



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
VICTORIA

SOUTHEAST ASIAN AMBASSADORS LUNCH

Wednesday 19th June 2019

Your Excellency High Commissioner of Malaysia, Ms Sudha Devi K.R. Vasudevan
Chair of the ASEAN Canberra Committee

Your Excellencies

Distinguished guests

Ladies and gentlemen

First, I acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the land upon which we are gathering and pay my respects to their Elders past and present.

Tony and I are delighted to join you here at this beautiful residence and thank you so much for your hospitality, Your Excellency.

Thank you too for including Joshua Puls, our Official Secretary, and someone who is absolutely integral to every aspect of my role, including being in charge of arranging our next visit to your region, a little later this year.

I know that we have had the opportunity to meet many of you previously, including at Government House Victoria in September last year. It was in fact just one day after the launch of Victoria's *Southeast Asia Trade and Investment Strategy* – the blueprint for the future of the mutually beneficial relationships between us.

Of course, we talk about the future of trade and investment between Victoria and your countries, but that future is set against a strong history of people to people connections.

Obviously, we are near neighbours.

And we have 265,000 Victorians of Southeast Asian descent: Victorians who are significant contributors to our industry, professions, academia, innovation, arts and sports and community organisations.

You most likely know that Victoria hosts the most international school, university and vocational training students in Australia. In fact, heading towards 40% of the Southeast Asian students who come to Australia choose to study in Victoria.

We are proud to be ranked in the world's top 3 student cities, and certainly do try to offer a wide network of supports for our visiting students.

We know that as they study, and learn about our culture, equally, our local students come to know and understand their different cultures as well. In increasing numbers, our students head off to study, live in or travel in your countries.

That certainly creates another strong connection between us, as does the increasing travel for tourism and work that sees many hundreds of thousands of Victorians travelling in Southeast Asia, and vice versa.

Add our shared interests in major sporting events such as the Australian Formula One Grand Prix and the Australian Open Tennis Grand Slam, (both held in Melbourne), or via our many cultural overlaps – including our Melbourne Symphony Orchestra's collaborations in the region – and we are assured that there is a multitude of ways in which we have come to know, and continue to learn more about each other.

Trade and investment between us is certainly not new, but it is growing. Victoria's two-way trade relationship with Southeast Asia grew by a massive 30% in just the last decade. Investment is also rapidly growing.

We know that you represent a region that is diverse and complex, accounting for 10 different economies, each in their own way dynamic and growing.

Victoria shares that vibrancy and growth.

Our economy has grown year on year for more than a quarter of a century. And it has grown ahead of the rest of the nation for 5 consecutive years now.

Our population is growing faster too than any other part of the country and, in the next decade, Melbourne is set to become the nation's most populous city. We are indeed in the process of Australia's most ambitious infrastructure program. That in itself creates many investment and business opportunities.

Victoria is a State in which we have not had the benefit of the natural resources to be found in some other parts of the country, so in order to prosper, we have had to be smarter and more innovative.

You have no doubt come to know of our reputation for liveability, and that The Economist Intelligence Unit attributes to Melbourne perfect scores in education, healthcare and infrastructure.

Victoria is known as 'The Knowledge State'.

We are proud that the University of Melbourne is Australia's highest ranked university, that Melbourne is one of only three cities in the world to have two universities in the global top 20 biomedical rankings and that one of these, Monash University, is also ranked as the second best university in pharmaceutical sciences in the world.

Melbourne's healthcare capabilities are supported by the combined strengths of the tertiary education and medical research sectors, which enable us to attract over 40 per cent of Australia's total competitive medical research funding. Victoria is also favoured for its fast, cost-effective and high-quality clinical trials.

Like many economies previously based around traditional manufacturing, we have had to change.

Innovation is essential to all that we do, and it is important to us that Melbourne has just been named one of the world's top five strongest growing start-up ecosystems. It is particularly encouraging that 25 percent of our entrepreneurs have come from overseas, specifically choosing Melbourne as their base of innovation.

And so, although agriculture remains an important sector for us – at 3% of the land mass, we produce 27% of Australia's food and fibre exports – advanced manufacturing and technology are now essential parts of our economy, underpinning important strengths in defence, cyberotechnology, med-tech, agri-tech and the food supply chain, sports events and technology, water management, financial services and renewable energy.

I think the point is well enough made that I am enthusiastic about the opportunities and buoyancy in our State.

We know that each one of you is equally able to enthuse about your own country's considerable strengths, economic development, innovation and adoption of new technologies.

We have been fortunate to meet with many of you previously, and are able to understand your enthusiasm. And so, having taken advantage of this generous invitation to talk about Victoria, I must say that we are looking forward to hearing and learning more from each of you over lunch. Indeed, we have visited some of your countries, several on many occasions as tourists, others more recently in an official role. In that latter capacity, we are hoping to visit Indonesia, Vietnam and Singapore a little later this year.

Our visit will follow upon other recent visits of Victorian leaders and delegations.

This year, the Hon Martin Pakula MP, Minister for Jobs, Innovation and Trade and Tourism, Sport and Major Events and Racing, led the first ever Victorian Government trade mission to Food and Hotel Vietnam. He also had discussions on the Hanoi Grand Prix 2020, which is being supported by Victoria, through our Australian Grand Prix Corporation.

I know too that there have been many recent trade and investment delegations in the digital and ICT space, including to Thailand, Singapore and Indonesia.

Amongst the resources available to further the relationship between us are three Victorian Government Trade and Investment offices across Southeast Asia, located in Kuala Lumpur, Jakarta and Singapore. They can provide on the ground assistance and connections.

At the heart of the Strategy released last year is the commitment to a shared future of mutual opportunities and benefits.

In that regard I reflect that, each of us here, in our respective roles, are the temporary custodians of the important relationships that will ensure not only mutually beneficial but – most importantly – enduring relationships between us.

Thank you for so graciously facilitating this occasion for me to make some small contribution today to that future.