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President's Corner



Dear Friends,
Time flies. It seems like it was only yesterday that I was giving my speech as "New BLAS President". Now I must say, that today, I am still very excited. The fact that 12 months go by so quickly, usually means that you are enjoying yourself and that things are going well. Looking back at this working year, I can only conclude that we had a good year. Most of

our activities were well attended and we had good fun there. We have cut down a little bit on the total number of activities in order to not overdo it and offer too much, but also to try to keep the quality and attendance high.

Based on the number of BLAS members, we can only say that things are indeed going well. As communicated already before, we have passed the 400 member mark some time ago. Which is quite an achievement, looking at where we were in the beginning of the year. Now, honestly, I don't think I deserve any credit for that. It is the BLAS team that did this, and talking about the increasing number of members, it is certainly thanks to our welcome team and Bieke, who are usually the first BLAS contact of those newly arriving in Singapore. They have done a great job in attracting new members! But I am sure that all of you here, not to say all members are good BLAS ambassadors, so in fact I have to thank you all.

Looking at our activities, I was especially pleased to see that it was again possible to have all our monthly Get2Gethers at the homes of some of our members, who were so kind to open their house, their garden or even their swimming pool ... for our gatherings. This brings a lot of work, and often also stress, I am sure. And because these evenings are so good, usually the last guests only leave in the early morning ... So a special thanks from my side to those amongst you that were so kind to open their doors ... I hope we did not create too much mess, I hope your neighbours are still talking to you and that we are welcome again sometime in the future. Thanks to Inge and Koen also for making these evenings happen and of course to safeguard the supply of Belgian beer.

Our other fun activities were good fun as always and very well organised at some very nice locations. We reached new heights, and I am quite sure we even had the "highest" BLAS party ever this year. Now one of the challenges we have ahead is that our fun "team" is leaving. Thanks Marielle, and all the best in Bangkok. I hope you will still come and visit us in the future.

We are a very family oriented organisation, therefore kids are important and their activities are often the most attended ones. Again this year, our youngsters showed up in big numbers and made a lot of noise at their activi-

ties. Amongst all the other events, Sinterklaas and the Easter egg hunt were the traditional highlights. Also here we have the challenge of having to replace our highly committed kids team. Sevrine is moving back to Belgium and Ingeborg wants to cut down a bit after some very active BLAS years, which I fully understand. All the best back home in sunny Belgium, Sevrine !

We have also had look for a new Vice President. A sincere thank you Dirk for your contribution to the BLAS during the last years! I am not sure if Inge and you have now taken a decision on where your future will be. Anyhow, I hope both of you will stay in town, but if not, all the best in Vietnam or somewhere else.

Also on the sports front all was going smooth. Our famous Belgium football team was performing well again, I hear the quality of their game has even further improved with some good transfers. And social tennis on Friday continues to be one of the weekly highlights in the Hollandse Club.

It is always dangerous when you start mentioning names, but I felt obliged to mention a few above. Thanks also of course to all the others that made BLAS happen this year: the Gazette team, where we will miss the help of Inge Schwartz next year – good luck back home Inge – the teens club, our website master – also Quiz master this year, our ladies of the lunch bunch, the play group, culture ... And last but not least Erik and his BLBG team, as they had an excellent year.

We should not only look back of course, we have to look forward. And there it seems like some of the traditional BLAS activities will need a bit of a "revive" next year. For example the Car Rally. It was really sad to see that we only had 5 teams participating this year, as this a great event and it requires a lot of preparation from the organising team. Also for some other events like the quiz we are struggling to get enough participants. So we will work on this.

Now, in order to further improve what we do, to make sure we maintain the right standards and offer what our members are expecting from us, we need their feedback of course. For this we have sent out a satisfaction survey to get your feedback on our work. So please, for those of you that have not completed it yet, take 10 minutes, go online and give us your feedback, it will really help us. We have already decided to put the BLAS website and Gazette in a new dress, but this you will see next year. And as always, the end of the year also means we have to say good bye to several members, but that's life. To all of you that are leaving Singapore: all the best! Where ever you are heading. To the ones who stay, I wish all of you a fantastic summer break and look forward to meet you again in after summer.

Cheers,
Jan

Embassy's Corner



Dear all,

How fast another year has gone by. It seems the unrelenting pace of Singapore is making the world spin faster and the days, weeks and months fly by at breakneck speed.

Most of us are preparing for the summer holidays, seeking a bit of relief from the heat of Singapore (although, at the precise time I am writing this, it is raining...), and many going back to Belgium to see family and friends, praying for good old fashioned summer weather and looking forward to the countless goodies our country has to offer.

To all, happy holidays !

In this fast spinning world change is inevitable, and I guess some of you will be packing up and be leaving us for good for other pastures, (and if you do, bon voyage !) but new faces will no doubt arrive to strengthen our numbers in Singapore, which stand at well over a thousand now.

Change is coming to the Embassy as well. You all undoubtedly know that consul Jeroen Deberdt left us in January already to go back to Brussels, (but maybe not many of you know that just a month ago he got married !).

We will face the imminent departure of Matthieu and Erica Branders in September, quite a loss to our team, but we can expect the arrival in the same month of two new diplomats at 8 Shenton Way, one of them being in charge of consular and administrative affairs.

A new world will open up for them (and for us too), but I remain confident that the necessary period of adaptation will be sweet and short and that things at the Embassy will run smoothly as ever thereafter. I am sure you will all have an opportunity to meet

them once they have settled in and that they will be a welcome addition to our ever growing larger "family" in Singapore.

As this is the last issue of the Gazette before the summer break, I would of course like to congratulate the BLAS volunteers for all the work and effort they put in, not only in bringing out the Gazette on time, but also for organizing a series of activities for young and old(er). Kudos are also in order for the BLBG and their successful organization of a number of meaningful events throughout the year.

See you all when you are back !

Yours,

Roland van Remoortele
Ambassador

Consular Matters

Royal Embassy



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The embassy is open
Monday to Friday:
8.30 am to 12.30 pm
1.30 pm to 4.00 pm

Closing dates :
See page 5

Pledge of financial support

The Embassy occasionally receives enquiries about how to obtain a pledge of financial support, which is mainly required for visa application purposes. Here is some information on the subject and its recent changes that might be useful for some of you.

With effect from April 2011, Belgians who are de-registered from the population registers in Belgium (including Belgians who are registered at the Embassy) can no longer act as a guarantor for a visa applicant through a pledge of financial support (also called Annex 3bis).

A pledge of financial support is a specific proof of means of subsistence. It offers a solution in situations where a visa applicant cannot prove his/her own solvency. Through this pledge of financial support, a Belgian national domiciled in Belgium, or a foreign national with a right to reside for an indefinite period of time in Belgium, acts as a guarantor for the applicant's period of residence, return journey and medical costs.

The guarantor should ask for the pledge of financial support at the municipality of his/her place of residence. The guarantor does not have to be the issuer of the invitation. When the pledge of financial support has been authenticated by the municipal authorities, the original document must be submitted to the relevant embassy or consulate, within six months of the authentication, together with:

- a copy of the guarantor's last three pay slips or any other (official) document proving his/her solvency
- an attestation of family composition (to be requested at the municipality)
- copy of a document proving that the guarantor is of Belgian nationality (identity card) or has authorization to stay in Belgium indefinitely (residence permit).

See table on page 5 (Purpose of trip)

Please refer to the website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Brussels for more information: <http://diplomatie.belgium.be/>

Engagement de prise en charge : [http://diplomatie.belgium.be/en/binaries/
brochuregarantenFR_tcm312-122599.doc](http://diplomatie.belgium.be/en/binaries/brochuregarantenFR_tcm312-122599.doc)

Verbintenis tot tenlasteneming: [http://diplomatie.belgium.be/nl/binaries/
brochuregarantenNL_tcm314-122599.doc](http://diplomatie.belgium.be/nl/binaries/brochuregarantenNL_tcm314-122599.doc)

Specimens: [http://diplomatie.belgium.be/nl/binaries/
TenlastenemingNL_tcm314-122600.pdf](http://diplomatie.belgium.be/nl/binaries/TenlastenemingNL_tcm314-122600.pdf)

[http://diplomatie.belgium.be/fr/binaries/
TenlastenemingFR_tcm313-122600.pdf](http://diplomatie.belgium.be/fr/binaries/TenlastenemingFR_tcm313-122600.pdf)

Consular matters

Pledge of financial support	PURPOSE OF TRIP: TOURISM OR VISITING FRIENDS	PURPOSE OF TRIP: VIS- ITING FAMILY (1 ST AND 2 ND DEGREE)
Basic monthly amount	1000€	800€
To add by current dependant of the guarantor (composition of family)	150€	150€
To add by anybody additional sub- ject to be responsible (person in- vited) by the guarantor	200€	150€
Minimum monthly income required from the guarantor	1350€	1100€

PUBLIC HOLIDAYS ON WHICH THE EMBASSY OF BELGIUM IN SINGAPORE WILL BE CLOSED IN 2011

Thursday	02	<i>June</i>	Ascension Day
Monday	13		Whit Monday
Thursday	21	<i>July</i>	Belgian National Day
Tuesday	09	<i>August</i>	National Day
Monday	15		Assumption Day
Tuesday	30		Hari Raya Puasa
Wednesday	26	<i>October</i>	Deepavali**
Tuesday	01	<i>November</i>	All Saints' Day
Monday	07		Hari Raya Haji (<i>Sun. 6 Nov</i>)*
Tuesday	15		King's Day
Monday	26	<i>December</i>	Christmas Day (<i>Sun. 25 Dec</i>)*
Tuesday	27		Boxing Day (<i>Mon. 26 Dec.</i>)*

** The date, 26 October 2011, for Deepavali needs to be checked against the Indian Almanac when it is available. Should there be a change in date, the Ministry of Manpower will issue a media release to announce the change.

* Where a holiday falls on a Saturday or Sunday, the next working day will be a holiday.

Refs: <http://www.mom.gov.sg/employment-practices/employment-rights-conditions/leave-and-holiday/Pages/PublicHolidays2011.aspx>

<http://www.feiertagskalender.ch/index.php>

BLBG'S CORNER



Dear BLAS and BLBG friends,

Coming at the end of a working year ... in the aftermath of the Singapore elections

While several of you are preparing for the annual vacation break, either back home to Belgium or somewhere in the region closer to the Lion City, we can reflect back on a year of interesting events organized by the BLBG.

I want to use this opportunity to express my appreciation to Dominique Soete who has been, once again, effective in producing a year round program of monthly BLBG events. Also thanks to Pascale Noel who supported the organization of our monthly events. Without their help and support, we would not have been able to offer you monthly events with great content.

Just before the end of May, we were fortunate to have the Minister President of Flanders at a breakfast event organized jointly with Flanders Trade & Investment led in Singapore by Peter Christiaen. A panel discussion with several BLBG members provided testimonials to a Belgian Trade Mission on the challenges and opportunities of investing in Singapore and in Asia.

The event fitted nicely into one of our priorities to continue sharing information about investing in Singapore and the region. As I write this message, we are planning another event to talk about how to invest in Malaysia which will be our last event of the year before the summer break.

While we are preparing for the next year's program, the recently elected new government is also preparing their new policy program for the country. It was interesting for us Belgians to observe the recently held elections in Singapore knowing that we all got used to be submitted to a variety of elections back home. The fact that the People's Action Party lost a GRC was a big deal in the local media but was also experienced by Singapore's leading political party as a clear signal that politics must stay in touch with its people. Singapore has often been criticized by the West to be a phony democracy. The results of recent elections, even if without major effects on the composition of parliament, tell us that Singapore's political system is getting more democratic and did trigger a good debate and exchange of ideas across the different political groups, active in Singapore.

Since the elections are done, we see the new government in Singapore moving ahead, capturing learnings from the election results and making interventions. At the same time, we see Belgium struggling forward talking and debating about how best to form a new government one day! We wish the government negotiators in Belgium the best of luck in their efforts; we can only hope to have a new federal government in Belgium after the summer break!

Wishing you all an enjoyable vacation and see you back in September for our openings event with the EU ambassador to Singapore as special guest.

Erik JONNAERT
BLBG president



BLBG COMPANY IN FOCUS

Yves De Leeneer
Chief Executive Officer Deepblue

Mr. Yves De Leeneer's life story is marked by a passion for the sea. He started sailing 16 years ago and has always been close to the water since; he studied naval architecture in Rotterdam with a specialization in hydrodynamics, he owns a company called *Deepblue* and he currently lives on a sailboat near Raffles Marina. This last anecdote makes him one of the most exceptional Belgians living on the island of Singapore. Yves was born in Congo, and grew up in Belgium. He however never worked in Europe, as his first job brought him to Singapore. He started working for a small company, called *Prosafe*, in the oil and gas sector that owned some ships and hired him to design underwater oil pipelines. After his first acquaintance with Singapore he was based amongst others on the Ivory Coast and in Houston. On some projects he would have over 150 people working under him and five ships to run. His technical competence is in designing and implementing underwater pipelines, mooring systems and rising systems to bring oil ashore. When a larger company bought *Prosafe*, the previous owner decided to start anew and took Yves with him. Yves completed some more projects in the same sector, accumulating more experience, until three years ago when he decided he was ready to start on his own. That is when *Deepblue* was born.

Deepblue is a Singapore-based SME, specialized in underwater engineering, mooring systems and FPSO (floating production storage and offloading). The company employs nine people but hires up to 30 extra manpower on a project base. Up until today Yves' company completed two projects in Brazil, two in Nigeria, two in Qatar, three in Thailand, three in Indonesia, two in Vietnam, one in the Philippines and one in India. Leading global companies like Chevron are amongst his clients. He recently started broadening the range of services offered, through own competence and partnerships, on request of his clients. *Deepblue* has been doing well, doubling its turnover every year, but Yves expects to reach a

threshold in the foreseeable future. His idea is to sell the company in 5 years to focus more on other projects that are closer to his heart.

A year ago Yves started another company that is active against beach and coral erosion, again in the underwater sphere. He cannot disclose a lot of information at this point in time but plans to take this company further in the future. In addition he is very active in the *Biosphere Foundation*, a project that aims to contribute to the existing body of knowledge about the biosphere and to inspire individuals to get actively involved, by means of a vessel that sails around the world. Last but not least, another one of his ideas is to build an underwater house and he is already sourcing partners for this ambitious plan. It seems that Yves, inspired by the sea, will have some more interesting stories to tell in the future. We will stay tuned.

NB: Via this article Yves wants to inform BLAS-members that he is happy to rent out his sailboat for corporate or private events. You can contact him for more details on yves.dl@deepbleu.sg

Isabelle Leliaert

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