

# 'Mutual exchanges between our countries are as strong as ever'



**Interview with Polish ambassador to Singapore Waldemar Dubaniowski**

**Q:** Poland-Singapore relations are growing ever stronger, with the recent visit of the Polish Prime Minister and the signing of some agreements. What is your assessment of ties between the two countries?

**A:** Relationships between our two countries intensified last year. Following Poland's successful transformation to a strong market economy, not only state visits, but, very importantly, investments and economic ties are on the rise.

This year has seen a growing number of people-to-people contacts on the official level. Our Prime Minister's visit was undoubtedly the most significant but not the only one. He was accompanied by Minister of Treasury Mikolaj Budzanowski, who is chiefly responsible for business, investments and privatisation. Ministers and top officials from the Ministry of Regional Development, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Environment came as well on various occasions. Representatives of Polish business associations such as Employers of Poland and Polish Chamber of Commerce have been here recently to explore opportunities for business cooperation.

Since I was appointed to Singapore in 2009, I have been witnessing the growth of Polish presence here. Singapore attracts young Polish professionals who come here to work for international companies or banks but also to contribute to innovative re-

search projects at the NUS, SMU or other reputable Singaporean research institutions. Student exchange is thriving, too. No surprise as Poland has been home to some of the brightest scientific minds, crowned by a few Nobel prizes. Polish people have a very good image of Singapore and lots of respect for its economic success and the organisation of your state. There is a positive sentiment about Singapore as a potential modern and reliable partner for Poland, both in business and knowledge exchange.

Euro 2012 also greatly contributed to our closer ties. Both Singaporeans and the Polish people are fervent football fans and I know that quite some Singaporeans travelled to Poland for the championship and came back with very fond memories of Polish hospitality. I have a vivid memory of the Euro 2012 opening ceremony live screening at Clarke Quay, where, next to a group of Polish fans, hundreds of local football lovers were enthusiastically cheering for Poland. That was a moving moment for me as I am not only a football fan but also enjoy playing myself. I was pleased and honoured to have played for the strong Singapore Parliament Football Team in the executive football charity "Football With A Heart". I find it, by no doubt, the most friendly and healthy way of strengthening the ties.

**Q:** There is much to be gained from trade as well as mutual exchanges in other areas such as R&D, between the two countries and into the regions around them. How has this progressed and what are some of the trends you see going forward?

**A:** Mutual exchanges between our countries are as strong as ever. Trade flows between Poland and Singapore are rising as the mutual trade volume went up nearly respectable 30 per cent from the previous year.

In R&D, renowned professor Wieslaw Nowinski and his team working for A\*Star invariably make us proud by their achievements in groundbreaking research on brain atlases. In recognition of his contribution, Polish foundation Teraz Polska awarded him the title of Eminent Pole in its latest edition.

A steady traffic of intellectual and scientific exchange between our countries takes place also in other areas. At NUS, there are more than a dozen

Polish scientists in physics working in such specialised research centres as Centre for Quantum Technologies and Singapore Synchrotron Light Source. I am proud to say that the Polish community in Singapore is perhaps not large but of top quality and greatly contributes to Singaporean society in science, academia and business.

The Memorandum of Understanding signed between A\*Star and the Polish Ministry of Science continues to be a milestone development, with Polish-Singaporean grant calls for collaborative research proposals launched in such areas as disruptive technologies and security in cyberspace.

**Q:** The recent signing of the double taxation agreement has been a good step forward. What further cooperation do you see in the economic sphere and how can we mutually benefit from upcoming trends such as the drive towards greater regional economic integration and FTAs?

**A:** "Death and taxes are the only things certain in life" – you certainly

know the saying. We cannot avoid taxes but the revised double taxation agreement will at least ease the tax burden and will make it even more attractive for Polish and Singaporean companies to do business with one another. Our economic ties should also benefit from the prospective Free Trade Agreement between Singapore and the European Union, which might still be finalised even this year. In view of the present slowdown in the Doha Round of negotiations, such bilateral agreements are growing in importance.

With its stable and growing economy, barely affected by the recent economic turmoil in Europe; central location; and skilled and competitive labour, Poland is actually an ideal gateway to start doing business with EU countries. Poland is already becoming a regional hub in Central and Eastern Europe for companies from other Asian countries, and would make an excellent hub for Singaporean operations in the region. With Singapore being a regional hub for South-east Asia, our countries could actually form a bridge between the two regions for inter-regional trade and investments.

Like Singapore, Poland is building, in an attempt to diversify its energy sources, a modern LNG terminal on the Baltic Sea which will create new opportunities in LNG transport and trading.

Poland is also considering shale gas exploration and production as alternatives to the current energy technologies. Our shale gas basins are estimated by some experts to be among the largest in Europe. Renewable sources of energy such as wind, biomass and biogas are also growing in importance.

Polish cities are on the path of modernisation and have some strong partners which you will recognise: Keppel's consortium with Polish company Budimex has just won a US\$124 million contract for a waste-to-energy project in Poland.

**Q:** Both our countries are strong in R&D and education. What opportunities can we make use of to build on this and cooperate?

**A:** Like Singapore, again, Poland is known to be a source of well-educated and highly skilled staff in science,

modern technologies and engineering. Worldwide, Polish programmers and engineers consistently score high in international competition. This potential has been recognised by major players in the market, and the number of shared service and R&D centres in Poland is always growing. Google, Samsung, Kroll Ontrack, Intel, Motorola, Sabre, Cisco and Citibank have all located their R&D centres in Poland.

A number of innovative and most interesting technologies come from Polish universities and research institutes. I can mention the example of graphene – an allotrope of carbon which makes a super-conductive, highly resistant and elastic material. Polish scientists were the ones to find a way to transfer the production of this Nobel Prize-awarded substance from laboratories to factories.

Warsaw University of Technology is working on revolutionary bio-implants for bone tissue reconstruction; another scientific consortium has just created a modern avian influenza vaccine that can be conveniently administered with food or water instead of injections. Such technologies have a potential to spur new scientific developments and create opportunities for commercialisation. I would love to see that done, in particular in Asia, through Polish-Singaporean cooperation.

One particularly interesting area to look at might involve "green technologies". Singapore has a strong position in this field and at the same time Poland is now home to many innovations, including work on smart wind turbines, biomass plants, solar collectors, and on energy efficiency solutions, geothermal energy development, and gas and water treatment technologies.

When you go to Poland – anytime soon, I hope – you will see a modern as well as very attractive country and you will definitely enjoy business with leisure.

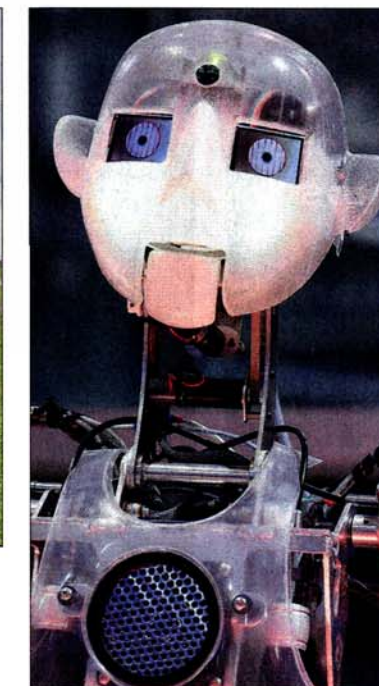
**'Polish people have a very good image of Singapore and lots of respect for its economic success and the organisation of your state.'**

– Waldemar Dubaniowski



**Best foot forward:** Ambassador Dubaniowski, in his Number 33 shirt, playing for the Singapore Parliament team in the executive football charity fundraiser 'Football with a Heart'.

**Right:** High-tech android created by Polish scientists at Warsaw's Copernicus Science Centre. PHOTOS: EMBASSY OF POLAND



Embassy of the Republic of Poland in Singapore

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 Business & investment in Poland: [www.paiz.gov.pl](http://www.paiz.gov.pl)  
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