

INSIDE THE ISTANA

Asian soul, European style

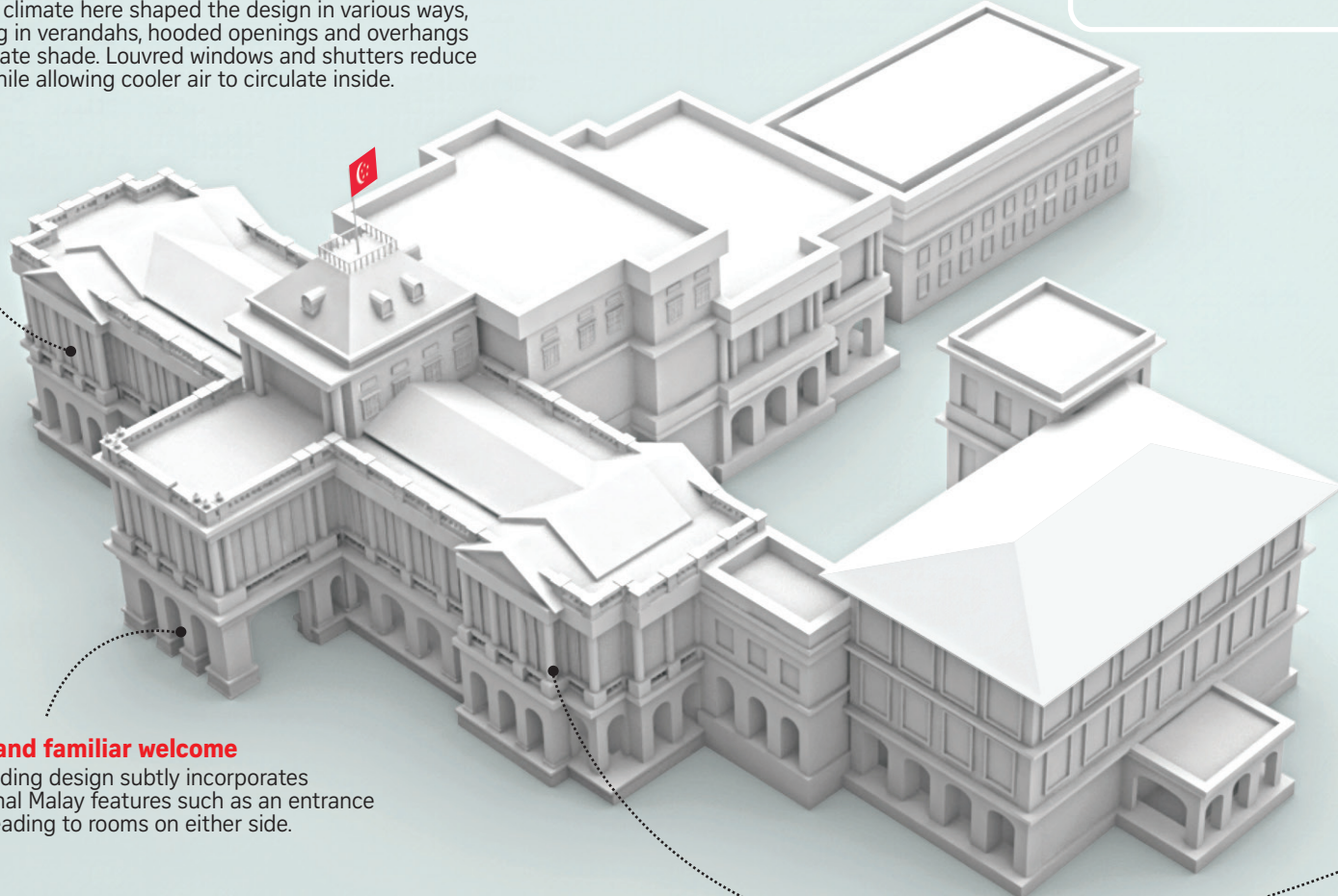
The design of the Istana's main building — originally built as Government House — subtly combines cool classical European structures with warm Asian details. The Straits Times takes a look at the architectural features.

Local ways to beat the heat

The hot climate here shaped the design in various ways, resulting in verandahs, hooded openings and overhangs that create shade. Louvred windows and shutters reduce glare, while allowing cooler air to circulate inside.

Warm and familiar welcome

The building design subtly incorporates traditional Malay features such as an entrance porch leading to rooms on either side.



See the Istana's main building seemingly appear in your real-world surroundings via augmented reality. Scan the QR code to start the experience.

Explore other highlights of the interactive graphic including:

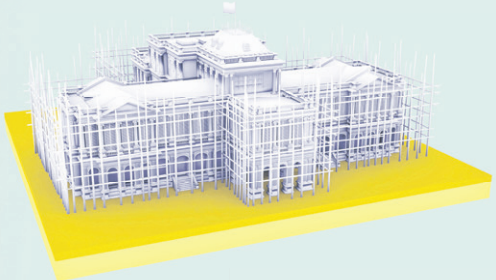
- Never-before-seen aerial shots of the Istana grounds
- 360-degree views of grand rooms
- Meet the Istana staff who work behind the scenes

SCAN TO SEE



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Asian artisans, European designer

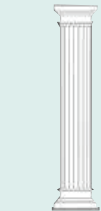


Government House, which later became known as the Istana's main building, was designed by chief engineer John McNair of the then Public Works Department. The local coolies did not have the skills to create the building's classical features and so more than 3,000 convict-artisans from India were brought in to do the job.

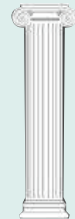
The convict-artisans worked on the building as draughtsmen, stonemasons, carpenters, painters and welders. They also made the bricks by operating kilns at the site. They worshipped the Guardian Of The House (above) as a spiritual benefactor. In 1869, Government House was certified ready to be occupied.

Classic structure

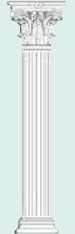
The main building's design was based on a European neo-Palladian style that evolved in India. The pilasters and columns on each level were made with different designs, following the architectural classical orders of Greek and Roman origins.



Doric
pilasters on the first level



Ionic
columns on the second floor



Corinthian
columns on the top level

Source: THE PRESIDENT'S OFFICE AND MARSHALL CAVENDISH
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STRAITS TIMES GRAPHICS