

**SPEECH BY MINISTER FOR TRADE AND INDUSTRY CHAN CHUN SING
IN PARLIAMENT ON 14 MAY 2018
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 changes, technological disruption and transition, many Singaporeans are concerned, and understandably so. Many ask simple questions:
 - 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. I am heartened that Singaporeans are concerned with these important issues.
4. While we must be alert and alive to these challenges, we need not be afraid.
 - a. There will always be challenges, so too, 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 enabling the next generation to do even better.
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.

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 in the 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 attach a price to our stand and position, no one will take us seriously ever again.
 - d. We were the host of 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, business and individuals - must understand the world, and collectively remain alert to the forces impacting us and navigate them carefully.
9. Let me illustrate with an example. China, a fast evolving giant, is not monolithic.
- a. Its interests vary and differ across its security, economic and social dimensions.
 - b. There are also different provinces and 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 the different interests and perspectives, knowing only the central government will be necessary but not sufficient.
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.
 - b. Now that China has moved beyond attracting foreign investments to venturing abroad, we must ask ourselves how we can play a role in partnership with the Chinese to explore third country markets.
11. However, this does not mean that we become more Chinese or 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 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. This 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 do business with us.

II. DEVELOP GLOBAL MINDSET, GLOBAL SKILLSETS

13. Our education system and training models must evolve in tandem to support this.

- a. Beyond the technical skills which we already excel in, Singaporeans must also be equipped with the mind-sets and skillsets to operate and compete globally.
- b. This must be our competitive advantage and we can do more.

14. I'm encouraged with ongoing efforts that give our people that global exposure.

- 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 this gives their students a strong competitive edge and open doors to international networks and opportunities.
 - c. More of our institutions should do so.
15. We must also help Singaporeans - both individuals and businesses - access and penetrate global markets better.
- a. Can we redefine the role of overseas Singapore Chapters and Chambers to build the necessary networks?
16. These networks should be formed to achieve 3 outcomes:
- a. connect fellow Singaporeans with one another.
 - b. connect Singaporeans with our network of overseas partners.
 - c. connect our overseas partners with Singapore.
17. To this end, EDB and associated agencies will collaborate, to better organise and expand our outreach overseas.
- 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 exposure overseas, 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 valuable 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; a vital ingredient for our economic future.

19. Imagine us having a global network of 3 million Singapore families, 30 million friends of Singapore, and 300 million fans of Singapore.

III. ENHANCE OUR CONNECTIVITY

20. To secure our place in the world, we must also better connect to the world as our hinterland, gaining better 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 one market.

- a. Our economic agencies continue 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, by ensuring that we are connected to the world in the realms of data, finance, talent and technology.

- a. We have much to work on to build and entrench ourselves as a global node for data, finance, talent and technology connectivity.
- b. We need to move fast before others leapfrog and overtake us. Competition is no longer linear.
- c. We can capitalise on finance and data flows by building on our reputation of trust and reliability to become a trusted financial and data hub.
- d. These “non-physical” dimensions of connectivity are increasingly essential to reinforce the physical dimensions of air-land-sea connectivity.
- 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 and through Singapore, to getting others to trade on our platforms.

24. PSA is a fine example. Since the 1980s, we knew that we couldn't possibly compete with the other mega ports in the world in terms of size, no matter how much we try to expand our port.
- 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 or an 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. This means, beyond looking at GDP as a benchmark, we have to focus on GNI too.
 - b. Not just about giving Singaporeans the best opportunities here in Singapore, but also helping Singaporeans to seize the opportunities beyond Singapore.
26. Mr Speaker, let me now turn to what we as "pioneers of our generation" must do to create a brighter future for all Singaporeans.

PIONEERS OF OUR GENERATION AND THE NEXT

I. PURSUE AN INNOVATION DRIVEN ECONOMY

27. As a society matures, it usually becomes more conservative – choosing to uphold the existing systems rather than break new grounds.
28. To be "Pioneers of our Generation", we must be clear-eyed about our challenges. Let me sketch out some of these challenges and my team mates will elaborate on them throughout this debate.
29. 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 others in a competition, it is another to beat our own standards, even when we are at the top, so that Singaporeans have even better opportunities.
- c. We need to ensure that 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 new capabilities and enterprises.
- e. A*STAR and Enterprise Singapore will lead this and work closely with our companies – SMEs and LLEs and trade associations to realise this. Senior Minister of State Chee Hong Tat will speak more about this.

II. FOSTER A CARING, INCLUSIVE SOCIETY

- 30. Every generation will want to do better than the previous. This is positive. This spurs us to improve.
- 31. We are aware that Singaporeans, particularly those who fall into the “middle-income, middle-age” category, are feeling the stresses and strains of technological and business disruptions.
- 32. 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. Making training and skills upgrading more accessible and affordable will be crucial.
 - d. We must also do more and better for the weak and vulnerable in society. 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 the Labour Movement’s efforts, while Minister Masagos Zulkifli and others, will

speaking about how we can foster a caring and inclusive society that's truly meritocratic.

III. UPHOLD SOCIAL MOBILITY

33. 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 human's natural instincts to pass on wealth and privileges to their next generation.
- c. If left unchecked, our people may lose faith in our system of meritocracy and this can hurt our social compact.

34. Can we then mitigate the forces that widens inequality?

- a. 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. Upholding social mobility is something that we must take seriously.

35. Everyone must have a good start and progress 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 tied to good grades, but also 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

36. As pioneers of our generation, it is also our responsibility to continue building and planning ahead.

- a. As we progress towards SG100- we too need to start planning for the next century.
37. Many of our decisions today will determine whether the next generation can have an even better living environment. For example;
- a. How we refresh our HDB flats and estates
 - b. How 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. We must never think we are ever done building Singapore.

V. FORGE A STRONGER SENSE OF NATIONHOOD AND IDENTITY

38. Beyond economic and social development, our most critical piece of work is to rally our nation together.
39. Our people must not merely be economic sojourners. They must have 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 the sense of community and contribution.
 - c. A true nation is one where its people will stay put to fight for our future and build it up.
 - 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 together as a team, will also establish the foundation for our identity as Singaporeans.
 - f. Minister Indranee Rajah will speak on this important topic of identity.
 - g. Minister Heng Swee Keat will also discuss how we intend to engage fellow Singaporeans for the next lap.

VI. FOSTER STRONGER TRUST

40. For Singaporeans to identify with one another and with this country, there must be trust – between people and government as well as between 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. Help our people to become better informed of the challenges, the options and the rationale behind policies.
- d. This way, they too would become more discerning, and stay vigilant of inaccurate or divisive content.
- e. This way, we can all own our choices and solutions together.

41. With higher education, Singaporeans' aspirations and expectations evolve. They want to be heard, considered and respected.

- a. So we have to keep various channels open for them to share their views and work on strengthening engagement.
- b. If we can continue to strengthen and deepen the trust, we can remain cohesive.
- c. We can then work towards a common vision and goals together- putting national priorities above all.

National Archives of Singapore

KEEPING OUR SYSTEMS REFRESHED & SPECIAL

I. DEVELOP OUR OWN UNIQUE SYSTEMS

42. 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.

43. As a small city-state with a multiracial society, situated in a volatile region, without conventional hinterland and with no one else to depend on our defence - our circumstances are unique.

- a. And while we study other systems and adapt them where suitable, we must not copy blindly or become “intellectually colonised”.

44. We must remain prepared to develop systems that work best for us. More importantly, for us to also constantly update them to meet our evolving needs.

- a. This has been our approach on issues like National Service, 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 of expertise.
- c. For example, in our efforts to renew our economy through the Industry Transformation Maps and to help workers seize the opportunities ahead.
- d. These efforts involve more than just the government agencies.
- e. It must include our Trade Associations and Chambers, our enterprises, the Labour Movement, as well as our workers.
- f. Rather than a “Whole of Government” strategy, this is a “Whole of Nation” strategy.

II. ATTRACT CAPABLE & COMMITTED PEOPLE

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

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

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

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

47. We need to find the strongest set of individuals- not to solve current problems alone, but to prevent future problems from arising in the first place.
- a. This means 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

48. Having found the strongest set of individuals is not enough, what we must do then is to mould them into the strongest team possible.
- a. Countries with more resources, may afford to have less cohesive leadership teams and 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.
49. For Singapore, this teamwork does not exist just 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 to do 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 purpose.
50. All these leadership traits – commitment, teamwork, courage to evolve, a sense of mission, are what we will need to keep our systems special.

51. 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.

- a. While Mr Low, sat on the opposite bench, he is nevertheless a fellow Singaporean and very much part of Team Singapore.

虽然刘程强先生身作为一名反对党议员，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.

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

52. Mr Speaker, politics is not just about winning votes. It is about serving our country and 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. 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 the 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。

53. 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.

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

54. Let me conclude in English. We will have our fair share of challenges and opportunities in our generation. But we can be confident that we will build an even better future for ourselves and our future generations.
55. 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 continue to transcend our constraints and turn them into opportunities.
56. As pioneers of our generation, we must be innovative and build upon the fundamentals that have brought us this far, so that we can enable the next generation to succeed further.
57. To keep Singapore successful, our systems and politics must be special and refreshed - suited to our unique circumstances and needs. We will also need to do more to inspire another generation of Singaporeans to come forth to serve Singapore, in spite of.
58. We can, and we will together write the next chapter of our Singapore story that's meaningful, engaging and real for all Singaporeans.