

To be embargoed until after 12 noon, 26 June 2015 (Friday)

“47 Hill Street” – An SCCCI-SG50 Special Exhibition

Media Conference

Date: June 22 2015

Time: 11 am – 12 noon

Venue: Singapore Flyer VIP Lounge, 3rd Floor

Panelists:

- Thomas Chua (SCCCI President)
- Wu Hsioh Kwang (SCCCI Vice-President, SCCCI-SG50 Exhibition Organising Committee Chairman)
- Adrian Peh (SCCCI-SG50 Exhibition Organising Committee member, and Chairman of SCCCI’s Culture, Education & Community Affairs Committee)
- Dr Tan Teng Phee (General Manager, Sun Yat Sen Nanyang Memorial Hall)

1. Why did SCCCI embark on this Special Exhibition? What is its significance?

In order to enable the public to understand the role of the Chinese business community in Singapore’s nation-building journey, and to understand the Chinese entrepreneurial spirit, the SCCCI has embarked on two large projects in conjunction with the celebration of Singapore’s 50th year of independence. The first project was the “SG50 Outstanding Chinese Business Pioneers Awards”, and the Awards Ceremony was held a few months ago, in February this year. This was to give due recognition to outstanding Chinese business pioneers for their excellent contributions to our nation.

The second is this SCCCI-SG50 Special Exhibition which we have named “47 Hill Street”. Many ethnic Chinese groupings like the SCCCI have been key witnesses and zealous participants in Singapore’s nation-building journey. Founding Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew once declared, “The history of the Singapore Chinese Chamber of Commerce is a reflection of the history of Singapore.” Indeed, this states in no uncertain terms that the SCCCI’s endeavours in the early years were closely interlinked with Singapore’s destiny.

We hope this Special Exhibition would enable the public at large to have a comprehensive understanding of the Chamber's history, both before and after Singapore's independence, and document valuable historical records for Singapore.

The Special Exhibition records the trials and tribulations of the nation-building years, and the important events that the Chamber has participated in during these pre- and post-independence years. For example, how the Chamber fought to attain citizenship rights for the ethnic Chinese residents in Singapore, how it sought for retrospective justice from the Japanese consul-general in Singapore to pursue the blood debts of the civilians who perished during the Japanese Occupation, and the efforts put in by the Chamber to erect the Civilian War Memorial. We believe these episodes of history would bring about the recollections of the pioneer generation.

The younger generation, on the other hand, could learn more about Singapore history from the history of the Chamber, and understand how our predecessors had toiled to unite and make the country strong and prosperous. The Special Exhibition could also set an example for the younger generation to uphold the Chinese entrepreneurial spirit of pursuing excellence, giving back to society and creating wealth for the people. It would encourage the younger generation to carry on the spirit of their predecessors in serving the nation and the people, and take active steps to contribute towards our nation's sustainable development. In other words, we also hope this Special Exhibition would become part of Singapore's collective memory, and be a bond that connects all three generations of Singaporeans.

2. Why is the Special Exhibition named "47 Hill Street"?

Hill Street is one of Singapore's earliest streets, and it witnessed the history of Singapore when it was still a British colony till Singapore's development after achieving independence. 47 Hill Street is the address of the SCCCI. In 1911, the Chamber bought over a mansion at 47 Hill Street for a sum of \$55,000.

In 1961, the Chamber demolished the old building, and constructed a new building at the original locale. The construction costs of the new building were wholly financed from contributions of member companies, demonstrating the unity of the Chinese business community. In 1964, the new building was officially opened by Founding Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew.

The building is a symbol of a great and proud heritage. It speaks of security, for it is concrete proof of the qualities of thrift and industry of a people who had come to the South Seas and made good and settled with the indigenous people here. It is the security of achievement. It is immovable proof that the Chinese had put their lot with the others in this country.

47 Hill Street can be said to witness the Chamber's ongoing resolve for future progress; apart from promoting business growth, it also leads the way for the Chinese community to participate in social, cultural and educational development.

Hence, we have adopted Mr Toh Lam Huat's suggestion of naming this special exhibition "47 Hill Street"; moreover, we are using multi-media to attract Singaporeans, especially the younger people, to come forward and watch the show and exhibition.

3. What are the highlights of the Special Exhibition?

The Special Exhibition has two "Firsts".

- (i) The SCCCI is the first ethnic Chamber in Singapore to witness and participate in the many chapters of Singapore's nation-building journey.
- (ii) The SCCCI is the first organisation in Singapore to use multi-media to present a history of more than a century (109 years)

The exhibition will be presented in two parts – it comprises a multi-media show and static display panels; the multi-media uses more than 20 projectors and stereo sound effects to put together valuable historical and life-like images. It integrates entertainment and education, enabling the viewer to understand Singapore's history through the history of SCCCI.

Also deserving mention is that the concept and production behind the Special Exhibition is totally "made in Singapore"; the multi-media technology used by the production company Digimagic is also a Singaporean innovation. It can thus be seen that our local talent and technology can even rival that of foreign companies.

4. When did the Chamber commence on the preparation work? Were there any challenges encountered? How were they overcome?

The entire exhibition spent a year to prepare. The video production cost \$1.4 million, while the static exhibition displays came up to another \$100,000. From looking for an exhibition venue, design concept and theme, style and production, the production team comprised Singaporeans from three generations. We devoted much time and effort, and went through countless brainstorming sessions, before we could complete this rather herculean and historical task.

We were very happy to have benefited from the assistance of many veterans, including Man Shu Sum, who was the Executive Producer for the video, Toh Lam Huat

who was the Chinese scriptwriter for the video, Giam Meng Tuck who helped us with the historical research for this entire period of history, every member of the Organising Committee who gave wholehearted support, and the assistance from many members of the community. We would like to express our gratitude and appreciation for their efforts and their contributions.

5. Which are the supporting organisations of this Special Exhibition? What role did these organisations have?

The Special Exhibition had the full support of the National Heritage Board, National Archives of Singapore, MediaCorp, Singapore Press Holdings and the Sun Yat Sen Nanyang Memorial Hall; it also received sponsorship from the SG50 Celebration Fund. The co-organiser is the Singapore Flyer and Straco Corporation Ltd.

The National Archives of Singapore, Mediacorp and Singapore Press Holdings supported us by providing much historical information, images and footage; National Heritage Board and Sun Yat Sen Nanyang Memorial Hall provided historical research materials, and the Singapore Flyer and Straco provided the venue and all the projectors and sound equipment.

6. How was the concept of the Special Exhibition derived?

There are five plaques hanging in the Chamber building, all of which have rich historical value; they have been used to denote the different chapters of the Chamber's history in this Special Exhibition, and they represent the missions of the Chamber during the different periods of history.

Hence, the theme of the Special Exhibition is "Marching together to build Singapore", and is divided into 7 main sections – Apex Business Organisation with Predominant Influence, Establishing Foundations, Moving Forward, Unifying for the Future, Congregating the Business Community, Towards Global Connectivity, and Embracing a More Glorious Future – to describe the Chamber's role and contributions in education, culture, community and the economy over more than 100 years.