

## **Singapore embodies resilience and strength during COVID-19 and remains a key location for UK companies to explore**

**March 8, 2020:** Visiting any business or one of our member companies this month will likely include an experience of temperature checks, body scans at the building entrance, travel declaration forms and the use of hand sanitiser. These steps have been encouraged by Singapore's Ministry of Health since January to avoid the community spread of COVID-19 within the city-state and are being enthusiastically adopted by companies across the island, keen to continue their business operations as usual with sensible precautions.

Since the spread of COVID-19 in China, the Singapore Government has been quick to react with the necessary travel restrictions and Stay at Home notices to keep residents safe. The timing of the increased cases in China was particularly difficult for Singapore to manage given the period of Chinese New Year when many residents were planning to visit family and return to Singapore or were expecting visitors. In parallel with the necessary limitations on movement, a sustained and an exceptional joint communications approach is ongoing with input from the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Manpower, the Ministry for Trade and Industry, the National Environment Agency, Enterprise Singapore, the Ministry of Finance and the Prime Minister's Office among others.

On an individual level to alleviate a concerned response from residents, official information is released throughout each day through channels including an official gov.sg WhatsApp, a live dashboard of the current Singapore COVID-19 status, health advisories, FAQs and advice for parents. For businesses, the Government announced an SGD\$4bn Stabilisation and Support package in the recent Budget, and Enterprise Singapore and the Singapore Business Federation released detailed Business Continuity Planning Guidelines along with a new programme to help Trade Associations and Chambers (TACs) to support businesses via the SG Together Enhancing Enterprise Resilience (STEER) Programme. The Ministry of Manpower is providing guidance for employees, support for key sectors and monitoring adherence to Stay at Home notices, while the Ministry of Trade and Investment is providing guidance on specific business concerns, working closely with TACs to continue a two-way dialogue with the business community.

All these steps have enabled the continuing facilitation of trade between Singapore and the UK, daily business operations and a resident population which is actively listening to the ongoing precautionary advice. The British Chamber of Commerce has been providing official updates via a [dedicated portion of our website](#), amplified through social media and our interactions with members and the wider business eco-system in support of this.

David Kelly, Executive Director at the British Chamber of Commerce commented: “**We have welcomed the openness and transparency of the Ministry of Trade and Investment, the support from the Ministry of Manpower, and the up-to-date information from the Ministry of Health. The**

excellent communications distributed by the economic agencies on COVID-19 is something that we openly praise and have made these available on our website for the British and wider business community.

“Connecting businesses, building networks and generating impactful events in the traditional way has been challenged by the circumstances created by the virus. However, we see this as an opportunity to think differently and to host virtual meetings to maintain connectivity – if we can’t get people to events, then lets simply get the content of events to our members and businesses.

“Singapore is a progressive and exciting place to work and do business, providing access to the wider ASEAN market. Providing an environment that nurtures start-ups and a business-friendly ecosystem is a key strength of Singapore. The multi-cultural blend of talent that makes Singapore such a vibrant location has demonstrated that viruses such as COVID-19 do not choose nationalities or races, and seeing everyone pull together in Singapore sets a good example for others to follow.”

We are polling our members for the ongoing business impact of COVID-19 this month at a local, regional and global level and continuing engagement in alternative formats.

In times such as these, the resilience of the resident population, the proactiveness of the business community to protect employees and our willingness to work together to ensure a limitation in community spread is vitally important. As Prime Minister Lee stated in his public address earlier this month - “whatever the situation, we can each do our part”.

#### **About the British Chamber of Commerce:**

The Chamber is an independent membership organisation with almost 4,000 members committed to strengthening the ties between the UK and Singapore. We have done so since 1954. Our goal is to deliver member value through the services we offer, that all work towards supporting our members in achieving their business objectives and aligning with our mission of Building Networks, Connecting Businesses and Creating Opportunities. Whether a company is just starting research into ASEAN by scoping the market opportunities in Singapore, have established their business and seeking growth, building connections to the UK Government, or looking for brand exposure and employee development activities, the Chamber is available to support their needs at every stage of the journey.

With a full calendar of activities throughout the year including events, publications and opportunities to collaborate with our members, the Chamber team is available to help as a point of resource, introductions, networking, learning and profile-raising. Ultimately, our entire network benefits from our leading position as a strong and credible voice for our members and British businesses in Singapore and beyond. For further information visit <http://www.britcham.org.sg>.



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