

**SPEECH BY 2nd MINISTER FOR MANPOWER,
MRS JOSEPHINE TEO
AT BRITISH CHAMBER'S ANNUAL 18TH BUSINESS AWARDS GALA DINNER ON 28
SEPTEMBER 2017**

Your Excellency, Scott Wightman, British High Commissioner to Singapore,

Dr. Bicky Bhangu, President of the British Chamber of Commerce,

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Introduction

Good evening. Thank you for inviting me to join you for BritCham's 18th Annual Business Awards Gala Dinner.

My heartiest congratulations to all finalists.

Your nominations reflect your outstanding business achievements as companies and individuals. It also celebrates your business excellence in Singapore and beyond.

Governments and businesses need to work together

Against a backdrop of rising protectionism, it is important that Governments and businesses continue to strengthen partnerships for greater economic cooperation particularly across borders.

Singapore and the UK are like-minded partners when it comes to trade and investment cooperation. The UK is Singapore's fifth largest European trading partner, with total bilateral trade valued at approximately S\$11.5 billion. At the same time, Singapore is the UK's largest trading and investment partner in ASEAN. About 40% of all Singapore investments in Europe are in the UK, which is second to none.

Earlier this year, Singapore renewed the bilateral Economic and Business Partnership with the UK. This agreement further affirms our commitment to work together to promote free and open business flows between both countries.

British companies have had long and significant presence in Singapore for close to two centuries. Today, we have more than 4,000 British companies in key sectors such as chemicals, pharmaceuticals, infocomms and media, as well as transport engineering. Collectively, these companies employ nearly 50,000 employees, of which about two-thirds are locals.

HC is the key to business success as the workforce evolves

As we transform our industries to prepare for the future economy, three key factors will impact businesses in Singapore.

First, the workforce will grow more slowly like in most advanced economies.

Second, the workforce is better educated and career aspirations are changing. Today, more than half of our local workforce are PMETs.

Third, technological advances such as Artificial Intelligence and machine learning will speed up the prevalence of workplace automation. Workers can be freed from routine tasks and take on more creative and challenging roles.

We have increased labour force participation and continue to complement the local core with foreign manpower. We will maintain a healthy working age population in Singapore. More importantly, we will invest in skills for our people and support businesses in their transformation.

It appears to me that, access to talent will remain highly competitive and human capital will be even more critical to business success. Companies will need to implement progressive HR practices to attract, retain and develop a skilled workforce that is able to adapt and grow in the future economy.

To this end, I am heartened to see that human capital development is one of the priority areas recognized by BritCham through its “Investing in People” Award.

Take Swire Pacific Offshore (SPO) an offshore marine services provider which I got to know from my time in the Ministry of Transport. It has been actively nurturing talent for the Singapore maritime community such as grooming local university graduates to become Management Trainees. It has also contributed to the Singapore Management University’s Maritime Economics Concentration programme and set up its flagship training centre, Swire Marine Training Centre in Singapore to offer specialised offshore training capabilities for seafarers.

Strengthening HC through Human Capital Partnership Programme

The tripartite partners in Singapore – MOM, NTUC and SNEF - are also helping employers to raise their game in human capital development. Through the Human Capital Partnership Programme (HCP), we recognise and support exemplary companies which are strong in 3 areas:

- First, they develop the Singaporean core in their sectors through providing training and career development opportunities;
- Second, they bring in foreign expertise and talent that complement our local workforce; and

- Third, they invest in building capabilities in Singapore.

Today, we have more than 70 Human Capital Partners including Rolls-Royce, GlaxoSmithKline and Croda. These employers come from all sectors and types of enterprises, and provide good employment for more than 100,000 locals.

Our HCPartners enjoy competitive advantages. They have access to a dedicated hotline for transactions with MOM, enjoy fast-lane processing for their Employment Pass applications, and priority access to our manpower development schemes such as Adapt and Grow and Lean Enterprise Development Scheme.

We look forward to growing this community of HCPartners, and building a pervasive culture that values and develops our workforce.

Unlocking the potential of mid-career PMETs via Adapt & Grow

Besides recognising progressive employers, we also support the broad community of employers in expanding their talent pipeline.

Just last week, I attended the Singapore Human Capital Summit, where I shared that we need to tap on three sources to build a globally competitive workforce in Singapore. The first two would be familiar to many of you – the Singaporeans entering the workforce and the foreign workforce complementing this local core.

Beyond these two sources, there is an emerging third source of talent that companies can tap as they pursue business and growth opportunities. These are mid-career, experienced local PMETs that may be displaced as businesses transform, but still possess valuable skills and experience companies.

To help businesses unlock the potential of mid-career PMETs, MOM offers employers substantial training and wage support when companies put their people through Professional Conversion Programmes (PCP).

To date, we have rolled out more than 80 active PCPs. In the first half of this year, we've been able to help businesses benefit from more than 1,500 professional conversions.

Leveraging government support - Case study from Rolls-Royce

Rolls-Royce is one of several companies that has been partnering Workforce Singapore in developing mid-career PMETs.

As a HCPartner with a strong commitment to develop a skilled workforce, Rolls-Royce also set up a Regional Training Centre in Seletar. It is the first of its kind in Asia, combining the latest aerospace technology, equipment and facilities to give their employees access to world class training. Each year, over 4,700 training places are offered.

Conclusion

We have many companies in Singapore like Rolls-Royce that invest much in human capital development. The government is happy to work with all these companies and help you make full use of the available support so your people can be future-ready.

Thank you once again for inviting me. I look forward to the award presentation ceremony and wish you all a pleasant evening.

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