

1. EXTENSION OF CIRCUIT BREAKER PERIOD TO 1 JUNE

On 21 Apr, Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong announced that Singapore would extend the Circuit Breaker period to 1 Jun and implement tighter measures to further reduce potential transmissions of COVID-19. The aim is to decisively bring down the number of COVID-19 cases in the community and to make sure that if any “leakage” occurs from the foreign worker dormitories to the wider community, we can detect and contain it early. PM called for Singaporeans’ support and cooperation for the extension of the Circuit Breaker period and the tighter measures.

The tighter measures include elevated distancing measures, and the closure of schools and non-essential workplaces. Since imposing the extended Circuit Breaker, the number of community cases has dropped, and the government has focused its efforts on identifying and treating the COVID-19 patients in the foreign worker dormitories. Hence, since 12 May, the government has relaxed some of the measures to allow for some essential services to operate, such as basic haircut services and the retail of pet supplies.



“Many will be disappointed by the extension of the circuit breaker, especially our business and workers, who are hurting greatly. But I hope you understand that this short-term pain is to stamp out the virus, protect the health and safety of our loved ones, and allow us to revive our economy.”

– PM Lee Hsien Loong in his televised address on 21 Apr

Sources: CNA, PMO & ST, 21 Apr]

2. LEAVING NO ONE BEHIND



On 30 Apr, PM Lee Hsien Loong's May Day message was televised for the first time. Here are the main points PM made:

- Unlike other countries which have to borrow, we are **using our reserves to save jobs, reduce costs for companies and tide Singaporeans over the crisis.**
- Both employers and workers are encouraged to **take a longer-term view to keep businesses going.** Workers must accept wage cuts and employers must make every effort to keep their workers.
- Our **economy will open up "step by step"** even after circuit breaker measures are relaxed.

PM also said that the COVID-19 pandemic will result in many changes to the global economy. This will have major implications for Singapore. There are likely to be significant structural changes to our economy. We will have to build up our

expertise and workforce. PM Lee pointed out two measures in place to help companies adapt to the new operating environment and retrain workers for the new jobs available:

- **Scaling up the SkillsFuture programmes** to train workers on a large scale.
- **Setting up a Job Security Council** to help match and train displaced workers (initiative by NTUC).

PM added that we have what it takes to succeed. Our smallness allows us to be nimble. Our global connectivity means that we can quickly identify and move into new growth areas. Most importantly, we have resources and our tripartite partnership to support businesses, invest in our workforce and take care of our people. This is how we work together as a nation, to protect our vulnerable and leave no one behind.

“COVID-19 is this generation's challenge. The virus is a tough enemy – invisible, but formidable. It is now our turn to prove that we are worthy of our forebears, and up to the challenge before us. I have every confidence that we will prove more than equal to the task.”

– PM Lee Hsien Loong in his May Day message on 30 Apr

[Sources: PMO, CNA & ST, 30 Apr]

3. ENSURING FOOD AND RESOURCE SECURITY

On 15 Apr, Singapore and New Zealand jointly announced the launch of a Declaration on Trade in Essential Goods for Combating the COVID-19 Pandemic. The Declaration aims to ensure the continued production and flow of essential supplies during the fight against COVID-19.



Image: MTI

The first shipment of essential items under the trade declaration arrived in Singapore a week later on 22 Apr. It consisted of about 20 tonnes of meat, including beef and lamb. Subsequent shipments will include fruits and eggs. In return, Singapore is helping overseas New Zealanders make their way home, and helping the New Zealand government with the sourcing of essential medical supplies.

In the meantime, Singapore is also putting in new measures to increase our food production:

- In Apr, the Singapore Food Agency (SFA) launched a \$30 million grant to help local farmers **increase their food production over the next six to 24 months**.
- On 11 May, SFA and HDB launched a tender to **convert the rooftops of multi-storey carparks into sites to farm vegetables and other food crops** from the later part of this year. The sites include Ang Mo Kio, Tampines, Toa Payoh, Hougang, Choa Chu Kang, Sembawang and Jurong West.
- In 2021, the 18-hectares **Agri-Food Innovation Park in Sungei Kadut**, dedicated to high-tech farming and, research and development, will open.

Sources: PMO & ST, 15 and 23 Apr; SFA, 17 Apr; ST, 11 May]

4. PAYING TRIBUTE TO OUR FRONTLINE AND MIGRANT WORKERS

As part of our national effort to keep spirits up and thank front-line and migrant workers amid the circuit breaker period, there was an island-wide singalong to the well-loved song *Home* on 25 Apr. Many families tuned in to radio stations, Mediacorp television channels or social platforms and sang along in their homes while waving torchlights at their windows or balconies. The special edition of *Home* featured composer Dick Lee, singers Rahimah Rahim, Shabir and Taufik Batisah, as well as a 900-strong choir from non-profit arts group Voices of Singapore and other artists.

We Are Majulah, a social movement on Facebook, also called upon Singaporeans to display their flags at home to celebrate Labour Day and pay tribute to our frontline and migrant workers.

Here are other examples of how we paid tribute to our migrant workers on Labour Day:

#1 Under an initiative driven by the Community Seva Committee of the Hindu Endowments Board, Hindu temples, Hindu organisations and several Indian community groups gave out 5,000 care packs to migrant workers who have recovered from the virus.



#2 Pizza Hut donated 3,000 personal Veggie Lovers pizzas to migrant workers who have been affected by the pandemic.

#3 The Singapore Bangladesh Society held a Facebook Live show on Labour Day and launched an online quiz for migrant workers on COVID-19 awareness.

#4 Migrant advocacy group Humanitarian Organisation for Migration Economics (Home) organised a special Labour Day dinner for about 50 foreign domestic workers living in its shelter. The shelter houses foreign domestic workers who experienced abuse or exploitation while others are resolving disputes with their employers.

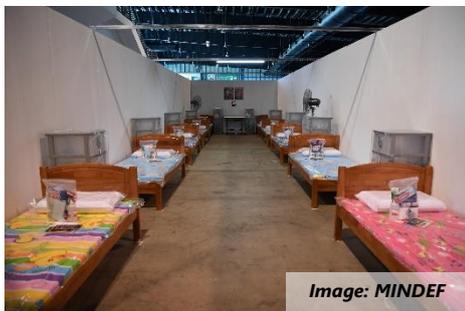


[Sources: ST, 24 Apr; FB/We Are Majulah, 25 Apr; FB/Singapore Bangladesh Society, HOME homepage & ST, 1 May]

5. MINDEF/SAF'S INVOLVEMENT IN SETTING UP THE CHANGI EXHIBITION CENTRE COMMUNITY CARE FACILITY

In addition to existing COVID-19 related efforts, MINDEF/SAF was recently involved in converting the Changi Exhibition Centre (CEC) to a community care facility (CCF). Here are some interesting facts about the CEC facility:

- The CEC is home to the biennial Singapore Airshow. It has been repurposed into a community isolation facility to house recovering COVID-19 patients and early patients displaying mild symptoms of the disease.



- More than 200 personnel from nine organisations affiliated with MINDEF/SAF and its partners are involved. The partners include Dormitory Association of Singapore, Experia Events and Surbana Jurong. MINDEF/SAF also works closely with managing agent Mandarin Oriental, Singapore and healthcare provider Raffles Medical Group to manage the facility and its residents.

- The remodelled indoor facility can accommodate about 2,700 patients. There is an option to increase its capacity to up to 4,400 patients by expanding into the outdoor area, which is currently undergoing construction.
- As of 18 May, the CEC facility has received more than 2,600 patients.
- The CEC is the third community care facility in Singapore. The first two are D'Resort NTUC in Pasir Ris and the Singapore Expo. D'Resort NTUC can take in about 500 people, while the Singapore Expo can take about 1,000 people.

[Sources: CNA, TodayOnline & PIONEER, 26 Apr; MINDEF, 18 May]

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