

Pioneers of a new generation

Trade and Industry Minister Chan Chun Sing has urged Singaporeans to be "pioneers of our generation".

Like previous generations, the current one can build and leave behind a stronger foundation for the future, he said.

He laid out the ways to do so: pursue an innovation-driven economy, uphold social mobility and plan ahead for the future to build a better living environment.

The country must also develop its own unique systems, have good people and ensure it has the strongest leadership team possible.

Mr Chan also outlined how Singapore must stay relevant to secure its place in the world.

The Government, businesses and individuals must understand the world, remain alert to external forces and navigate them carefully.

Singapore must also connect with the rest of the world in the realms of data, finance, talent and technology.



Team Singapore

Veteran opposition MP Low Thia Kiang was praised in Parliament yesterday.

Trade and Industry Minister Chan Chun Sing described the former Workers' Party (WP) chief as "a fellow Singaporean and very much part of Team Singapore".

He placed on record the People's Action Party leaders' appreciation of Mr Low's efforts to work together to build a better Singapore despite their different perspectives, and thanked him.

Mr Chan said the Government looks forward to working with new WP secretary-general Pritam Singh and his party, to put the country's interests first.

Mr Singh later said the WP will always bear national interests in mind. In his speech during the debate, he said bold leadership is needed to address the issue of rising costs.



Brand Singapore meritocracy

Singapore needs to develop its own brand of meritocracy to guard against social inequality.

Environment and Water Resources Minister Masagos Zulkifli called for this, and warned against a polarised society with distinct groups living different lives in different worlds.

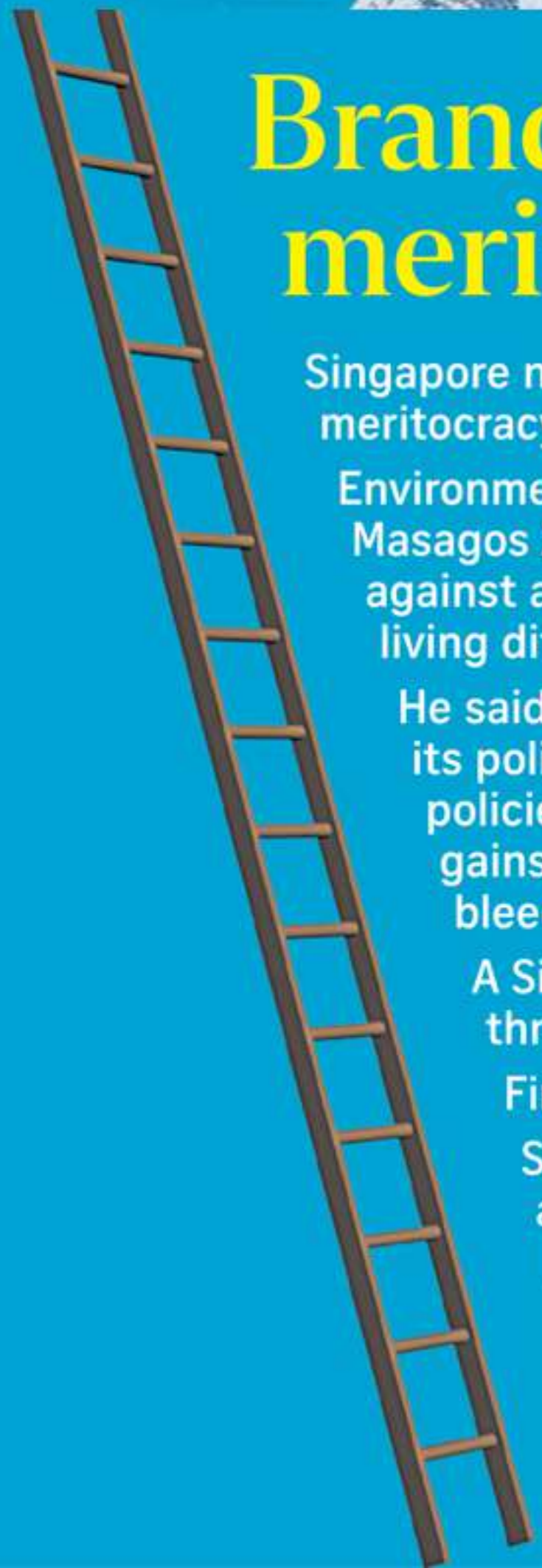
He said the country has to strike a balance in its policies - it cannot drive its economic policies purely on fierce pursuit of economic gains, nor can it design social policies with bleeding hearts.

A Singapore-style meritocracy should have three ingredients.

First, the successful giving back to society.

Second, the preservation of common spaces and experiences for people of all backgrounds - for example, by mixing public and private housing more deliberately.

Third, government policies that act as enablers and also encourage self-reliance.



Tackling inequality

A number of MPs tabled suggestions to tackle inequality yesterday.

Mr Ang Wei Neng (Jurong GRC) mooted having principals of "non-elite" primary schools nominate one deserving student each to enter a top secondary school.

He flagged the issue of an uneven playing field, and cited the example of fewer students from "non-elite" schools going to Raffles Institution and Raffles Girls' School.

Ms Cheryl Chan (Fengshan) suggested reducing the emphasis on academic excellence, and valuing actions towards the community more.

Mr Henry Kwek (Nee Soon GRC) suggested tapping values-in-action programmes to encourage collaboration between students of "elite" and "non-elite" schools, and to promote friendships across social divides.

ActiveSG's sports academies and clubs could also take in more young people from different schools and backgrounds, Mr Kwek said.

