

Key items on the agenda

In her address at the opening of Parliament yesterday, President Halimah Yacob outlined the Government's directions in its new term. The various ministries will elaborate on these plans this week, and they will be debated next week.



SECURING JOBS FOR SINGAPOREANS

STRENGTHENING THE SINGAPOREAN IDENTITY



- Jobs will remain a top priority for the next few years.
- Businesses, especially small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), are getting support with cash flow and credit so they stay afloat and retain workers; the National Jobs Council is working with employers and unions to create new job and skills-upgrading opportunities.
- The Government will look out for lower-wage and mature workers, many of whom are essential workers. A concerted effort is also being made to help workers in their 40s and 50s.
- There is an urgency to transform the economy and keep it competitive so that jobs continue to be created.
- Efforts to fortify resilience in areas like food, healthcare and supply chain management can become new sources of growth.
- There will also be a major push for sustainable growth, including redesigning urban mobility and efforts for green financing and sustainable infrastructure development across the region.

- A sense of shared identity is key to Singapore's success in the long term, and much more can be done to strengthen this sense of togetherness in society.
- Multiracialism will always be a core element of the Singaporean identity. Everyone, regardless of race, language or religion, must have an equal place in society.
- Multicultural instincts have to be shaped in children early in life, and sustained across communities and workplaces.
- Younger Singaporeans prefer talking about issues to do with race, language and religion, more candidly and openly, which is a positive development. But the conversation has to be conducted with restraint and mutual respect.
- Concerns over competition for jobs from work pass holders will be addressed.
- Singapore's workforce can compete against the best in the world. The Government will work with employers to strengthen capabilities and ensure firms treat Singaporeans fairly when they recruit or retrench workers.
- At the same time, Singapore must not turn inwards but continue to welcome and integrate those who can contribute to Singapore.
- Singaporeans must work even harder to listen to and understand one another.

BUILDING A FAIR AND JUST SOCIETY

EVOLVING SINGAPORE'S POLITICS



- Social safety nets will be strengthened to help Singaporeans cope with life's uncertainties. This will be done in a way that is financially sustainable.
- The Government will do more to support every Singaporean, at each stage of life: young families, in home ownership, education and training; middle-aged citizens, in securing good jobs and saving for retirement; and seniors, in ageing well.
- The conception of merit will be broadened. Schools and scholarships will look beyond academic results,
- and employers will be encouraged to hire people based on skills.
- The next bound of SkillsFuture will enable every worker to upskill throughout his or her career.
- All Singaporeans have a role to play too, such as helping students from disadvantaged families, providing training and job opportunities for people with disabilities, and bridging the digital divide for seniors.

- The Government and the opposition both have roles to play to build trust in public institutions.
- There is room to agree to disagree on some issues, but on those core to Singapore's survival and future, there should be common ground and a broad consensus.
- The Government will be open to constructive criticism and to new ways of doing things, but must govern for all and cannot shy away from tough decisions in the national interest.
- The opposition should also propose policy alternatives to be scrutinised and debated.
- Public debates should be honest and open about the trade-offs of different options, and what they will cost society.
- The diversity of views and ideas among Singaporeans can be a source of strength.
- Singaporeans have to work in partnership with the Government and others to act and make a difference to causes they care about, in the spirit of the Singapore Together movement.