

The SICCI Journey: 1924 - 2014

Singapore Indian Chamber of Commerce & Industry

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Published in Singapore 2014 by



Singapore Indian Chamber
of Commerce & Industry
ESTABLISHED 1924

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ISBN: 978-981-09-2396-9

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In Loving Memory of Founding Patrons

Mr. Harnam Dass Sharma

&

Mr. Ishwar Dass Sharma

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Message

*I*would like to congratulate the Singapore Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SICCI) on its 90th anniversary. Established as the Indian merchants' association in 1924 to champion the cause of traders, SICCI has helped businesses to connect to the Southeast Asia, India and beyond. It built a strong network of Indian business communities in the region and opened up trade and investment opportunities in India. SICCI is also working with their sister chambers in Singapore, the Chinese and Malay Chambers to share contacts and experiences in their different countries of expertise, taking advantage of our multi-racial and multi-cultural context to help our businesses go overseas.

SICCI has always championed SMEs. When I chaired the Economic Committee in 1985, they submitted a paper that detailed the problems faced by SMEs and made useful recommendations. Today, SICCI continues to help Singaporean SMEs find opportunities in India, the Middle East and Africa. The SME Centre @ SICCI is recognised as one of the best-run SME Centres in Singapore.

I wish SICCI a happy 90th anniversary and many more good decades to come.

*Mr. Lee Hsien Loong,
Prime Minister*



Message

*T*his year, SICCI turns 90 years old while Singapore is preparing for its 50th Anniversary. SICCI is a non-profit organization established in 1924, making it one of the longest established business groups with over 800 members.

SICCI plays a significant role by creating a conducive environment for businesses, especially small and medium enterprises (SME's) to develop and expand their capabilities. In the current highly volatile global economy, the role of the local trade associations such as SICCI becomes even more relevant and important. SICCI, through its various endeavours, provides its members the necessary platforms to grow their companies locally and internationally.

SICCI raises the views and concerns of its members at official platforms so that these are taken into account during policy making. These have ensured SICCI to continue to meet the changing needs of its members and the larger business community.

Singapore has always been keen to reach out to and strengthen ties with other countries. As the world becomes interconnected, it is more the norm than exception for companies to collaborate across boundaries in a synergistic manner to offer a better and more complete solution to the market. It is a world of tsunami where changes are inevitable and a necessity to remain abreast with.

SICCI's new brand image aims to involve and align everyone associated with it to its corporate objectives, core values, key programmes and future directions. This book on our history of the past 90 years is an attempt to chronicle the effort of our founding fathers and successors to establish and build the Chamber.

I wish to put on record our deep appreciation to Mr George Abraham, SICCI's Executive Director from 1980 – 2003 for his past services and contribution. He has put this history together in less than three months and is currently helping us in our reorganization of the Chamber and implementing the plans of actions the new Board has for the Chamber.

Dr. R. Theyvendran
Chairman
Singapore Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry



Foreword

*W*hen I was requested by the SICCI Chairman in June 2014 to take charge of bringing out the history of the Chamber covering 90 years, I felt a sense of *deja-vu*.

It was 34 years ago, when a few Board members of SICCI approached me to accept the job of Executive Director of SICCI. I was informed that SICCI had the opportunity to be active in the ASEAN Chambers of Commerce and Industry (ASEAN CCI). The SICCI President, a former Minister of Commerce, had been appointed the Chairman of the Working Group on Trade of ASEAN CCI and an Executive Director was required to administer and help in research and in presenting position papers for discussions on intra-ASEAN Trade. I was also asked to help restructure the Chamber in line with Singapore's development by the Chamber's active participation in the government's efforts to grow the economy together with the private sector.

The rest as the saying goes, is history. From 1980 to 2003, I had the privilege of serving together with the wonderful team of Chairmen and Board members who helped in the growth of the Chamber nationally and internationally. In the process, I discovered meticulously kept minutes of committee meetings (hand-written) from 1936 onwards till the typewriter came to be used as well as printed Annual Reports. The task of preparing this book was thus made easier because of the existence of these records chronicling SICCI's contributions and involvement in nation building.

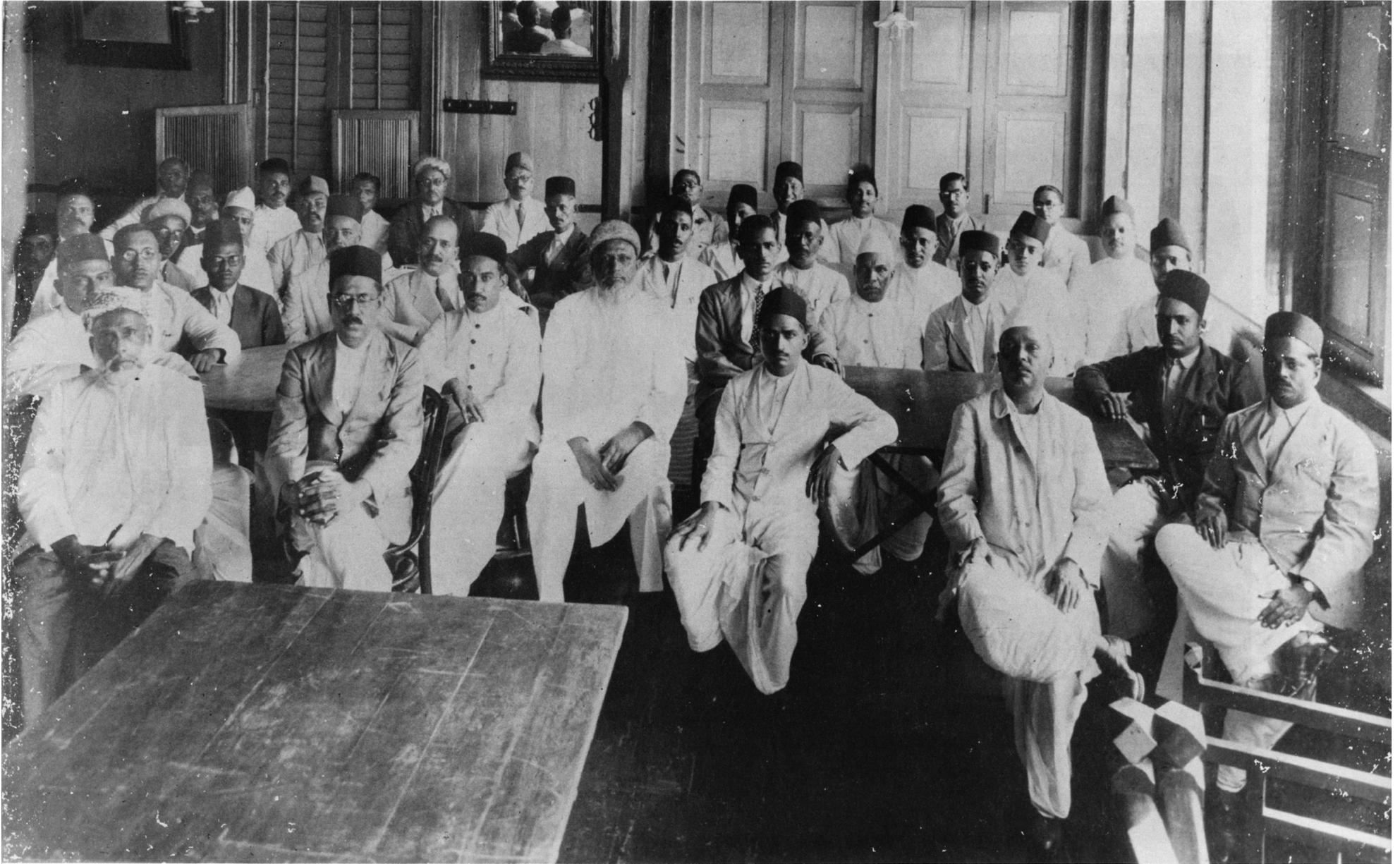
I wish to place on record my appreciation to Chairman Dr. R. Theyvendran for his confidence in me in meeting the deadline of the 90th Anniversary celebrations, Dr. Bernhard Platzdasch who helped in the research and piecing together of the materials available and to Mr. Kirpa Ram Sharma, Vice Chairman SICCI for his general sponsorship of this publication.

It has certainly been a nostalgic homecoming.

*George Abraham
Consultant CEO
Singapore Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry
September 2014*

THE START OF A JOURNEY:

The Humble Origins of SICCI



MEMBERS PRESENT AT THE INAUGURAL MEETING HELD ON 15TH SEPTEMBER 1935.

From documents available with SICCI, the genealogy of the SICCI is as follows:

Indian Merchants Association (“IMA”) - 1924

Indian Chamber of Commerce (“ICC”) - 1935

(Exempted from Societies Ordinance)

The Singapore Indian Chamber of Commerce & Industry (SICCI) - 1992

The rest of the evolution of the SICCI is detailed in the Minutes Books of ICC, Singapore Indian Chamber of Commerce and SICCI which are presently available in (the Chamber) SICCI. The Chamber has its humble origins in the efforts of a few dedicated Indians who set out to organise the Indian merchant community. Their objective was two-fold: to protect and advance their business interests through a unified body, and to play their rightful role in the economic and social development of the island.

Though Indian merchants had been active in trade and commerce in this part of the world from time immemorial, the historic developments that followed the arrival of Stamford Raffles in Singapore nearly two centuries ago gave a new fillip to their activities, particularly in Singapore and Penang. However, the first attempt to form an organisation of Indian merchants was made only in 1924, when Mr. Bhujangilal Mehta was asked to convene the first meeting and “The Indian Merchants Association” was founded with 30 members.

The Report of the Commission appointed by the Governor of the Straits Settlements from 1933 to 1934, to enquire into the Trade of the Colony of Singapore has interviews with officials and members of The Indian Merchants Association. According to our records, the appointment of a Trade Commission was due to the shipping monopolies and this Association single-handedly fought the Bombay Conference by breaking away from them and chartering ships.

Eleven years later, on 26th August, 1935, when Mr. R. Jumabhoy was President, the Association’s name was officially changed to “The Indian Chamber of Commerce” (ICC), a body exempted from registration under Ordinance 116 (Societies) of Malaya. On the 15th of September that year, the inaugural meeting of the Chamber was held under the Chairmanship of Mr. R. Jumabhoy and was reported in the Malaya Tribune of 17th September 1935.

At this first general meeting, Mr. R. Jumabhoy J.P., the President who “was responsible for the establishment of ICC in 1935 and is the founder of ICC”

said: “Today is the first general meeting of the Indian Chamber of Commerce, Singapore, which will remain as a red letter day not only for the Indian merchants of Singapore but of the Straits Settlements, as almost all those who trade in Penang and Malacca have their Head Offices or branches here and most of them are members of this Chamber.”

He said that “The Chamber owed its origin to the Singapore Indian Merchants Association which was established on Nov. 21, 1924,” and that the Association had brought together the Indian merchants and had helped in settling disputes not only of Indians but of others without going to law.

The Association participated actively in the Trade Commission appointed by the Colonial Government and also had its Representative on the Commission.

Mr. Jumabhoy said the Chamber started with a membership of 62 firms who transacted 95 per cent of the import and export business between Singapore and India and of the direct piece goods importers, 90 per cent were Indian and members of the Chamber.

He outlined the role of the Chamber thus:

“As I have already stated, the funds of this Association have been transferred to the Chambers’ account, there is no need of money except that we should own Chamber premises. This is the body which represents your trade, therefore, your cooperation to this Chamber is for your own welfare. The prosperity of any country depends on trade and you are an important part of the backbone of this country and therefore your responsibility is greater. The dignity and respect of the Chamber means dignity and respect of the Indian community and I hope every one of you will maintain its prestige. Your cooperation with the sister communities and the Government is very essential. You have on you the responsibility to look after the interests of the Indian community in general and merchants in particular, a responsibility which I hope you will discharge honourably through the Chamber.”

His words remain relevant 90 years later.

The first general meeting of the Chamber was held on the 6th February, 1936 at the Chamber’s premises at 4, Raffles Quay. At this meeting, Mr. M. Jumabhoy (Mr. R. Jumabhoy’s brother) was elected President.

INDIAN MERCHANTS' ASSOCIATION (IMA)

Presidents 1924 to 1935

Mr. A. M. S. Angulia, Mr. Jivarajbhoy Parekh, Mr. R. Jumabhoy

INDIAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE (ICC)

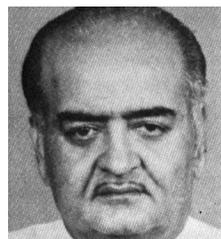
Presidents 1935 to 1990



The Hon'ble Mr. R. Jumabhoy, C.B.E., J.P., M.C.H. President for the years 1935, 1940, 1941, 1946 to 1948, 1950, 1953 and 1954.



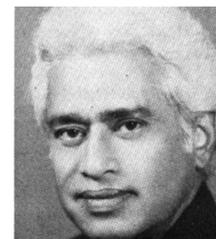
Mr. M. Jumabhoy, President 1936 & 1937



Mr. D. T. Assomul, P.J.G. President 1951, 1952, 1955 to 1957 and 1962.



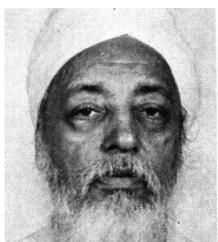
Mr. K. M. Abdul Razak, P.J.G. President 1959 to 1961 and 1963 to 1965.



Mr. G. Ramachandran, President 1966 to 1968, 1973, 1974, 1982 to 1986.



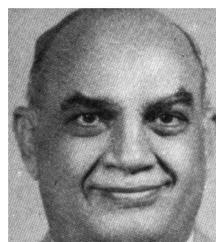
Mr. G. Maganlal, President 1938 & 1939.



Mr. Hardial Singh, President 1949.



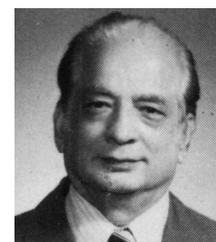
Mr. Roop K. Vaswani, President 1970 to 1972.



Mr. D. D. Sachdev, President 1969 and 1975 to 1977.



Mr. J. M. Jumabhoy, President 1978 to 1982.



Mr. Rupchand J. Bhojwani, 1986-1990.

SINGAPORE INDIAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE & INDUSTRY (SICCI)

Presidents / Chairmen 1991 to 2014



Mr. Tikamdas R. Mulani, President 1990-1992.



Mr. Murli K. Chanrai, Chairman 1992-1996.



Mr. Dau Dayal Gupta, Chairman 1996-2000.



Mr. Nitin B. Doshi, Chairman 2000-2002.



Mr. Shabbir H. Hassanbhai, Chairman 2002-2004.



Mr. M. Rajaram, Chairman 2004-2008.



Mr. Vijay Iyengar, Chairman 2008-2010.



Mr. R. Narayanamohan, Chairman 2010-2014.



Dr. R. Theyvendran, Chairman since 2014.

At the next general meeting held on 7th March, 1937 it was unanimously resolved to register the Chamber under the Ordinance 155 (Companies) of the Straits Settlements. Mr. M. Jumabhoy was re-elected President at that meeting.

Following the decision at the general meeting, on 28th August 1937 the following members signed the Memorandum of Association of The Indian Chamber of Commerce Singapore:

Mr. M. Jumabhoy
Mr. Dayaram W. Vaswani
Mr. Gulamhusen Najmee
Mr. F.H.M. Nakhoda
Mr. Dhanpatrai
Mr. N. Manchharam
Mr. V.M. Shah
Mr. B.K.M. Ismail
Mr. P. Govindasamy Pillai

On 27th September 1937, a Certificate of Incorporation under the Companies Ordinance was issued to the Chamber.

The period between 1935 and 1945 was characterised by constant readjustment to local politics. The Chamber continued to function even during the Japanese occupation. In 1949, the Chamber announced its acquisition of No 41 Market Street for its premises and attained recognition during this period by gaining one seat in the legislative assembly.

This was followed by places on an increasing number of other public bodies like the Advisory Commission, the Import and Export Advisory Panel, the Court dealing with trade disputes, Food and Price Control Advisory Board, Singapore Education Sub-committee, Improvement Trust House Allocation Committee and the Board of Governors of the Singapore Polytechnic.

In 1961, the chamber acquired 55 Robinson Road as the new Chamber premises. For the first time the AGM was held in the Chamber's own premises in 1963. Optimism was reflected in the international contacts that the chamber was making. The chamber's increasing recognition and its members stature



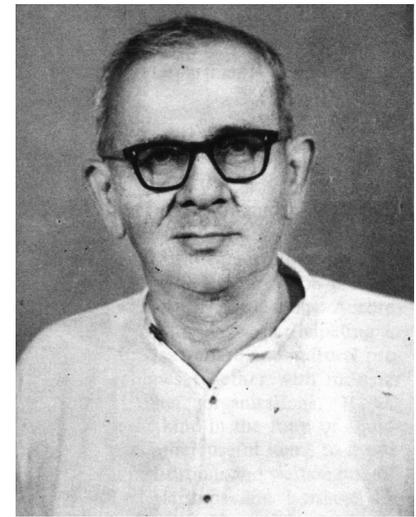
MR. P. GOVINDASAMY PILLAI, J.P.
(P. GOVINDASAMY PILLAI SINGAPORE
(PTE) LTD.)



MR. N. MANCHHARAM (MANACO TEXTILES)



MR. DAYARAM W. VASWANI (W. HASSARAM)



MR. V. M. SHAH (R. P. & SONS (PTE) LTD.)

as traders was indicated by visits by trade missions from India, Pakistan, Iraq, Italy, Japan, the UK, the US, Afghanistan the United Arab Republic, Burma, Sarawak and Australia.

Local recognition increased with the Chamber's seat in various important public bodies like the Trade Advisory Council, the Joint Standing Committee of Chambers of Commerce, the Tariff Advisory Committee and the Economic Consultative Committee. As these were government linked, references to such committees always indicated a sense of the Chamber having a say in economic matters.

The Singapore Federation of Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SFCCI) was formed in 1979 and SICCI was a founding member. The SFCCI was perceived as signaling the emergence of close cooperation between Government and the private sector in matters concerning Singapore's economy. The Chamber's involvement with the ASEAN Chambers of Commerce and Industry (ASEAN-CCI), during this period promised the possibility of better economic consideration and co-operation at the regional level. Until today, SICCI continues to play an active role in regional economic affairs through the various regional and international organisations.

Soon after the establishment of SFCCI, the Chamber's involvement in ASEAN-CCI and Chamber President Mr. Jumabhoy's appointment as Chairman of the ASEAN-CCI Working Group on Trade, the Chamber's committee felt that it was appropriate to engage a professional as the Chief Executive of the Chamber. His duties would include modernizing the chamber in line with the economic growth of Singapore, liaising with various government departments and agencies and working actively in the region through ASEAN-CCI which required the presentation of research papers and the management of regional councils. In July 1980, Mr. George Abraham was appointed the Chamber's Secretary and Executive Director of the Working Group on Trade of ASEAN-CCI. Subsequently, with the support of the Chamber president and the committee, the Chamber embarked on activities to promote the interests of the members at the regional and international level.

1979 was the year when the Chamber's property was acquired by the government and it was only in 1985 that the Chamber bought its present premises in a high rise building.

The Chamber had set out to operate purely as a commercial body right from the start to prove its credibility as a commercial organisation to the relevant authorities. However, it had also been performing important social roles whenever the needs arose.

The Chamber was involved in calls for long overdue attention to the local Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs). The Singapore Indian Chamber of Commerce was instrumental in defining the problem when it first alerted national attention to the long neglected SME sector with its 1985 paper submitted to the Economic Committee, entitled "Small & Medium Enterprises (SME) in Singapore- Problems and Assistance Required". The paper listed the main

problems faced by local SMEs: the lack of institutional support; the lack of financial resources and capital for business start-ups and ventures; and the lack of modern management competence which was characteristic of survival driven SMEs. Comparisons were made to countries like Japan, Korea and Taiwan, which showed that small businesses thrived under the patronage and guidance of official authorities. The Chamber then clarified that the "aim of the policy should not be to protect small businesses but to encourage and support them in growth". The Chamber then recommended that a body be setup to look into the needs of SMEs, supplemented by a core group of consultants from the Economic Development Board (EDB), the Trade Development Board (TDB) and the National Productivity Board (NPB).

In 1986, the Chamber submitted a paper to the then National Productivity Board entitled "Training Needs for Small Businesses". Three recommendations were outlined in the paper to boost the performance of SMEs, as well as the capacity of SME consultants (see Appendix). The NPB took up the recommendations, conducted a training needs survey, courses for chamber members and an associate scheme for independent consultants, as an extension of its consultancy service for SMEs.

The Chamber provided secretariat facilities to the Action Committee on Indian Education (ACIE) set up in 1990 with the aim of improving the educational level of Indian children in Singapore and donated funds towards the printing of the ACIE report, "At the Crossroad." The Chamber's contributions helped pave the way for the establishment of the self-help group, the Singapore Indian Development Association, SINDA which the Chamber continues to support with fund raising.

SICCI has been a firm supporter of Singapore's efforts to develop its external economic wing. By establishing links with India and Indian businessmen the chamber has become an important partner in Singapore's thrust into India's economy. In 1993, SICCI sponsored Parameswara Holdings Ltd, a public company with its registered office in the Chamber, and which held shares in the Bangalore Information Technology Park and other projects in India. In 1996, SICCI successfully organised the Global Indian Entrepreneurs Conference with the support of the Singapore Government which brought together over 500 businessmen from around the world for networking and looking at investments in India.



SECOND FROM THE LEFT: MR. ALAN YEO (CHAIRMAN TDB), MR. K. ABANDAN (PRESIDENT FKCCI) WITH MEMBERS OF FKCCI.

In order to seek new ways to expand its role in Singapore society, SICCI brought in two NUS academics to look into how SICCI could better prepare itself for the next century. As a result, the Memorandum and Articles of Association of the Chamber were amended in 1999 to open up membership to professionals and Indian non-residents which will help bring in new ideas and perspectives into the Chamber.

At a time when the government is encouraging foreign talent to boost our talent pool, SICCI's move to accept non-resident Indians complemented this exercise. The Chamber recognized the positive aspects of introducing such talent into our midst and the ultimate benefit they could bring into the organisation, our community and our country and hopefully provide talented foreign-born Indians a feeling of belonging to Singapore.

In 1999, the Chamber held a historic meeting of representatives of Indian Chambers of Commerce & Industry and Entrepreneur Groups from Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines and USA. SICCI signed an agreement to set up the Asia Pacific Indian Chambers of Commerce & Industry or APICCI. Those present unanimously appointed Singapore as the first President of the APICCI with the Permanent Secretariat to be located in Singapore in the Singapore Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry. This regional chamber will tap the entrepreneurship base in the region;

have exchange of information on a regular basis with the newsletters, trade news, trade missions and joint missions to third countries. SICCI expanded its website to include APICCI members so as to encourage the use of internet for networking and eventual development of e-commerce.

The Pioneers

The earlier pioneers, namely, the Presidents of the Indian Merchants Association, were Mr. A.M.S. Angulia, Mr. Jivrajbhoy Parekh and Mr. R. Jumabhoy.

Presidents / Chairmen of the Chamber

<u>PRESIDENT</u>	<u>FOR THE YEARS</u>
Mr. R. Jumabhoy	1935, 1940, 1941, 1946–1948, 1950, 1953 & 1954
Mr. M. Jumabhoy	1936 & 1937
Mr. G. Maganlal	1938 & 1939
Mr. Hardial Singh	1949
Mr. D. T. Assomull	1951, 1952, 1955–1957, 1962
Mr. K. M. Abdul Razak	1958–1961 & 1963–1965
Mr. G. Ramachandran	1966–1968, 1973–1974, 1982–1984, 1985–1986
Mr. Roop K. Vaswani	1970–1972
Mr. D. D. Sachdev	1969 & 1975–1977
Mr. J. M. Jumabhoy	1978–1982
Mr. Rupchand J. Bhojwani	1986–1990
Mr. Tikamdas R. Mulani	1990–1992
Mr. Murli K. Chanrai	1992–1996
Mr. Dau Dayal Gupta	1996–2000
Mr. Nitin B Doshi	2000–2002
Mr. Shabbir H Hassanbhai	2002–2004
Mr. M. Rajaram	2004–2008
Mr. Vijay Iyengar	2008–2010
Mr. R. Narayanamohan	2010–2014
Dr. R. Theyvendran	since 2014

From 1992, the term “Chairman” was used instead of “President”, in line with the Companies Act and the Chamber's revision of its M & A.

Growth and Development

Membership growth of the Indian Chamber of Commerce has been steady except during the war years and the post-Korean recession. The Chamber started with 50 members in 1935. This figure rose to 62 in February 1936 when the Chamber met to elect its office-bearers. By the end of the year, the membership rose to 85. The War came with its disruption of shipping and loss of the European market. The result was that by 1940 the membership dropped to 73, but revival of activities following the end of the War saw the membership soaring to 202 in 1946 and surging on to 295 in 1947. The Korean War boom helped to further swell the membership to 344 in 1952. Then came the post-Korean War depression with membership dropping to 243 by 1960. But the successful Merger Referendum and formation of Malaysia in 1963 again boosted the membership to 280 and then 338 by 1965, the Year of Separation from Malaysia and Proclamation of Singapore as a Sovereign Independent Republic. By 1976, it stood at 432. From then on the membership continued to grow steadily and today it stands at over 800. This includes non-ethnic Indian firms as well.

The Chamber Premises

The Indian Merchants Association at the time of its conversion into the Indian Chamber of Commerce was located in a small rented room in an old building in Malacca Street, where the Republic Plaza now stands. Later, in 1937, with its incorporation, the Chamber was relocated in a rented but far more spacious premise at no. 4 Raffles Quay. But in 1953 when the site was required for putting up the present Asia Insurance Building, the Chamber had to move out to yet another rented place – this time at no. 94-B Robinson Road. Ultimately in 1963 it shifted into its own premises- the three-storey building at 55 Robinson Road, which it acquired after disposing of the one it had bought at no. 41 Market Street as early as August 1949 but could not occupy as its tenant stayed put! As an unfortunate tailpiece to this long house hunting episode, it may be added that the Chamber's building was acquired by the Government for urban re-development. In 1984, it acquired a modern office space in Tong Eng Building in Cecil Street which housed the secretariat, a trade documentation centre, conference/seminar facilities and library. Finally, in 2008, the Chamber moved into its current 31/2 storey premises at 31 Stanley Road, henceforth known as 'the SICCI Building'.

Chamber Representatives

With the formation of the Chamber and its incorporation under the Companies Act, its leaders had demanded and secured representation on public bodies such as the Municipal Council and Government committees especially those concerned with trade, shipping and similar other matters. After the War, the then President Mr. R. Jumabhoy was appointed to the Governor's Advisory Council, and later to its successor the Legislative Council, both of which were then wholly nominated. Still later, when the council became partially elected, the Indian Chamber in common with its sister Chambers, was privileged to send its own nominee to the legislature. The Chamber continued to avail itself of this representation by electing Mr. R. Jumabhoy to the Council.

Promoting Singapore's Trading & Manufacturing

The Chamber was represented on several Government committees and statutory bodies as well as educational and other organisations.

It was one of the five founding members of the (SFCCI) Singapore Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry established in 1978, the other four being the Singapore Chinese Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the Singapore International Chamber of Commerce, the Singapore Malay Chamber of Commerce and the Singapore Manufacturers' Association. From 1978 to 2002, the 5 constituents had four seats each on the council of SFCCI. Mr. G. Ramachandhran and Mr. George Abraham served as President and Hon. Secretary General of SFCCI respectively for the years 1986-1988 and 1990 -1992.



The SFCCI was dissolved in 2002 and was succeeded by the enlarged Singapore Business Federation comprising the ethnic and foreign chambers of commerce in Singapore. The Indian Chamber together with the Chinese and Malay Chambers have a permanent seat on the Council of Singapore Business Federation and current SICCI chairman Dr. Theyvendran is a member of the SBF Council.

SFCCI as a national body representing the private sector of commerce and industry in the Republic was a member of the ASEAN Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ASEAN-CCI). SICCI held the responsibility for the ASEAN-CCI Working Group on Trade (WGT) for Singapore. Mr. J.M. Jumabhoy and Mr.

George Abraham were the Chairman and Executive Director respectively of WGT from 1979- 1981 and Mr. G Ramchandhran and Mr. George Abraham from 1987-89. They also served as President and Secretary General respectively of ASEAN-CCI from 1990-1991. During their term ASEAN-CCI had achieved considerable progress and the following are the highlights of the projects initiated by them:



ASEAN
-CCI

(A) ESTABLISHMENT OF AN ASEAN-CCI STUDY GROUP

At the 39th meeting of the ASEAN-CCI Council on 23rd January 1991 in Kuala Lumpur, the Meeting gave in-principle approval of a proposal to locate an ASEAN-CCI Study Group in the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies (ISEAS) in Singapore. The overall theme of this 2-year project was to understand how the private sector could act together with ASEAN and other governments in fostering greater economic growth through investments and trade in the ASEAN region. The budget proposal and work programme were presented and accepted at the 41st ASEAN-CCI Council meeting held in Bangkok on 28th November 1991.

(B) ASEAN-CCI TRADE INFORMATION NETWORK “ASEANET”

An ASEAN-CCI/ ITC UNCTAD/GATT workshop was held in May 1991 in Singapore to discuss the establishment of an ASEAN-CCI Trade Information Network. It was agreed that the network, called “ASEANET” would initially contain company profiles on traders, manufacturers and their business interests. By end 1991, most of the ASEAN countries were operational. At the 5th meeting of representatives of Chambers of Commerce and Industry of Developing Countries, members of the Group of 77, held in February 1992 in Indonesia, ASEANET was presented as a model for trade information exchange among Chambers of Commerce, thus expediting the establishment of a network for the whole G77 group.

(C) US-APEC HRD INITIATIVE IN ASEAN COUNTRIES

In April 1990, U.S Secretary of State James Baker announced the establishment of a US-APEC Initiative on human resource development in ASEAN. Working with ASEAN-CCI, the University of Michigan proposed firstly to provide U. S style management education seminars to ASEAN private and public enterprise managers and secondly to developing publish case studies on business in ASEAN

countries which were to be used in the ASEAN program as well as in business schools and programmes in the USA. A series of seminars was held in the ASEAN countries after which the case studies were developed.

From 1993 to 2002, SICCI's Mr. M. Rajaram and Mr. George Abraham served as Chairman and Secretary General respectively of the ASEAN India Business Council. Many projects were initiated at ASEAN-CCI meetings for developing ASEAN-India trade and investment.

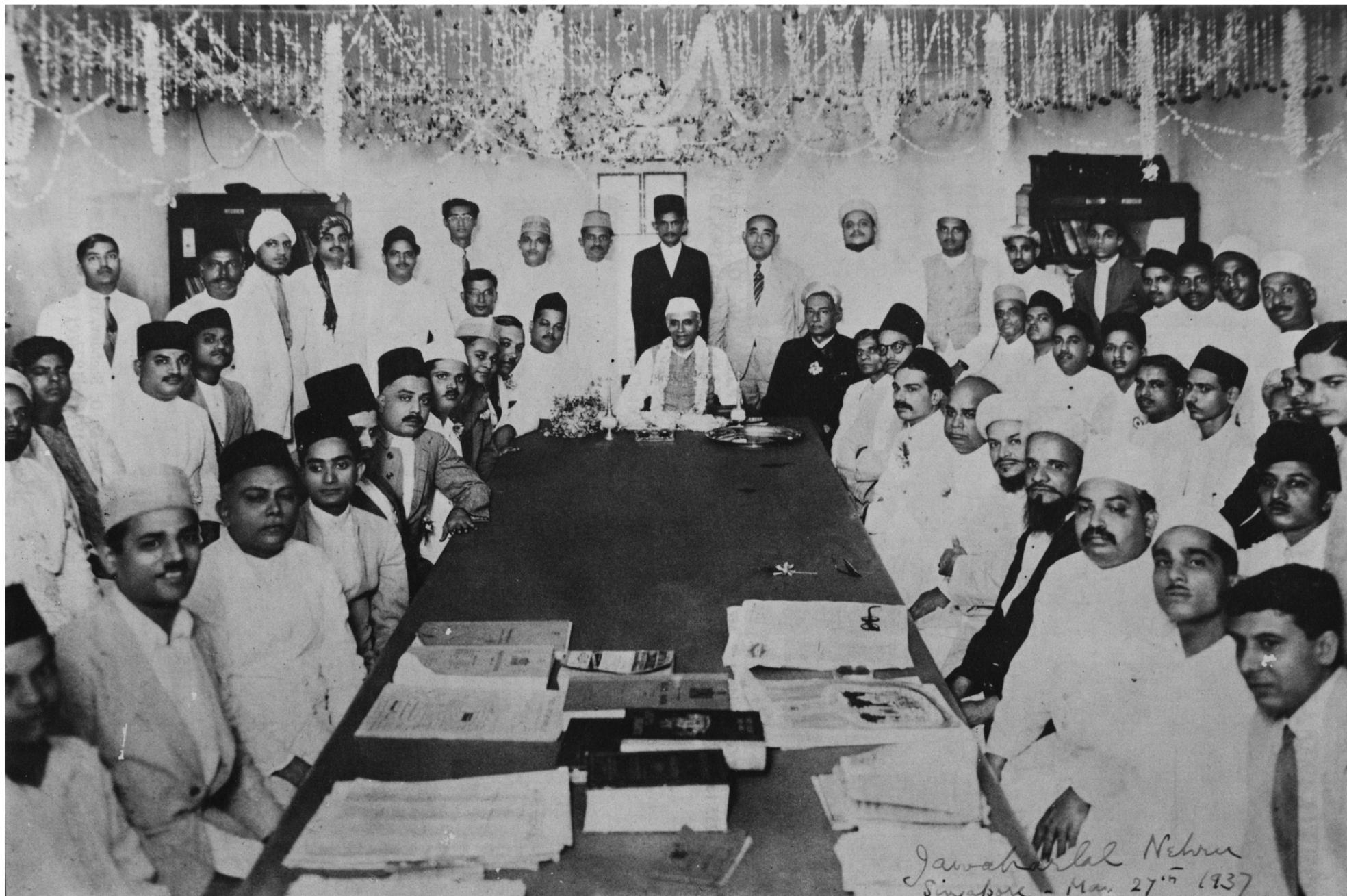
SICCI's Executive Director Mr. George Abraham served as Chairman of the Task Force on Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) of ASEAN-CCI from 1997-2002. In 1999, he conducted and published an exhaustive survey of SMEs in the ASEAN countries covering their current state, issues and problems. During this period, he also worked with the International Trade Centre UN/WTO to conduct workshops for ASEAN traders followed by a buyer-seller meeting. The first on agricultural products was held in Singapore in 2001 and the second on automotive products was also held in Singapore in 2001.



CACCI

The Chamber has also played an active role in the Confederation of Asia Pacific Chambers of Commerce & Industry (CACCI) which has a membership of 23 national chambers in the Asia Pacific region. The Chamber was the Pivotal office for CACCI from 2000-2002 with Mr. George Abraham as the CACCI Pivotal person for Singapore and as Chairman for the CACCI, IT & SME Development Committee. The 65th CACCI Council meeting endorsed the development of the CACCI website which was coordinated by Mr. Abraham.

Thus the Chamber has been playing an increasingly important role not only within the Indian business community but also with the Government and in the regional and international arena. Again, individually on its own and jointly with the other Chambers and the Government Trade organisations, the Indian Chamber participates in trade missions to foreign countries to boost Singapore's exports. It also welcomes missions from abroad and discusses ways and means with them to step up their trade with Singapore and secure their participation in Singapore's exports and industrialisation. The Chamber has also urged its members not to confine themselves to trade but to launch into industrial ventures and enlarge their base of activity in non-traditional areas and this has seen success in the last 20 years.



PANDIT JAWAHARLAL NEHRU'S FIRST VISIT TO SINGAPORE AS PRESIDENT OF THE INDIAN NATIONAL CONGRESS. PHOTO SHOWS PANDIT NEHRU AT A TEA PARTY IN THE CHAMBER ON 27TH MAY 1937 WITH THE PRESIDENT OF THE CHAMBER MR. M. JUMABHOY ON HIS LEFT AND VICE PRESIDENT MR. G. UTTAMRAM ON HIS RIGHT AND MEMBERS OF THE CHAMBER.



MILESTONES IN THE HISTORY OF THE CHAMBER:

The Pre & Post-War Years

The Chamber during the Pre-War Period

1936

The Annual Report of 1936 highlights the activities of the Indian business community at the inception of ICC. As a newly established organisation, the Committee of the Chamber concentrated on strengthening the functioning of the Chamber. The membership as on 31st December 1936 stood at 85.

Four Permanent Advisory sub-committees were set up:

- (a) Shipping: to deal with shipping matters.
- (b) Imports: to protect Indian imports.
- (c) Piece-goods: to protect piece-goods trade and
- (d) Overseas: to protect overseas exports

Three Temporary sub-committees with full executive powers were also setup:

- (a) For the Housing and Equipment of the Chamber's Office.
- (b) For the Rules and Regulations of the Chamber.
- (c) For the Library Fund and selection of Books.

These three sub-committees were dissolved as soon as the duties entrusted to them had been discharged.

Shortly after its setup, the chamber also set up a process for arbitration and one case was amicably resolved in the first year itself.

The Housing and Equipment subcommittee ensured the move of the Chamber to a spacious place, fitted up the Chamber's Office to suit meetings and reading room purposes, and provided the secretariat with every modern equipment.

The Rules sub-committee prepared the constitutions and the Chamber's seal. The Library sub-committee raised \$2,627 to set up the Library. The Imports sub-committee framed the "Chamber's Conditions of Sales", which standardised the tare allowances, the periods of credit and the deduction percentage, on Indian imports. Thus, many disputes which formerly arose over these undefined matters were avoided because a reference to the "Conditions" would at once clear any doubt.

The Overseas sub-committee passed certain black-listing regulations. As a result of this, the bad practice of the consignees of refusing payment of bills

unreasonably, practically ceased. To combat high freight rates paid by the members, the Chamber worked towards getting independent Indian shipping companies to operate between India and Malaya and vice-versa.

The members of the Chamber were mostly in the trading business. Items of exports included areca nuts (betel nuts), coconut oil, copra, cube gambier, gum Benjamin, gum damar, nutmegs, black pepper, sago flour, sticklac, rubber and tin, tapioca and sago pearls, mace and seeds. Imports included aluminium ware, castor and linseed oils, cinemas film, coal, coriander seeds cotton yarn, gramophone records (Indian records formed 1/4th of Malayan record imports), gunnies and onions. In addition, imports and exports included piece good textiles.

According to the Chamber's annual report for 1936, the general trend of the piece goods business during the year was quite satisfactory.

The introduction of the Textile Quota System in 1934 was made in order to help the British Empire Trade generally. This quota system was greatly beneficial to individual importers, in as much as only certain fixed quantities were importable from foreign countries, while the rest of the local requirements were to be imported from the United Kingdom. Reasonable profit was made in the sale of foreign goods, especially of Japanese origin, while substantial imports were made from various parts of the United Kingdom to meet the requirements of this market.

British India Piece Goods: Some of the enterprising merchant members of ICC started the importation of piece goods from India. They started as early as 1935 and were successful in establishing the sale of those goods in this market with good results. Within the year 1936, the imports steadily increased in volume, with many other Indian merchants getting into the business. The main piece goods imported were plain and bleached cottons, dyed and woven cottons. Particular mention should be made of cotton and cotton/art silk mixed sarongs.

70 percent of the Indian sarong imports were intended for the Dutch East Indies. The sarong formed the main feature of local wear generally among most classes of people in Southeast Asia and members of the Chamber had a monopoly on the import and export of sarongs.

The Chamber's members were also promoters of Japanese textiles in the region especially printed cottons, art silk and art silk sarongs which fetched good values and dyed cottons which fetched lower values. Japanese Sarongs had a good market in the Dutch Indies and ready made goods, hosiery, underwears, etc., increased in big volume on account of their cheapness and the shortage of cheap piece goods to make wearing and other apparels.

The Chamber members were involved in re-export trade of piece goods to the nearby Dutch Free Islands, Siam, Thailand, The Philippine Islands, French India, Aden and other places in the Middle East.

1937

During the year the Chamber was affiliated as a member to the International Chamber of Commerce, Paris; the Indian Chamber of Commerce in Great Britain; the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry, New Delhi- as associate member.

The Chamber started issuing Certificate of Origin to members from 1936 and to non-members in 1937.

1939

The committee appointed a qualified person, Mr. M. M. Nayar as the Secretary of the Chamber to head the Chamber Secretariat.

TEXTILE QUOTAS: The Government consulted the Chamber when the quota system was introduced. The members of the Chamber were the largest importers of Japanese piece-goods.

INDIAN RADIO PROGRAMMES: The Chamber committee played an important part in conferring with authorities of the British Malaya Broadcasting Corporation for the resumption of Indian programmes in their broadcasts. As a result of this meeting, Tamil and Hindustani programmes were included in their broadcasts.

MALAYA PATRIOTIC FUND: The splendid response of the Indian community in Singapore to the appeal for contributions to the Malaya Patriotic Fund was a result of the initiative taken by the Chamber in calling meetings of the Indian community for the formation of an Indian section of the fund which succeeded in collecting over \$50,000.

1940

President Mr. R. Jumabhoy pointed out at the Annual General Meeting that "It is the duty of every Indian to join any of the branches of the Local Passive Defence and render service to the country where he earns his bread and butter."

During this year, the President announced the start of a Building Fund for the purchase of the Chamber's own premises. He also said that "a scheme has been devised to have a permanent exhibition at the Chamber's premises for the Indian goods at a nominal fee and thus help the Indian trade in this country. A letter was addressed to the Indian Government with a request to inform the interested Chambers and Associations of manufacturers and producers."

The Chamber had been championing the setting up of Indian banks in Singapore and in 1940, The Indian Overseas Bank Ltd. opened their branch in Singapore. As traders, the members also received full cooperation from the existing non-Indian banks in Singapore.

The Chamber during the Post-War Period

1946

The Chamber entertained Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, then Vice-President of the Indian Interim Government, at a Tea Party on 19th March 1946. A purse of \$15000 was presented to him on this occasion and Panditji donated this sum for the Indian Relief Work.

1947

FEDERATION OF CHAMBERS: The Chamber took the initiative to have a federation of the existing Indian Chambers in the Peninsula. Invitations were sent to the following:

- The Indian Chamber of Commerce, Selangor.
- The Indian Chamber of Commerce, Penang.
- The Indian Chamber of Commerce, Malacca.
- The Indian Chamber of Commerce, Ipoh.
- The Indian Chamber of Commerce, Seremban.

This meeting was held in Singapore on March 27th 1948 to consider the formation of a federation of all non-sectional Indian Chambers of Commerce in Malaya. The Penang and Ipoh Indian Chambers regretted that the representatives chosen by their Chamber were at the last moment unable to come owing to untoward circumstances, but they both agreed to abide by the decisions reached at the meeting. The delegates agreed in principle that a Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce in Malaya should be formed, the nature of such federation to be decided later.

During this period, the Chamber also maintained a working relationship with other similar Indian bodies in Singapore: the South Indian Chamber of Commerce, the Chettiar Chamber and the Sindhi Merchants Association.

(see Appendix I)

1948

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL AND REPRESENTATION BY INDIAN CHAMBER: The year 1948 marked a historic step for progress in the Government of Singapore as for the first time franchise was introduced into this Colony. Mr. R. Jumabhoy was appointed as the Chamber's first elected representative on the new Legislative Council.

1950

In a speech delivered by Mr. Sardar Hardial Singh, President of the Indian Chamber of Commerce, Singapore, at the Ninth Annual General Meeting of the Chamber held at the Adelphi Hotel Roof Garden on Saturday, 22nd April, 1950, he pointed out that the Chamber's membership consists of Indian merchants of every description, without provincial limitation. The local Government had recognised the right of representation of this Chamber on the Legislative Council of the Colony. The influence of its members in the civic life of this City had also been demonstrated by popular elections to the Municipal Commission, where three of the members of this Chamber had secured seats in their individual capacity.

1951

ASSOCIATED INDIAN CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE, MALAYA:

Initiated earlier by the Indian Chamber of Commerce in Singapore, the inaugural meeting of the Associated Chambers of Commerce was held at the premises of the Selangor Indian Chamber of Commerce, Kuala Lumpur, on Sunday, 6th August 1950. Mr. R. Jumabhoy, President, represented this Chamber at the inaugural meeting and advised the representatives first to federate the Indian Chambers in the Federation of Malaya, as Singapore was a free port and politically separate. Singapore Indian Chamber, as senior body, agreed to co-operate in matters of common interest. This suggestion was accepted and it was decided to call this new body "The Associated Indian Chambers of Commerce, Malaya". Mr. S. I. K. Ubaidulla was appointed first President of this new body.

The question of lighterage rates in Singapore also received the attention of the Management Committee and after a very full enquiry in which they were associated with the representatives of the Singapore Chamber of Commerce and the Singapore Chinese Chamber of Commerce, a new scale of rates was introduced taking into consideration that costs incurred in handling goods should be maintained at a level which will attract trade to and not divert trade from Singapore.

In 1951, the Chamber had representation on the Legislative Council, Trade Advisory Committee, Import & Export Advisory Panel, Food & Price Advisory Board and the Improvement Trust Houses Allocation.

1952

In 1952, the Chamber had 344 members.

In a speech delivered by Mr. D.T. Assomull, President of the Indian Chamber of Commerce, Singapore, at the eleventh Annual General Meeting of the Chamber held at the Adelphi Hotel Roof Garden on Saturday, 17th May, 1952, he said, “We meet in difficult times, when prices are falling for most of the commodities and merchants are being forced by compelling circumstances to dispose of some of their goods below the cost price, in order to keep the wheels of commerce turning.”

The Chamber called on the Government of India to abolish or at least reduce the prevailing 25 per cent duty on medium and coarse goods.

BAN ON RE-EXPORT OF TEXTILES TO HONG KONG: Early in the year the local Government imposed a ban on the re-export of textiles to Hong Kong. This unilateral action was taken without prior consultation with merchants. The ban came at a time when large consignments of textiles were lying uncleared in Singapore Harbour Board godowns and merchants were being put to great hardship because of lack of demand from Indonesia and other neighbouring countries.

The Chamber raised the issue with the Government, pointing out that there was no dearth of textiles in this country to meet the internal demand for some time to come and that re-export to Hong Kong itself did not amount to much. The merchants regarded the ban as an unwarranted interference with their normal activities.

Quoting figures, the Chamber convinced the Government that Singapore re-exported to Hong Kong only 6.27 per cent of the arrivals in 1949. In 1950 it was 6.81 per cent.

The Chamber also pointed out that if re-exports from Singapore were not permitted, merchants might be forced to order their agents to ship goods direct to Hong Kong, thus depriving the Colony of its legitimate entrepot trade.

The Government, after quite a lot of correspondence and publicity in the press, relaxed the ban except on the export of cotton drills and cotton duck of any origin.

The chaotic conditions which existed in the godowns of the Singapore Harbour Board, lack of storage facilities both in and outside the wharf area, auctioning of goods by the Singapore Harbour Board authorities, when merchants failed to clear goods within the specified time, added to the troubles of Chamber members.

The Chamber took up this question vigorously with the Government and was successful in getting the authorities to see the Chamber’s viewpoint.

1953

CHAMBERS' LIAISON COMMITTEE: The three Chambers (Singapore Chamber of Commerce, Singapore Chinese Chamber of Commerce and Singapore Indian Chamber of Commerce) set up a Liaison Committee in August to tackle mutual trade and commerce problems. The Presidents, Vice-Presidents and one nominee from each Chamber form the Committee. This was a welcome move in the Colony to review activities of mutual interest and confirmed the important role of the chamber.

1956

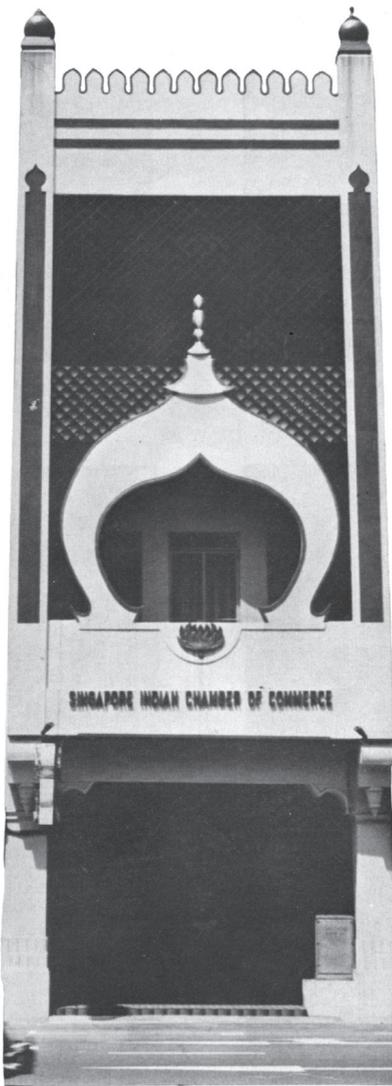
Mr. J.M. Jumabhoy, an ex-Committee member of the Chamber and son of Mr. M. Jumabhoy, former ICC President, was appointed Minister for Commerce and Industry.

The Chamber had representation on the following Public bodies: Trade Advisory Council, Rent Conciliation Board, Board of Governors of the Singapore Polytechnic, Board of Management of the Singapore Youth Sports Centre, Select Committee on Minimum Standards, Committee on Apprenticeship Training Scheme and Committee on Trade Census.

The Chamber’s members were also invited to participate in official Singapore trade delegations to Cambodia, Vietnam, China and Japan.

1960 & 1961

Mr. K. M. Abdul Razak, Chairman, Indian Chamber of Commerce, Singapore in his speech, at 19th Annual General Meeting held at G. H. Cafe on Saturday, 28th May, 1960 said: “The financial policy of the new Government under the new constitution and the practical and courageous steps it took almost at once have given much confidence to the Mercantile Community in respect of the economic future of Singapore.”



CHAMBER BUILDING AT 55 ROBINSON ROAD.

He said: “We, as merchants and traders, naturally feel compelled to take notice of the steps taken by Government to expand the economy of the State, and accordingly to adjust our own ways of trading so that an all-round prosperity is achieved. The Establishment of an Economic Development Board and the encouragement given for the rapid industrialisation of Singapore, show clearly that on a long term policy, Commerce, can no longer be the backbone of our economy. It is clear that both Commerce and Industry will be twin assets to our expanding economy, and as such, members will no doubt appreciate the importance of investing and taking part in the establishment of local industries. This should be in addition to our respective commercial occupations.”

The most important event during the year 1961 was the acquisition by the Chamber of the property at no. 55, Robinson Road.

1962

The Chamber constantly received encouragement and help from the Trade Section of the Ministry of Finance. The Director of Trade met the Management Committee informally once in three months and this resulted in very close liaison between the Department of Trade and the Chamber which addressed issues of concern to the members.



JOINT CHAMBERS DINNER WITH PRIME MINISTER MR. LEE KUAN YEW; 6TH JUNE 1962.

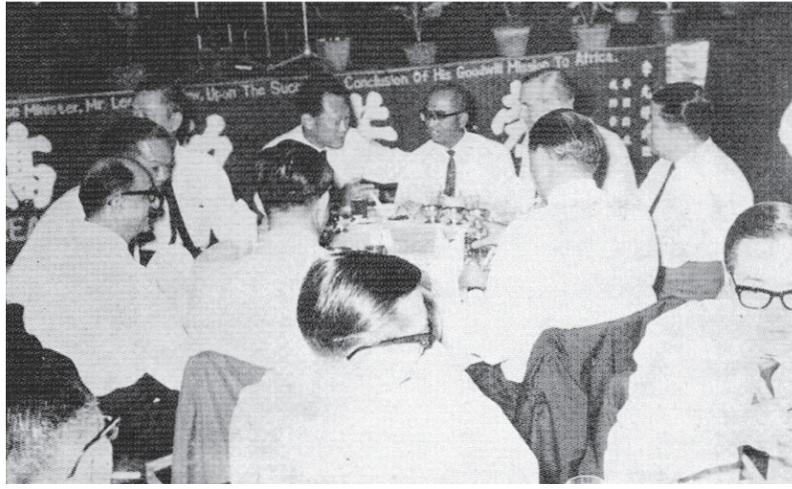
1963

The Chamber's representatives attended meetings in Kuala Lumpur on Trade matters in cooperation with the other Chambers of Commerce. The President Mr. K. M. Abdul Razak and Mr. D. T. Assomull, P.J.G. represented the chamber at the Meeting held in Kuala Lumpur on 30th May, 1963, at which they explained personally to the Prime Minister of Malaysia, the trade and commercial effect caused to Singapore as a result of the policy of economic confrontation which the Republic of Indonesia had announced against Malaysia.

There was also close cooperation between the various Chambers of Commerce in Singapore and the Government. In co-operation with the Joint Chambers of Commerce, the chamber took an active part in organising the following dinner parties:

A. Dinner to Prime Minister, Mr. Lee Kuan Yew, at Cathay Restaurant, on 23rd July 1963 for concluding successfully the Malaysia Agreement.

B. Dinner to Prime Minister, Mr. Lee Kuan Yew, and the Singapore Government, on Sunday, 29th September 1963 at the Victoria Memorial Hall to celebrate the continuation of the present Government.



JOINT CHAMBERS DINNER WITH PRIME MINISTER MR. LEE KUAN YEW ON 6TH JUNE, 1964.



MR. K.M. ABDUL RAZAK WITH DATO AU CHENG CHYE AND MR. N. W. HOLD WELCOMING THE PRIME MINISTER MR. LEE KUAN YEW AT THE DINNER GIVEN IN HIS HONOUR ON 17TH APRIL, 1964.

1964

Mr. K. M. Abdul Razak, President, Indian Chamber of Commerce, Singapore, at the 23rd Annual General Meeting held at G. H. Cafe Ltd. , Singapore on 30th May, 1964, highlighted some key areas affecting the chamber and its members:

(a) The Chamber had taken an active part in the major commercial and trade matters of policy affecting Singapore, in co-operation with the Joint Standing Committee of the Chambers of Commerce. Similarly, the Chamber had, he said, given full support to the Government in its ever expanding programmes to help or to benefit the people in raising the standard of living and to increase the economy of the State.

(b) Members of the Chamber had also been active in social service and had contributed generously during the year to the Bukit Ho Swee Fire Relief Fund, Memorial Fund Committee of the Civilian Victims of the Japanese Occupation and the University of Singapore.

(c) The Government had taken effective measures in co-operation with the Joint Chambers, employer associations, and the National Trades Union Congress to assist the workers who were unemployed as a direct result of the loss in Indonesian Trade. It was agreed to give all such workers, for a period of six months, an income at two thirds of their proven monthly earnings of which 50 percent would be provided by the Government and 50 percent by the employer. Arrangements were made to ensure by law that the affected workers were given priority for employment, whenever vacancies or new jobs were available in Singapore and for those two purposes the Economic Defence Ordinance and the Economic Defence (Direction of Employment) Ordinance were introduced by the Government. The Chamber supported all these measures.

Chamber members continued to be active in trade and their imports of Textiles related mainly to fabrics of Cotton and Synthetic yarns.

Their main sources of supply were the United Kingdom, Hongkong, India, West Germany, U.S.A., U.S.S.R., China, Japan, Formosa (Taiwan), Pakistan, Hungary and Czechoslovakia. Members of the Chamber especially the High Street merchants were pioneers in introducing textiles from Eastern Europe and East Asia into the region.

Members of the Chamber were also active in the trading of Pepper, Coffee, Copra, Coconut Oil, Spices and Raw Drugs.

1965

At the 1965 AGM, President Mr. K. M. A. Abdul Razak reiterated his earlier call to the chamber members: "I am deeply concerned with the lack of interest which the Indian community has shown in participating in the many construction and industrial projects, at a time, when Singapore is speeding towards all round development in all sectors. I do hope members will give this matter considerable care and attention so that our Community as a whole will have a share in the industrial fortunes of Singapore."

A State Economic Consultative Council was established in which all Chambers of Commerce and other responsible bodies were represented. This Council played an important part as a link between Government, Trade Union, and Businessmen, promoting trade and industry and dealing with matters of common interest. Most important of all, the Council gave encouragement for the continuance of entrepot trade in pepper, copra, rubber and other raw materials, as well as for the expansion of all intra-regional trade in South East Asia.

The Chamber's Representation on Public Bodies included the Joint Standing Committee of the Chambers of Commerce, Singapore; the Economic Consultative Council; the Board of Governors, Singapore Polytechnic; the Rent Conciliation Board; the Free Trade Zone Committee; the Singapore Tourist Association; the Ministry of Culture, the Singapore Traffic Advisory Board, the Committee on Tariff Matters and the Tourist Trade Committee.

The Chamber continued to have good relations with Government leaders. A dinner was organised by Chamber, in honour of Prime Minister, Mr. Lee Kuan Yew, on 16th November 1965.

The textile traders faced many problems and the Chamber addressed some of these issues:

- a) A meeting was held by the Textile section to discuss the Government's decision to impose a quota on certain items of textiles.
- b) Two other meetings were held in the Chamber premises on the same subject between the chamber's textile representatives and the Singapore Chinese Textiles & Sundries Importers Union. Three representations were made jointly with the Chinese Textiles & Sundries Importers Union to the Director, Trade Division, Ministry of Finance, Singapore, and they were successful in their efforts.

The Chamber was represented by the President at a meeting held on 26th August 1965 between the Prime Minister, Mr. Lee Kuan Yew and the Joint Standing Committee, Chambers of Commerce, Singapore. Matters discussed at that meeting related to the separation of Singapore from Malaysia and its effects on trade in general.

A meeting was also held between the Joint Standing Committee and the United Chambers of Commerce, Malaysia on 7th November, 1965 in Kuala Lumpur, on the subject of co-operation between Malaysia and Singapore after the separation of Singapore from Malaysia. The representatives were Mr. K. M. Abdul Razak, President and Mr. G. Ramachandran.