

**SPEECH BY MS LOW YEN LING, PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY,
MINISTRY FOR TRADE AND INDUSTRY, DURING THE COMMITTEE OF
SUPPLY DEBATE UNDER HEAD V (MINISTRY OF TRADE AND
INDUSTRY) ON THURSDAY, 7 APRIL 2016**

“Equipping Singaporeans for Jobs of the Future”

INTRODUCTION

1. Mr Chairman, I would like to thank Members for their comments and suggestions.
2. The Minister for Trade, Minister for Industry and Minister of State explained how our economic strategies will prepare us for the future, and create good jobs for Singaporeans. I will now round up MTI’s speeches by elaborating on the initiatives specific to renewable energy and manpower that will position Singapore for the future.

HARNESSING SOLAR ENERGY

3. Mr Louis Ng asked about the steps we are taking to achieve our renewable energy goals.
4. Given our geography, solar energy is the most viable form of renewable energy in Singapore. The Government is therefore proactively facilitating the greater deployment of solar while ensuring grid stability.
5. For example, the government is funding R&D to facilitate the deployment of solar energy, and has streamlined regulations for households using solar power. Alongside improvements in the cost-competitiveness of the technology, these have allowed solar adoption to rise from 2 Megawatt Peak (MWp) in 2009 to 57 MWp in 2015.

6. Under the SolarNova programme led by EDB and HDB, the Government is also taking the lead to accelerate solar deployment in Singapore by aggregating solar demand across various government agencies. HDB, MHA and PUB awarded a tender for an energy supplier to meet 76 MWp of combined demand in December last year. And tenders of 30 to 50 MWp sizes are expected to be launched around every nine months by HDB on behalf of public agencies. The SolarNova programme will play a key role in furthering our plans to raise solar energy deployment in our system.

FUTURE-PROOFING OUR TALENTS AND MANPOWER

7. Let me now turn to manpower. I would like to thank Mr Liang Eng Hwa for highlighting the importance of our SkillsFuture movement in enabling our workforce to adapt and be future-ready for the future economy. To make this happen, we need everyone, *everyone*, to be part of this movement - companies, unions and TACs, and all Singaporeans. Together, we equip ourselves to stay competitive and relevant.

GLOBAL TRENDS WILL CHANGE INDUSTRIES AND THE WAY WE WORK

8. We need to attune ourselves to new work trends emerging from disruptive technologies and global developments. There are now, like what the two Ministers have highlighted, jobs in exciting new areas such as fintech that did not even exist just a few years ago. And the digital economy is also flourishing. According to a report by Accenture¹, the increased use of digital technologies could add at least \$1.36 trillion to the total global economic output in year 2020. This has led to new job opportunities in fields like data analytics and e-commerce.

9. These fast-moving developments are changing the way we work. Today, operators in routine assembly work may also have to master the use of advanced technologies such as additive manufacturing and robotics solutions. Across various sectors, jobs are being optimised through technology solutions.

¹ Accenture Digital Density Index, 2015. *Guiding digital transformation: A new way for government and business leaders to understand, measure, and manage digital strategies to drive growth and competitiveness.*

GOVERNMENT WILL CONTINUE TO SUPPORT THE DEVELOPMENT OF OUR WORKFORCE

10. As Mr Liang rightly said, we should gear ourselves to ride on the waves of change and seize the opportunities of the future economy.

11. Mr Chairman, may I have your permission to display some slides on the LED screens please.

12. Take the example of, Ms Lilian Yeo, a 58 year old Sales Supervisor for Decks, the retailer for Surfers Paradise and Island Shop products. Decks has adopted RFID for both its front- and back-of-house operations. Lilian's can-do spirit helped her adapt and learn this new technology. She is now very adept at applying, at using RFID. She appreciates how technology has eased her job and given her more time to focus on frontline duties like serving and interacting with the customers.

13. Like Ms Lilian Yeo, we need to be flexible and stand ready to be trained to develop industry-relevant skills. And to stay ahead of the curve, we must continue to train and produce workers with skills that meet the demands of the industries. We can open the doors to a better future by embracing the spirit of lifelong learning. Please allow me to give you a quick update on the various SkillsFuture initiatives that support Singaporeans on this constant journey, starting with our youths, then the working adults and then the businesses. We fully agree with Mr Sitoh Yih Pin that one of the ways to engender the development of these skills is through apprenticeships, particularly for our SMEs. To this end, MTI supports the **SkillsFuture Earn and Learn Programme (ELP)**. The ELP is a work-study programme matching our fresh graduates from Polytechnics and ITEs to suitable companies, including SMEs, in sectors related to their disciplines of study. This not only helps companies attract talent, it also allows participants to develop deep industry-relevant skillsets during their apprenticeships.

14. Besides apprenticeships for our youths, we must also nurture in them a curiosity and desire for global exposure. This can certainly support our companies' internationalisation drive as we grow the pool of talents in our workforce ready with the necessary skillsets to support our external economy. The ability to work in international teams and harness cross-cultural capabilities are some of the skills that are offered in the **Young Talent Programme (YTP)** by IE Singapore.

15. To prepare them for global careers, the YTP offers our students opportunities for overseas immersion through internships and work-study programmes. In November last year, IE Singapore officially extended the YTP-Market Immersion Programme to the Polytechnics. Since then, about 200 Polytechnic students have gone to China, Germany, U.S and the ASEAN countries. I am pleased to report that we will implement the Programme in the ITEs later this year as well. This will provide more opportunities for our students to gain international exposure.

16. Our young people will learn how to navigate across cultures and differences. This picture shows Mr Raiyan Muhammad bin Musa from Ngee Ann Polytechnic with some of the friends he met on his internship at The Ascott Limited in Vietnam. Besides these friends, Raiyan shared with us that he had colleagues from France, the UK, India and Malaysia. During the internship, Raiyan learnt how to connect across cultures, across nationalities in the workplace. Such experiences during the formative years will give our young people a potential head-start into a global career.

17. In addition to building young talent for global jobs, we are grooming promising Singaporeans to take on leadership positions through the **SkillsFuture Leadership Development Initiative (LDI)**. It aims to grow a pipeline of Singaporean leaders across all career levels. As part of LDI, EDB has been partnering companies to design and implement leadership development roadmaps tailored to their business objectives and HR priorities. For example, MasterCard's Management Associate Programme has an overseas stint in emerging markets that provides fresh graduates with global exposure and in-market experience across key business units. Upon completion of the programme, the Management Associates will be better-positioned to take on larger roles in the company.

18. We all know talent is key for our businesses, big or small, to grow and succeed. For SMEs that may not have the resources to build up their talent development and workers' competencies, we have created the **SkillsFuture Mentors Programme** under SPRING Singapore. The agency works with industry partners to build a pool of mentors who support the development of SMEs' capabilities and help them participate in SkillsFuture initiatives. Since its launch in December last year, 70 mentors have been qualified and 15 SMEs have been matched in sectors such as Retail and Engineering. Over the next 3 years, we aim to build up a pool of 400 mentors to support 2,000 SMEs across different sectors.

19. Moving forward, the Government will continue to invest in SkillsFuture to ensure our workers and companies are well-positioned to meet the challenges of the future. Chair, please allow me to continue in Mandarin.

SKILLS UPGRADING AND COLLABORATION WITH OUR PARTNERS ARE KEY FACETS OF INDUSTRY TRANSFORMATION

[提升技能以及与合作伙伴协同合作，是产业转型重要的一部分]

20. 提升技能不但能帮助我们的工人作好准备、迎接未来，同时也是产业转型重要的一部分。正如财政部长和易华仁部长所说：“产业转型计划（Industry Transformation Programme）”将在各个领域，整合生产力、创新能力以及人力发展方面的调整措施，以及确保达到最佳的成效。

21. 领域人力计划（Sectoral Manpower Plans, SMPs）”是产业转型的其中一个重要的元素，能够针对个别领域的人力资源需求，制定策略和相关的行动方案。去年，我们率先在酒店和零售等领域开始推行领域人力发展计划，并制定了5年人力资源发展策略，支持相关行业的发展。

22. “领域人力计划（SMP）”是政府和各领域劳资政三方委员会（STC）共同开发和实施的。劳资政三方委员会就包括了我们的工会、我们的商会以及企业的代表。例如，“酒店领域人力发展计划”的实施，就是新加坡旅游局、还有劳

动力发展局、还有各酒店、和全国职工总会、食品饮料同业工友联合会，和新加坡酒店协会携手合作，在工作场所实地展开。

23. 总的来说，“未来技能”计划 (SkillsFuture)，希望通过和各合作伙伴的协商还有讨论，加强行业的需求还有劳动力发展之间的一个对接。

24. 我们的企业还可以通过许许多多的方式参与“未来技能”的行动。

25. 除了提供实习还有培训的机会，其实我们的企业可以设定个别职能的发展途径，为员工制定具有吸引力的职业规划，以便留住人才。

26. 在这里请允许我和大家分享一个例子，本地企业四海化工，决定赞助能力出色的员工进修兼职大专文凭课程。四海化工告诉我们说，公司相信“人”是最重要的资产。所以公司会给予所有员工同等的一个机会，帮助他们提升技能、提高知识。王治国先生在 2010 年进入四海化工，刚开始的时候对物流真的是一窍不通。但是因为他的工作表现好，而且有潜力，公司因此资助他进修供应链管理课程。他也因此从最初的仓库管理员，一步步往上提拔，成为物流主管。王先生的成功，不但是他个人的成功，也是公司的成功。

27. 在此，我们贸工部想要鼓励我们的企业,要把眼光放得更长、更远，把竞争放在国际层面，勇敢求新、勇敢求变。除了利用科技提高效率，更重要的是，企业必须愿意对工作进行重新设计，为员工提供培训，帮助他们提升技能、驾驭科技。这样一来，生产力提高，其实呢,企业的收益也会提高。

28. 从员工的角度来看呢，如果能从事更高端科技、更有附加值的工作，也必然会从工作中得到更大的满足感，收入也会随之提高。

29. 企业对员工所投入的教育和培训，将能够帮助企业迎接新经济所带来的挑战。我们贸工部希望看到更多像四海化工一样的企业，放眼未来、投资培育员工。接下来，请允许我以英语做一个总结。

Translation for para 20-29

20. *Skills upgrading is not only a means to future-proof our workers, but also a key facet of industry transformation. As the Minister for Finance and Minister for Industry have explained, the Industry Transformation Programme will integrate our restructuring efforts in productivity, innovation and manpower development at the sector level to maximise effect.*

21. *An integral element of this plan is the **Sectoral Manpower Plans (SMPs)**, which identify the strategies and action plans required for developing sector-specific skills. Last year, **SMPs** were launched in sectors such as Hotel and Retail, setting out 5-year manpower strategies that support the growth of these sectors.*

22. *The SMPs are developed and implemented together with Sectoral Tripartite Committees (STCs), consisting of unions, TACs and companies. The strategies under the Hotel SMP, for example, are being implemented on the ground in partnership with STB, WDA, Hotels, National Trades Union Congress (NTUC), Food, Drinks and Allied Workers Union (FDAWU), and the Singapore Hotel Association (SHA).*

23. *Through consultations and discussions with our partners, SkillsFuture aims to strengthen the nexus between industry demands and our workforce.*

24. *There are also many other ways that our companies can be part of the SkillsFuture movement.*

25. *Besides providing training opportunities, companies can also offer competency-based career progression pathways to motivate and retain talent.*

26. *Take for example Tee Hai Chem, a local company that sponsors high-performing employees on part-time diploma studies. Tee Hai told us that they believe that people are their most important asset, and that all their staff are given equal opportunities to upgrade their skills and knowledge. Mr Kelvin Ong joined the company in 2010. He started out not knowing much about logistics. But Tee Hai*

recognised his good performance and potential, and sponsored his part-time diploma in Logistics Management. I am heartened to learn that, after starting out as a storekeeper, Kelvin is now a Logistics Supervisor at the company. Indeed, Kelvin's success is not just his own, but also the company's.

27. *The Ministry of Trade and Industry would like to encourage companies to be long-sighted and open to change, so that they are well-placed to compete on an international stage. Besides adopting technology to improve operational efficiency, companies should also be willing to redesign jobs and equip their workers with the skills to navigate the technologies. By doing so, companies stand to benefit from a more productive workforce.*

28. *From the employees' perspective, the opportunity to take on higher-skilled and higher-value jobs will mean greater job satisfaction, and better lives.*

29. *Companies that invest in their employees' training and development will be well-positioned to take on the challenges of our new economy. The Ministry would like to see more employers like Tee Hai Chem who invest in their employees for the future. Allow me to conclude in English.*

SINGAPOREANS TO TAKE OWNERSHIP OF OUR OWN LEARNING AND CAREER DEVELOPMENT

30. We understand skills upgrading takes effort and may not be easy for all, especially older workers. But successful upskilling is possible at any age, when one is armed with a positive and can-do attitude. Take Mr Mohammad Romzi Bin Kassim for example. The 46 year-old employee at PestBusters has upgraded his knowledge and skills by attending several technical and WSQ training courses. In just 6 years, Romzi has been promoted 3 times, from a Pest Control Technician to an Executive. And he does not intend to stop learning. He is keen to hone his craft with technology, and has been selected to learn best practices in pest control work in Melbourne under MediaCorp's sponsorship.

31. Romzi's proactive approach towards learning certainly exemplifies the SkillsFuture spirit of passion for lifelong learning.

CONCLUSION

32. Mr Chairman, the Government remains committed to supporting the development of our workforce. But we cannot do this alone. Lilian, Raiyan, Kelvin and Romzi have shown us all that all of us can take ownership of our own training and career paths. We call upon our partners and every Singaporean to come on board the SkillsFuture movement. Together, we will build a future-ready workforce empowered to overcome challenges and stay on track for success in the global economy.

33. Thank you.