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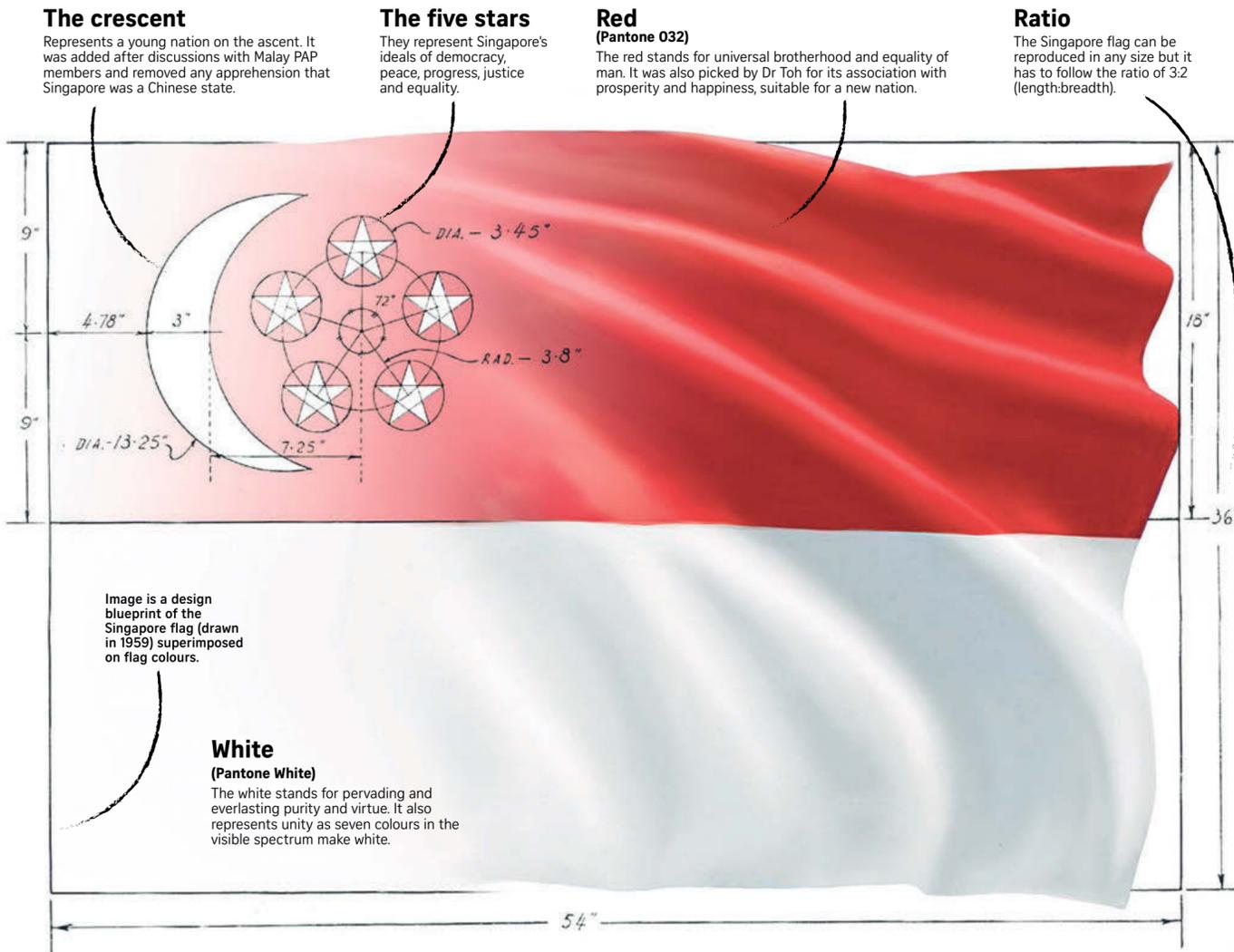
# Flying high

Flags are national symbols – a form of identity as well as a way to convey the ideas, ambitions and values of a nation or organisation. When Singapore became a fully self-governing state in 1959, then Deputy

Prime Minister Toh Chin Chye was tasked by then Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew to create a new flag and state crest to mark its independence. Dr Toh and his team completed the special assignment in two months.

It has been 60 years since then and Singapore now has its own unique and distinct flag as well as identity. Celebrate this anniversary by learning more about Singapore's history and flag with **The Straits Times**.

## BLUEPRINT OF A NATIONAL FLAG



**The crescent**

Represents a young nation on the ascent. It was added after discussions with Malay PAP members and removed any apprehension that Singapore was a Chinese state.

**The five stars**

They represent Singapore's ideals of democracy, peace, progress, justice and equality.

**Red (Pantone 032)**

The red stands for universal brotherhood and equality of man. It was also picked by Dr Toh for its association with prosperity and happiness, suitable for a new nation.

**Ratio**

The Singapore flag can be reproduced in any size but it has to follow the ratio of 3:2 (length:breadth).

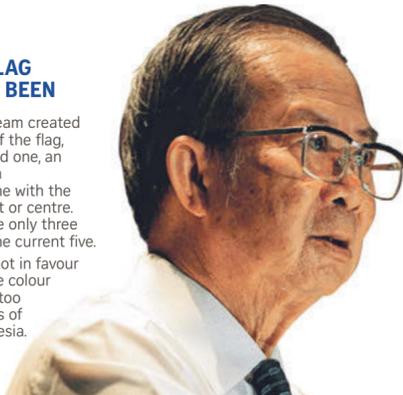
**White (Pantone White)**

The white stands for pervading and everlasting purity and virtue. It also represents unity as seven colours in the visible spectrum make white.

Image is a design blueprint of the Singapore flag (drawn in 1959) superimposed on flag colours.

**WHAT THE FLAG COULD HAVE BEEN**

- Dr Toh and his team created various versions of the flag, including an all-red one, an all-blue one, and a blue-and-white one with the emblem at the left or centre. Initially, there were only three stars instead of the current five.
- He was initially not in favour of a red-and-white colour scheme as it was too similar to the flags of Poland and Indonesia.



**NATIONAL IDENTITY**

**I didn't want any conflict. I wanted a clear-cut Singapore flag, unique to us only.**

**DR TOH CHIN CHYE**, Deputy Prime Minister of Singapore (1959-1968) and head of the team that designed Singapore's flag and coat of arms.

**COAT OF ARMS/ STATE CREST**



- The national coat of arms was designed by Dr Toh's team along with the National Flag.
- It consists of a red shield bearing a white crescent moon and five white stars, supported by a lion and a tiger. Below the shield is a banner inscribed with "Majulah Singapura" (Malay for "Onward Singapore").
- The colours and symbols on the shield bear the same meaning as those on the flag.
- The lion represents Singapore (Lion City), while the tiger symbolises the close economic and political ties between Singapore and the then Federation of Malaysia.

**THE JOURNEY BEHIND THE FLAG**

Despite its short history, Singapore has flown several flags since its modern founding in 1819. Below is a list of the past flags that have flown over the island as well as key events leading up to the adoption of Singapore's modern flag today.



**1819-1826 Flag of the British East India Company**

When Sir Thomas Stamford Raffles landed in Malaya, a trading post was established in Singapore under the British East India Company.



**1819-1826 Flag of the United Kingdom of Great Britain (Union Flag)**

Flown as a sign of British conquest.



**1826-1942; 1945-1946 Flag of the Straits Settlements**

This is the flag of the group of British territories in South-east Asia.

**1939 Start of World War II.**



**1942-1945 Flag of Japan**

Japanese Occupation of Singapore.



**1942-1945 Flag of the Japanese Imperial Army**

**1945 End of World War II.**

**1946 Straits Settlements dissolved.**



**1946-1959 Flag of Colony of Singapore**

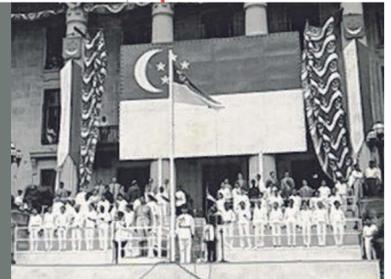
**1959 Singapore becomes a self-governing state; current flag designed and endorsed, along with state crest and National Anthem.**

**GUIDELINES FOR FLYING THE FLAG IN SINGAPORE**

- Must be flown only from a flag pole\*
- Must be in a position of honour (left or middle)
- Needs to be properly illuminated at night\*
- Should be lowered before bad weather if safe\*
- Should be cleaned when dirty and replaced when faded
- Must not be visible when hung outdoors like laundry or disposed of

\* EXCEPTIONS: During the period of National Day celebrations (July 1 to Sept 30), there is greater flexibility in the use of the National Flag to encourage more people to fly the flag. In addition to the exceptions made here, the flag may also be flown on vehicles and displayed on costumes and personal attire as long as it is treated with respect.

The National Flag was unveiled on Dec 3, 1959, at the City Hall steps, during the installation of then head of state Yusof Ishak. The flag was adopted as the official flag of Singapore when it gained independence in 1965.



**OTHER FACTS ABOUT THE FLAG**



**30m x 20m**

The size of the Singapore flag used during the National Day Parade state flypast since 1987. The flag size had been increased through the years from a 3m by 2m flag in 1970-1986.



**1,247kg**

The weight of a fully rigged flag used for the flypast. It takes a team of 25 soldiers one hour to prepare the flag for the flypast.



**1960**

The first time the flag was used to represent Singapore in the Summer Olympics held in Rome, where Tan Howe Liang won Singapore its first silver medal.



**6**

The number of countries which adopted their flags in the same year as Singapore. The flag of the Ivory Coast shares the same adoption day as Singapore – Dec 3, 1959.



**2002**

The year that some of the Singapore flags used in the Busan Asian Games medal ceremonies were printed wrongly, with the stars inverted.



**1959-Present Flag of Singapore**



**1963-1965 Flag of Federation of Malaysia**

**1965 Singapore gains independence.**

Sources: NATIONAL HERITAGE BOARD, NATIONAL LIBRARY SINGAPORE, THE NEW PAPER

ST GRAPHICS: BILLY KER, LEE YU HUI