

SPEECH BY MINISTER FOR TRADE AND INDUSTRY CHAN CHUN SING
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DEBATE ON PRESIDENT’S ADDRESS

INTRODUCTION

1. Mr Speaker Sir, for 53 years, Singapore has not only survived, but thrived-in spite of.
 - a. We lack a conventional hinterland for access to resources and markets. So we worked hard to grow our economic lifelines – connecting ourselves to the world.
 - b. And in building a collective future for ourselves, we strived hard to unite our people of different races, languages and religions.
 - c. There is indeed much that we can be proud of.
 - d. However, we must never be complacent about our shared future.
2. In these times of rapid geopolitical shifts, technological disruption and transition, many Singaporeans are concerned, and understandably so. Many ask a very simple question:
 - a. Can Singapore continue to thrive?
 - b. Will there be opportunities for future generations to similarly realise their potential?
 - c. Will we remain united, despite the many forces that threaten to pull us apart?
3. These are important questions.
 - a. And I am heartened that Singaporeans are concerned with these important issues.
4. While we must be alert and alive to the challenges, we need not be afraid.
 - a. Challenges there will always be, so too, will opportunities.
 - b. Our challenges do not define us. Our responses will.

5. Our challenges are not insurmountable. And just like the generations before us, we too can be “pioneers of our generation”.
 - a. Pioneers who will build and leave behind a stronger foundation.
 - b. Pioneers who define success not just by how well we do for ourselves, but also enabling the next generation to do even better than us.
6. Today, I will cover three broad areas;
 - a. First, how we must stay relevant to secure our place in the world, in an uncertain geopolitical and rapidly evolving economic environment.
 - b. Second, what we, as “pioneers of our generation”, must do to create a brighter future for all Singaporeans.
 - c. Third, why we must continue to keep our systems refreshed and special to keep our country successful.
 - d. Let me start with Singapore’s place in the world.

SINGAPORE’S PLACE IN THE WORLD

I. CREATING RELEVANCE

7. The relative shift of geopolitical and economic weight between the West and the East- as epitomised by the US and China, will define the global security and economic environment for many years to come.
 - a. Many ask- which side should we be on?
 - b. This is not the right way to frame the issue.
8. As a small country with an open economy, we believe in a rule-based, connected and interdependent world.
 - a. Our task is not in choosing sides.
 - b. Small states, more than any others, must be principled.
 - c. If others ever attach a price to our position or stand, no one will take us seriously ever again.

- d. We were the host to the historic meetings between China and Taiwan – the Wang-Koo meeting in 1993, and the Xi-Ma meeting in 2015. We will be host for the upcoming summit between US and North Korea in June. Our principled stand and neutrality were some reasons why Singapore was chosen for these meetings.
 - e. Our task and priority is to ensure that we remain relevant.
 - f. To do this, we need to have a deep understanding of the different interests, institutions and individuals shaping global developments.
 - g. All of us – government, businesses and private individuals - must understand the world, and collectively remain alert to the forces impacting us and for us to navigate them carefully.
9. Let me illustrate with an example. China is a fast evolving giant and China is not monolithic.
- a. Its interests vary and differ across its security, economic and social dimensions.
 - b. There are also different provinces and different layers of government - each with their own perspectives and priorities.
 - c. This tells us two things. First - to be relevant to China, we can't rely on old mindsets and solutions. China is not looking for "hand-me-down" solutions. They are looking to develop their own solutions to their own unique challenges - sometimes by themselves, sometimes with partners.
 - d. Second, given their different interests and perspectives, knowing only the central government will be necessary but insufficient.
10. To do business with China, we must understand the different provinces and personalities as well.
- a. Only then, can we provide more relevant ideas for mutual benefit in a timely manner.
 - b. Now that China has moved beyond attracting foreign investments into venturing abroad, we must ask ourselves how we can play a role in partnering the Chinese to explore third markets or how we become a platform for them to reach out to third markets.

11. However, this does not mean that we become more Chinese or do we replicate the western model for them.
 - a. Instead, we must contribute to the partnership as Singapore - a multiracial and multicultural society - capable of developing unique solutions to our shared challenges - having learnt from both the East and the West.
 - b. There are many successful Singaporeans making waves in China because they bring this unique value. I had earlier today shared a video on my Facebook that illustrates this. The short film shows how enterprising and spirited Singaporeans can be, and how we can be relevant to China at different levels.

12. How we relate to China, must also be how we relate to the rest of the world.
 - a. With the US, we not only deepen collaboration with American companies in areas such as smart-city solutions and e-commerce, we are also an established gateway - a launch-pad for American companies seeking growth opportunities in the region.
 - b. What's clear is that no one deals with Singapore for our domestic markets or resources alone.
 - c. Instead, they leverage upon us as a platform to reach the region and the world.
 - d. To remain effective and attractive, we must develop people with a deep understanding of the region and the world, so that we can create value when others come and do business with us.

II. DEVELOP GLOBAL MINDSET, GLOBAL SKILLSETS

13. Our education system and training models must similarly evolve in tandem to support this.
 - a. Beyond the technical skills which we already excel, Singaporeans must also be equipped with the mindset and skillsets to operate and compete globally.
 - b. This must be our competitive advantage and we can do more.

14. I'm encouraged by the ongoing efforts that give our people this very global exposure that we desire.
 - a. Students who join Singapore Management University (SMU) from August this year will need to participate in at least one overseas programme, before they can graduate.
 - b. SMU believes that this will give its students a strong competitive edge and open doors to international networks and opportunities.
 - c. I agree with them. More of our institutions should do so.
15. We must also help Singaporeans - both individuals and businesses - access and penetrate the global markets better.
 - a. We need to ask ourselves- can we redefine the role of the overseas Singapore Chapters and Chambers to build the necessary networks?
16. These networks should be formed to achieve three outcomes:
 - a. To connect Singapore to the world
 - b. To connect the world to Singapore
 - c. And to connect fellow Singaporeans to compete in the world.
17. To this end, EDB and associated agencies will collaborate, to better organise and expand our overseas outreach.
 - a. We will build a *Singapore Talent Network* to engage Singaporean families, friends and fans to be part of the Singapore Story.
18. Our ability to network also depends on Singaporeans' ability to understand and work across cultures and nationalities.
 - a. Besides enabling Singaporeans to gain overseas exposure, we must also be able to work with talented people from elsewhere locally.
 - b. We must have the diversity of talent – both local and global. Foreign professionals with knowledge, skillsets, and competencies working shoulder-to-shoulder with skilled Singaporean talent, cross-pollinating ideas and bringing out the best in each other. Such dynamism is what keeps Singapore

a vibrant, exceptional place to do business and this is the vital ingredient for our economic future.

19. I've always aspired that we will one day build a global network of more than 3 million Singaporeans, 30 million Singaporeans' friends, and perhaps 300 million Singaporeans' fans and together, we will write the next chapter of the Singapore Story.

III. ENHANCE OUR CONNECTIVITY

20. To secure our place in the world, we must also better connect to the world as our hinterland, gaining access to resources and markets. We need to step up in three areas.

21. First, we need to widen our portfolio of markets to diversify our risks of relying on any single particular market.

- a. Our economic agencies are working hard to negotiate new Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) and upgrade existing ones.
- b. We continuously explore new markets and support bilateral and multilateral trade efforts.

22. Second, we need to go beyond the conventional dimensions of air, land and sea connectivity as expressed by member Mr Liang Eng Hwa, by ensuring that we are connected to the world in the dimensions of data, finance, talent and technology.

- a. We have much work to build on to entrench ourselves as a global node for data, finance, talent and technology connectivity.
- b. And we need to move fast before others leapfrog and overtake us. Today's competition is no longer linear- having a head-start does not mean that we will always be ahead.
- c. We can capitalise on finance and data flows, by building on our reputation as a trusted financial and data hub.
- d. These "non-physical" dimensions of connectivity are increasingly essential to reinforce the physical dimensions of connectivity that we already have a head-start.
- e. If we can strengthen and complement our connectivity across all dimensions, we can continue to transcend our physical challenges.

23. Third, as global production and supply chains shift, we too must stay agile to connect to the new shifts.
- a. We need to move from getting others to trade with us, to trade through us, to also include for others to trade on our Singapore platforms.
24. PSA is a fine example. Since the 1980s, we knew that we couldn't possibly compete with other mega ports in the world in terms of size, no matter how much we try to expand our port or reclaim the entire Southern coastline from Changi to Jurong.
- a. Hence, PSA updated its strategy to become a global port and supply chain operator, to compete at the system and network level, rather than at the port level.
 - b. Soon, the competition followed.
 - c. Today, PSA is working with partners to use the PSA platform regardless where the trade flows may be. It's like having an "Intel" chip on operating system, inside the global trade flow operations.
25. Our economy is maturing. To achieve sustained and quality economic growth, we must not only be able to attract activities here. We must also venture out.
- a. For the next lap of our economic growth story, we cannot just look at Gross Domestic Product- what we do in Singapore only, we need to also focus on what we call the Gross National Income – what we do in Singapore and beyond.
 - b. It is not just about giving Singaporeans the best opportunities here in Singapore, but it is also about helping Singaporeans to seize the opportunities beyond Singapore.
26. Mr Speaker Sir, let me now turn to what it means for us to be "pioneers of our generation" so that we can create a better future for all Singaporeans together.

PIONEERS OF OUR GENERATION AND THE NEXT

I. PURSUE AN INNOVATION DRIVEN ECONOMY

27. To be "Pioneers of our Generation", we must be clear-eyed about our challenges. Let me sketch out some of these challenges which my team mates will elaborate on throughout this debate.

28. There are at least six areas, that we need to focus on;
- a. Having an innovative economy
 - b. Building an inclusive society
 - c. Ensuring social mobility
 - d. Building our future Singapore
 - e. Building our national identity
 - f. Building trust.
29. Let me start with the first, on an innovation driven economy.
30. As any society matures, it usually becomes more conservative – choosing to uphold existing systems rather than breaking new grounds.
31. We cannot allow this to happen in Singapore. We need to keep up our vitality and verve.
- a. It is one thing to be the best-in-class for ports and airports. But it is another, to be even better - ready for tomorrow's needs, ahead of time.
 - b. It is one thing to beat someone else in a competition, it is another to beat our own standards, even when we are at the top, so that Singaporeans can have even brighter prospects in the future.
 - c. We need to ensure that the pioneering spirit lives on by embracing change and innovation.
 - d. Our enterprises must innovate and scale up. We need to better translate investments in research and development, into capabilities and enterprises.
 - e. A*STAR and Enterprise Singapore will lead this, and work closely with our companies – be it Large Local Enterprises(LLEs) or Small and Medium Enterprises(SMEs) and trade associations, for all of us to realise this together. Senior Minister of State Chee Hong Tat will speak more about this.

II. FOSTER A CARING, INCLUSIVE SOCIETY

32. Second, fostering an inclusive society.
33. Every generation aspires to do better than the previous. This is positive and this is what drives us to improve.

34. We are aware that Singaporeans, particularly those who fall into the “middle-income, middle-age” category- they are feeling the stresses and strains of technological and business disruptions.
35. As leaders, it is our responsibility to ensure that everyone progresses together.
- a. In keeping faith with the government, Singaporeans want us to understand their fears, concerns and aspirations.
 - b. We need to continue to better help the striving broad middle group to keep improving their lives.
 - c. We need to make sure that our training and skills upgrading are relevant and accessible-helping our workers to access opportunities throughout their entire life cycle.
 - d. We must do better for the weak and vulnerable in society. But beyond providing immediate relief, we must also enable them to do better for themselves.
 - e. Minister Ng Chee Meng and the labour MPs will elaborate more about on Labour Movement’s efforts, while Minister Masagos and others, will speak about how we can foster a caring and inclusive society that’s truly meritocratic.

III. UPHOLD SOCIAL MOBILITY

36. Third, to uphold social mobility.
37. As a society matures, social mobility tends to slow down, with social inequality becoming more apparent over time.
- a. This is often the result of “social clustering” of people from similar backgrounds.
 - b. Social inequality is also partly caused by our human’s natural instincts to pass on wealth and privileges to the next generation.
 - c. If left unchecked, our people may lose faith in our system of meritocracy and this can hurt our social compact.

38. So can we mitigate the forces that widens social inequality?

- a. How can we better distribute the fruits of growth to a broad majority to prevent stratification as a society? We have seen the fallout from others who did not do so.
- b. Hence, upholding social mobility is something that we must take seriously.

39. We want everybody to have a good start and to achieve their full potential.

- a. This means ensuring opportunities remain accessible to all who are hardworking, talented and committed.
- b. That opportunities are not just tied to academic grades, but also to the right aptitude and skills.
- c. Minister Ong Ye Kung and various members will address some of these challenges.

IV. PLAN AHEAD FOR THE FUTURE

40. Fourth, as pioneers of our generation, it is also our responsibility to continue building and planning ahead for the next generation.

- a. As we progress towards SG100- we need to start planning not just for the next 50 years, but also beyond.

41. Many of our decisions today will determine whether the next generation can have an even better living environment than ours. For example;

- a. How do we refresh our HDB flats and estates?
- b. How do we prepare our transport, utilities, data infrastructures for the next lap?
- c. Minister Lawrence Wong and Senior Minister of State Janil Puthuchery will speak about these challenges and our responses.
- d. But the bottomline is this- we must never think that we are ever finished with building Singapore. We must never think that we are ever done building Singapore.

V. **FORGE A STRONGER SENSE OF NATIONHOOD AND IDENTITY**

42. Beyond economic and social development, our most critical piece of work is to rally our nation together.
43. Our people must not be merely economic sojourners. They must have the natural instincts to defend what's ours, to build upon what we have; and stay put even when the chips are down.
 - a. A nation is not just about economics benefits.
 - b. It is also about a sense of community and contribution.
 - c. A true nation is one where its people will stay and fight for its future and build it all up, even when the chips are down.
 - d. This is the spirit of the 1965 generation, and this is what we want to imbue in every generation of Singaporeans.
 - e. How we communicate and work as a team, will establish the foundation for our identity as Singaporeans.
 - f. Minister Indranee Rajah will speak on this important topic of our Singapore identity.
 - g. And Minister Heng Swee Keat will also discuss how we intend to engage and partner fellow Singaporeans for the next lap.

VI. **FOSTER STRONGER TRUST**

44. Last but not least, for Singaporeans to identify with one another and with this country, there must be trust – between people and government as well as amongst Singaporeans ourselves.
 - a. To foster trust, leaders must lead by example - develop strong connections across the different segments of our population, communicate with them effectively, to mobilise them.
 - b. The contest of ideas is constant. In fact, this has intensified in this digital age. We must work harder to let our people see and understand an issue for what it is.

- c. Helping our people to become better informed of the challenges, the options and the rationale behind our choices.
 - d. Only this way, can we all become more discerning, stay vigilant and own our choices and solutions together.
45. With higher education, Singaporeans' aspirations and expectations also evolve. They want to be heard, considered and respected.
- a. So we have to keep channels open for everyone to share their views and work on strengthening our engagement.
 - b. If we can do this well, we will remain cohesive as a nation.
 - c. And if we can have a common vision, a common set of goals- putting our national priorities above all, we will emerge stronger than ever.

KEEPING OUR SYSTEMS REFRESHED & SPECIAL

I. DEVELOP OUR OWN UNIQUE SYSTEMS

46. Mr Speaker Sir, let me touch on the last set of topics that I will like to speak on today. And that is keeping our systems refreshed and special.
47. Singapore has come this far because of trust, teamwork as well as our ability and guts to develop our own systems to meet our unique needs.
48. As a small city-state with a multiracial society, situated in a volatile environment, without the conventional hinterland and with no one else to depend on for our defence - our circumstances are indeed unique.
- a. And while we study other systems and adapt them where suitable, we must not copy blindly or become "intellectually colonised".
49. We must remain prepared to develop systems that work best for us. More importantly, for us to also constantly update them and meet our evolving needs.
- a. This has been our approach on issues like National Service, HDB and housing, CPF, as well as the GRC system and Elected Presidency.
 - b. Today, we are also fostering stronger collaboration and synergies - tapping on different networks in society for their views and expertise.

- c. For example, in our efforts to renew our economy through the Industry Transformation Maps and help our workers seize the opportunities ahead, we will not just involve the government agencies alone.
- d. It must also include our Trade Associations and Chambers, our enterprises, and the Labour Movement.
- e. So rather than a “Whole of Government” strategy, we will work on a “Whole of Nation” strategy.

II. ATTRACT CAPABLE & COMMITTED PEOPLE

50. Beyond having good and nimble systems, we must have good people.

- a. People build systems. People also corrupt systems.
- b. We have seen examples of both democratic and socialist systems failing – often by people with the wrong motivations.

51. To bring forth good people to serve is a never ending challenge.

- a. It is difficult enough to bring forth good people who would sacrifice their personal and family interests for the country- this is especially so when the country is already successful, peaceful and prosperous. But we must continue to try.

52. We need to find the strongest set of individuals- not just to solve today’s current problems, but also to prevent future problems from arising in the first place.

- a. This means that we need diverse skillsets and perspectives, so that we can combine them as necessary and tackle challenges together, when circumstances change.
- b. This cannot be left to chance. The PAP Government will spare no effort. This applies to the political leadership team, as much as it applies to the public service and business community.
- c. Agreeing with us is not the pre-requisite. Agreeing to put Singapore first and foremost is the pre-requisite.

III. STRONG LEADERSHIP AND TEAMWORK

53. Having found the strongest set of individuals is still not enough, what we must then do is to mould them into the strongest team possible.
- a. Countries with more resources, may afford to have less cohesive leadership teams and still survive.
 - b. But for Singapore, we must ensure that we have the strongest leadership team possible, for others to take us seriously and be willing to work with us.
54. For Singapore, this teamwork does not just exist within one generation.
- a. It is also between generations.
 - b. Our leadership model is to have overlapping generations of leadership teams to help the next generation do even better.
 - c. This provides continuity in our interaction with others, and for us to compete at the highest global level with consistency in vision and execution with purpose.
55. All these leadership traits – commitment, teamwork, courage to evolve, a sense of mission, are what we will need to keep our systems special.
56. At this juncture, I will also like to place on record our appreciation of Mr Low Thia Kiang, as leader of the Workers' Party for the last 17 years. Allow me to continue in Mandarin, Mr Speaker Sir.

- a. Although Mr Low Thia Kiang is a member of the opposition, he is nevertheless a fellow Singaporean and very much part of Team Singapore.

虽然刘程强先生身为一名反对党议员，但他也是一名新加坡人，更是新加坡团队的一份子。

- b. While we may not always agree with his perspectives or methods, we nevertheless appreciate his efforts to work together to build a better Singapore as the leader of the Workers' Party.

我们可能不会每次都认同他的观点或立场，但是，作为工人党党魁，他在新加坡民主政治历程中确实是有所发挥的。

- c. Although Mr Low may have different perspectives, but from his speeches, we can detect his pride in Singapore and his determination to defend our sovereignty. Thank you Mr Low.

虽然刘程强先生时常与政府意见相左，但从他的言论中，我们也听出他是一个对新加坡感到自豪、原意捍卫我国独立主权的人。在此，我想向刘程强先生表达谢意。

- d. We look forward to similarly working with Mr Pritam Singh and the Workers' Party to put Singapore's and Singaporeans' interest first, always.

我们期待以同样的精神继续和毕丹星先生以及工人党合作，并犹如过去一样，继续把新加坡和新加坡人的利益摆在第一位。

IV. CONSTRUCTIVE POLITICS

- 57. Mr Speaker Sir, politics is not just about winning votes. It is about serving our country and our people.

议长先生，政治不只是关乎要赢得选票，它更重要的意义在于服务人民和侍奉国家。

- a. In some places, to win votes by stoking anger and unhappiness may be a common practice in politics elsewhere. This is negative politics and is not constructive.

有些地方或许会靠引起民众的负面情绪来赢得胜利，赢得选票，但这是负面的政治，也不具建设性。

- b. To win the hearts and votes of our people, we must work hard to develop sound policies for our common future.

要赢得民众的支持，我们就必须致力于施行有效的政策，打造我们美好的共同未来。

- c. I hope that all of us will continue to define our politics in constructive ways.

我希望我们所有人都能继续以建设性的方式贡献于我国的政治。

58. My belief is that we want political leaders, not just politicians, to lead Singapore.

我向来的宗旨是我们需要政治领导人，而不是政客，来带领新加坡。

- a. Leaders who weigh options carefully before acting decisively, and never opt for just the most expedient idea or solution for personal interests or short-term gains.

政治领导人慎重地衡量各项选择,再果断地做出决定，不为私人利益或短期收益而选择走捷径。

- b. It also means not shying away from making difficult or unpopular decisions, but being guided by that resolve to always do what is in the best interests of Singapore and Singaporeans- never shirking responsibilities towards our current and future generations. Leaders who will put Singapore and Singaporeans first. Leaders who have the trust of Singaporeans, and leaders who recognise that our success today was built on the hard work of our pioneers, and their responsibility is to leave an even more successful Singapore to future generations. They know that the benchmark of success is not measured against what they do now, but rather, how successful future generations will be.

这也就是说不回避做出较困难或不受欢迎的决定，坚持以国家的长远利益出发为信念来办事 – 从不推卸对这一代和下一代新加坡人的责任。以国为先，以民为本。政治领导人必须以诚信待人。他们知道新加坡今天的成就是上一代留给我们的基础，所以这一代，每一代的责任,是把一个更美好的新加坡留给下一代。他们也意识到每一代新加坡人都以下一代的成功作为我们成功的定义。

CONCLUSION

59. Let me conclude in English. In the next lap of our country's history, we will have our fair share of challenges and opportunities for our generation. But we can be confident that we will build an even better future for ourselves and our future generations.

60. To secure our place in the world, we have to value add to stay relevant, build our networks and be able to compete globally, in order to transcend our constraints, our geography and resources, and instead, turn them into opportunities.

61. As pioneers of our generation, we must continue to break new grounds, build on our fundamentals that have brought us this far, so that we can continue to enable the next generation to succeed even more than us.
62. To keep Singapore successful, our systems and politics must be special and refreshed - suited to our own unique circumstances and needs. We will also need to do more to inspire yet another generation of Singaporeans to come forth and serve Singapore, in spite of.
63. We can, and we will, together write the next chapter of our Singapore story that's meaningful, engaging and real for all Singaporeans.
64. Our 1965 generation has achieved that with much less. They overcame their share of challenges to leave us the Singapore we have today. There is absolutely no reason why our generation that has so much more, cannot leave behind an even better Singapore for the next generation. We can, together become Singapore Unlimited- unlimited by our geography, unlimited by our size, unlimited by our resources.
65. We can only be limited by the scale of our ambition and drive. And our scale of ambition and drive will determine how far we progress as a nation, for the next 50 years and more. Mr Speaker Sir, I support the motion.