

In this issue of News In Focus, we take a look at Singapore's external challenges, their implications for Singapore and what we must do to stay united and strong as a nation.

Key Highlights from Debate on the Motion of Thanks to the President:

Remain United, Be Go-getters and Uphold Singapore's Reputation

PM Lee Hsien Loong said that while our relations with our immediate neighbours are stable and encouraging, the geopolitical and economic outlook remain grave, and that we must remain united as a nation:

Troubled External Environment

- The Russia-Ukraine war continues to disrupt supplies, resulting in inflated prices, and worsen international relations between Russia and the NATO countries, and between China and the United States (US).
- The deep mutual distrust between the US and China will not improve any time soon. The US views China's growing strength and assertiveness as a grave threat and seeks "extreme competition" against China. China believes that the US is trying to "contain, encircle and suppress" it. Taiwan continues to be a dangerous flashpoint.
- With protectionism, "on-shoring" and "friend-shoring" of supply chains, the global economy is becoming more fragmented and will affect Singapore's economic growth. For small, open economies like Singapore, we need a stable, well-functioning international trading system to compete against other countries.



“ Our forefathers worked hard to build up the Singapore that we have today... Against long odds, they determined to forge a prosperous nation and a united people, and they succeeded. We, too, must embrace their can-do spirit and outsized ambition to be an extraordinary country, an exceptional place in the world. ”

– PM Lee at Debate on the Motion of Thanks to the President on 19 Apr 2023



What Can Singapore Do?

Remain united

- There will be new stresses in our society. We must **stay united as One Singapore**, and not allow ourselves to be divided along fault lines.
- We must continuously work on our harmony, and build up our social cohesion and national strength.

Have a go-getting spirit

- We must **have grit and inner steel, have an adventurous mind-set, and always remember that nobody owes us a living**. We must continually upgrade our capabilities and build new ones.
- We need to work hard, be smart and strategic in our thinking, stay connected to the world, and make ourselves useful as a global city.

Uphold our reputation

- Singapore has built a strong international reputation over the years. We must **uphold and make full use of it and show the world that our people are of high quality, competent, trustworthy and skilled**.
- Singapore must continue to stand out as an extraordinary and outstanding country in the world.



Scan the QR code to read the transcript of PM Lee's speech.

“ We may be a small island state, but we are not a small people, and neither are our hearts nor our aspirations. Let us think boldly, aim high, and seek far. Let us work together, Government and people, to build a Singapore that we and our children will all be proud of. ”

– PM Lee at Debate on the Motion of Thanks to the President on 19 Apr 2023

Sources: PM's FB page, PMO, ST & CNA, 19 Apr

Close and Stable Relations with Our Neighbours

Indonesia

- Both Singapore and Indonesia have signed and ratified the Flight Information Region (FIR) agreement, Defence Cooperation Agreement (DCA) and Extradition Treaty. Once ICAO approves the new FIR arrangements, all three agreements can come into force simultaneously.
- Going forward, we can focus on our collaboration such as on the digital economy, sustainability and renewable energy.

Malaysia

- Singapore has a broad cooperation agenda with Malaysia ranging from trade, investments to connectivity.
- Although we have significant issues to tackle, such as Singapore's development works at Pedra Branca, delimitation of our maritime boundaries, water and airspace issues, Singapore is maintaining frequent exchanges at all levels with Malaysia, and working on new areas such as the Rapid Transit System Link between Singapore and Johor Bahru.



Five Key Shifts in Singapore's New Social Compact

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Finance Mr Lawrence Wong laid out the five key shifts to create a stronger social compact to take Singapore forward. Here are some key highlights:

1. A New Approach on Skills

- Our new approach must include a fresh commitment to making continuous learning, re-skilling and up-skilling a way of life. Lifelong learning should be key so that we will become more adaptable and resilient, well-equipped and confident to face the future.

2. A New Definition of Success

- We should strive to be a society where everyone can be the best versions of themselves; and where there are many ways for diverse talents to contribute and earn respect in our society.

3. A New Approach for Social Support

- For the vulnerable, we should boost their sense of drive and purpose, and strengthen their sense of agency and ownership.
- For those with disabilities, we could do more to empower, involve and enable them to contribute to society. We will find ways to affirm their dignity and enable them to realise their full potential.

4. A New Approach to Caring for Our Seniors

- We will invest in our infrastructure to ensure our seniors can remain active and purposeful in their golden years.

5. A Renewed Commitment to One Another

- Our sense of collective responsibility underlies our refreshed social compact. It saw us through the pandemic and will carry us through our next bound. We need to look out for and help one another.

“ We intend to make this shift in our social strategy so every Singaporean can be confident: in this harsh, unpredictable world, we will have your back, and we will support you. We will cheer you on, so you can strive to achieve, do your best, and bounce back stronger. ”



“ We will build on our strong foundations to navigate a more troubled world. But we must also have the courage to change where change is needed. ”

– DPM and Minister for Finance Mr Lawrence Wong at Debate on the Motion of Thanks to the President on 17 Apr



Scan the QR code to read the transcript of DPM Wong's speech

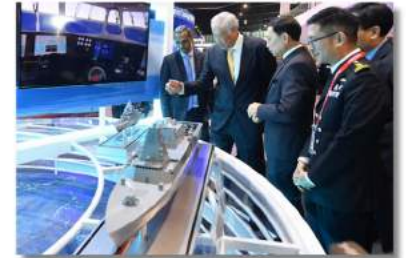
IMDEX Provides the Platform to Enhance Regional Stability and Security

At the Opening Address of the 13th International Maritime Defence Exhibition and Conference Asia (IMDEX Asia) 2023, Minister for Defence Dr Ng Eng Hen said that IMDEX provides the platform to deepen mutual understanding and foster consensus which is essential for maintaining peace and stability in our region.

Here are the key highlights:

War in Asia would be more damaging than the Russia-Ukraine war

- The top priority for all leaders should be to avoid a physical conflict in Asia. A conflict between the US and China (which together account for more than a quarter of global trade), would be manifold times the disruption that the world is facing now from the Russia-Ukraine war.
- The impact of the deliberate decoupling between the US and China to reduce dependency will create pain for all countries, particularly because countries will increasingly be forced to choose sides.



Dr Ng viewed the exhibits on display at IMDEX Asia 2023.



Mr Heng visited Indonesian Navy ship KRI I Gusti Ngurah Rai.

Importance of a Peaceful Maritime Domain

- Singapore sits astride a key sea line of communication. One quarter of the global oil trade and one third of global container trade passes through the Straits of Malacca and Singapore. If conflict were to destabilise our region, it would have far-reaching implications worldwide.
- A rules-based order such as the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) preserves freedom of navigation while respecting the sovereign claims of individual states.
- The ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting (ADMM) and the plus partners have established the Code for Unplanned Encounters at Sea and the expansion of the ASEAN Direct Communications Infrastructure. These are positive steps but more can be done to reduce the risks of miscalculations at sea.
- We must keep our sea lines of communication free and safe for routine business. This can be done through close collaboration with our stakeholders.
- The Malacca Strait Patrol and the recently inaugurated Coordinated Patrol Indonesia-Singapore are good examples where countries collaborate together to ensure the security of the Straits of Malacca and Singapore.

Scan the QR code to read the transcript of Dr Ng's speech at IMDEX Asia 2023





Any feedback on this issue?
Let us know through
<https://go.gov.sg/feedbacknif>
or email us at nexus@defence.gov.sg

