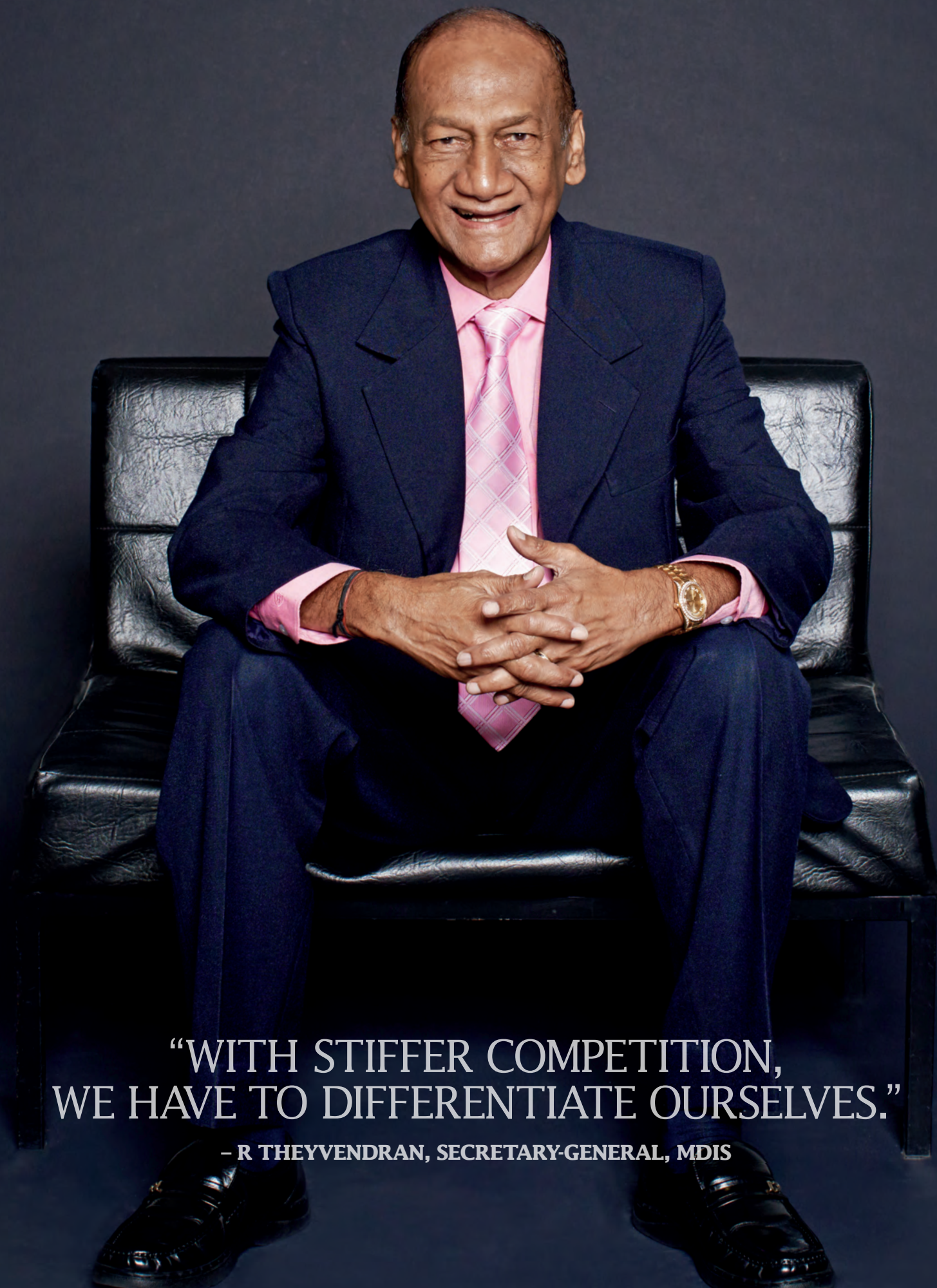


THE BUSINESS TIMES

theSME magazine

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2016



“WITH STIFFER COMPETITION,
WE HAVE TO DIFFERENTIATE OURSELVES.”

— R. THEYVENDRAN, SECRETARY-GENERAL, MDIS

Photography: Ching, GreenPlasticSoldiers Styling: Dan Foo Hair & Makeup: Graneli Loh, using Clinique Wardrobe: Jacket stylist's own



COMMUNITY SPIRIT

ACROSS the board, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) will tell you that they are invested overseas, or that they have plans to go overseas. Everyone knows that internationalisation is a must in order to scale the business. That seems to be a given. But ask people about the Asean Economic Community (AEC), and you will get mixed responses.

As pointed out by Singapore Business Federation's CEO Ho Meng Kit, over 60 per cent of respondents in the *National Business Survey 2014/2015* said that they are aware of the AEC. On the flip side, the federation has also received feedback from businesses that they are still unsure of the real benefits of the AEC.

This is why the year's first issue of *The SME Magazine* is focused on the AEC. Mr Ho and other association heads, as well as United Oversea Bank, share their take on the AEC in a roundtable that we conducted, and what they are doing to prepare their members and/or clients. The roundtable can be found immediately after Top Story.

We continue with our study in both Smart Capital and Legal Adviser. In order to navigate the challenges and be better positioned to take advantage of the opportunities that will no doubt come up, businesses will likely have to turn to mergers and acquisitions (M&As) as organic growth alone will no longer give them sufficient buffer to defend themselves against competition. Smart Capital delves into the dos and don'ts of M&As, and shares pointers on what SMEs need to be aware of as they expand.

Legal Adviser also jumps in to tackle some of the legal niceties that businesses might find themselves entangled in. It picks up some country-specific examples such as Thailand and Myanmar to delve deeper.

Elsewhere, the recently concluded Conference of Parties (COP 21) in Paris – otherwise known as the 2015 Paris Climate Conference – may have reinforced the need for businesses to pursue a green strategy. Beyond completely retrofitting their offices, what are some small (but effective) measures that businesses can take to go green and reduce costs? Space has a whole spectrum of easily implementable tips and tricks.

This issue, our *towkay* is the colourful R Theyvendran, secretary-general at MDIS. Despite the slowing global economy and stiffening competition from the growing private education sector, MDIS has managed to keep a step ahead. It walked off with the Enterprise 50 award last year; it was the first time that the private education institution took part in the award selection process.

We round up the issue with a tour of the highlights from Watches & Wonders, and a look at the steel watches that stole the show at last year's Only Watch charity auction.

I hope you find this issue a useful companion as you move into the New Year.

Mindy Tan

EDITOR



ON THE COVER

Photography:
Ching, GreenPlasticSoldiers
Grooming: Ernest Lim
Wardrobe: R Theyvendran's own

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