

## **Southeast Asia – So much in common!**

I live in Singapore, the heart of Southeast Asia. I am a true blue Singaporean and proud of it. I am fortunate to live in a beautiful, peaceful and economically stable country. That said, Singapore is not the only Asian country with hosts much beauty. In the past few weeks, I have been working on updating my firm's website and as the work we do in the firm is focused on IP in Southeast Asia, I made it a point to look for unique pictures symbolizing various countries to feature on our website. In my mind, it was a simple.

But, as I ventured on in my search, thinking that it would be easy to find different pictures for each country, I came to realise that I was wrong. A lot of the pictures I found were similar for each country, not just in terms of the city landscape but rather the rustic beauty, its people, their heritage, their roots as Asians. So, I discovered that there was a lot more in common than not in Southeast Asia.

Yes, legally and economically, there are stark differences but socially, culturally, and even historically, there is much similarity. For example, Singapore and Malaysia are historically and geographically linked with families living on both sides of the border; not forgetting we are multi-racial and speak practically the same languages. Indonesia and Malaysia, also linked through their languages and strong religious beliefs. Thailand, Philippines, Indonesia, Vietnam boasts many padi fields with rice being a staple food for their people. Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Thailand have historic temples that are the pride of Asia. Thailand, Vietnam, Indonesia, Philippines and Malaysia are home to some of the most beautiful and scenic beaches in the world. Culturally too, the people of Southeast Asia share similar festivals, similar national costumes, similar national dances and even similar cuisines.

Before this research, I thought of Southeast Asia as being vastly different because I was focused on the economic success of Singapore and on the different IP legal systems of this region. But now, I see that, despite our differences, we in fact have so much in common and this make me proud to be a Singaporean and equally proud to be Southeast Asian.