

Adjusting after Covid-19

In his May Day message, PM Lee touched on the need for workers and firms to adapt to changes wrought by Covid-19. Here are his key points.

THANKS TO ALL WORKERS

May Day is a day of celebration for all workers, including migrant workers. I too send my thanks and good wishes to all migrant workers in Singapore, for what you have built and contributed here... I am especially grateful to our brothers and sisters working in essential services, who have kept Singapore going.

SACRIFICES ON BOTH SIDES

Many workers will still see a pay cut, either because of lost overtime or direct wage reductions. This is unavoidable. But I encourage both employers and workers to take a longer-term view. Workers must accept wage sacrifices to keep businesses going. And employers must make every effort to keep their workers, and help them through this difficult period.



ADJUSTING TO NEW ENVIRONMENT

During the circuit breaker, people have adjusted. We have learnt to telecommute, and work with others virtually... We will not go back to status quo ante, after the circuit breaker ends. And that will mean opportunities in these new ways of doing things.

Other industries like medical services, biotech, food production and delivery, and IT – they are also growing... We have capabilities in some of these new and growing sectors.

Other industries will be new to us, and we will have to build up our expertise and workforce.

PHOTOS: NG SOR LUAN, CHONG JUN LIANG, DESMOND FOO

LEAVING NO ONE BEHIND

Employers, the Labour movement and NTUC, and the Government work closely together, in good times and bad... The tripartite partnership is one important example of how we work together as one nation, protect our vulnerable and leave no one behind. This is why when the virus started to spread in other countries, we brought overseas Singaporeans home. We did not leave them to fend for themselves. This is why we care for our migrant workers, who have done much for us, as we care for Singaporeans. This is why we have taken unprecedented steps to draw upon our reserves, in order to forestall retrenchments and support the low-income.

HELP FOR COMPANIES, WORKERS

We will help companies adapt to this new operating environment, and retrain workers for the new jobs available. We will scale up SkillsFuture programmes to train workers on a large scale. NTUC has set up a Job Security Council to help match and train displaced workers for new job opportunities. We will also find ways to buffer freelancers in the gig economy against economic volatility. We will not be able to save every job. But we will look after every worker.

