEDIA

EVENT HIGHLIGHTS

5 mins event highlights are available [here](#)

EVENT VIDEOS

Videos from the event are available [here](#)

MEDIA COVERAGE

Tabla!

<https://www.tabla.com.sg/community/events/straits-connect-builds-living-bridge-between-singapore-and-india>

Tabla! Op-ed

<https://www.tabla.com.sg/community/opinion/op-ed-meeting-five-indian-origin-diplomats-two-days-only-singapore>

Singapore Business Channel <https://www.singaporebusinesschannel.com/article/936565800-a-living-bridge-between-singapore-and-india-the-straits-connect-2026-concludes-with-call-to-deepen-ties>

Business Times Journal

<https://www.businesstimesjournal.com/article/936565800-a-living-bridge-between-singapore-and-india-the-straits-connect-2026-concludes-with-call-to-deepen-ties>

Connected to India

<https://www.connectedtoindia.com/you-are-a-living-bridge-singapores-pio-minister-dinesh-vasu-dash-hails-indian-communitys-role-in-bilateral-ties>

Singapore Digital Press <https://www.singaporedigitalpress.com/article/936565800-a-living-bridge-between-singapore-and-india-the-straits-connect-2026-concludes-with-call-to-deepen-ties>

Tech Times Singapore <https://www.techtimesingapore.com/article/936565800-a-living-bridge-between-singapore-and-india-the-straits-connect-2026-concludes-with-call-to-deepen-ties>

Business News Today https://business.einnews.com/pr_news/936565800/a-living-bridge-between-singapore-and-india-the-straits-connect-2026-concludes-with-call-to-deepen-ties

ENI News https://www.einnews.com/pr_news/936565800/a-living-bridge-between-singapore-and-india-the-straits-connect-2026-concludes-with-call-to-deepen-ties

Edex Live

<https://www.edexlive.com/news/youths-students-biggest-bridge-between-india-and-the-world-says-envoy-to-singapore>

Pioneer

<https://dailypioneer.com/news/youths-and-students-biggest-bridge-between-india-and-the-world-says-envoy-to-singapore>

FII News

<https://www.fiiinews.com/2026/08/23/market-students-build-indias-bridge-to-world>