

Most bosses give retrenched workers payout

But more employers choosing lump sum rather than amount based on length of service as economy slows

Joanna Seow

Nine out of 10 companies that retrenched workers last year gave retrenchment benefits to eligible local employees.

Still, the 91 per cent that did so represented a dip from the 94 per cent in 2012.

Also, the latest official figures show a bigger proportion of these companies gave a lump-sum payment, which is typically one to two months of a worker's wages, instead of an amount based on the number of years the person has

worked in the company.

The comparative figures are 17 per cent in 2015 and 7 per cent in 2012, according to Manpower Ministry figures released yesterday.

The survey on retrenchment benefits is done every four years and the next was due in the new year. But it was brought forward to see how badly the labour market has been hit by the slowing economy.

Human resource experts believe the rise in lump-sum payments was probably due to employers reining in their expenses as the economy wobbled. "One to two months' salary is hardly sufficient to tide most

job seekers over till they get another job," said NeXT Career Consulting Group managing director Paul Heng. "Still, some help is better than no help."

Retrenchment benefits are not compulsory, though companies tend to give the payout to workers with at least two years of service.

But last year, two out of three companies gave them to staff with less than two years of service, the survey found.

More workers, however, are likely to face uncertainty as they change jobs more often, said an assistant secretary-general of the National Trades Union Congress (NTUC), Mr Patrick Tay.

Most collective agreements unions sign with companies include retrenchment benefits and all these businesses gave them last year. But only 89 per cent of non-unionised companies did so, said the ministry.

Bigger companies tend to give the payout: 98 per cent of businesses with at least 200 workers did so against 88 per cent of smaller firms.

A total of 12,010 workers were retrenched from January to September this year.

The NTUC's Mr Tay said the retrenchment numbers are not likely to go down next year. The pain, however, will be felt most severely in such sectors as retail and foreign financial institutions and more small and medium-sized enterprises.

From Jan 1, employers have to notify the ministry of retrenchments within five working days, so that help from agencies can reach the workers faster.

Singapore Human Resources Institute president Erman Tan urged workers to learn new skills. "If you are retrenched, be courageous and take it as a good starting point for a new career."

A senior executive, laid off earlier this year when her real estate firm closed its Singapore office, said the staff were not given retrenchment benefits. But the employees asked for help, said the 40-year-old job seeker.

"The firm gave us two months' salary, a thank-you lunch and offered to write reference letters for us, so it ended well," she said.

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Senior positions affected in Inchcape's restructuring

Christopher Tan
Senior Transport
Correspondent

Vehicle distribution giant Inchcape is restructuring its Singapore operations, a move that will result in one of the biggest downsizing exercises the local motor industry has ever witnessed.

The Straits Times understands that some 120 employees across Toyota agent Borneo Motors and Suzuki agent Champion Motors will be retrenched within the next several weeks.

The cohort represents 12 per cent to 14 per cent of Inchcape's headcount here.

A number of senior positions will also be affected.

Mr Koh Ching Hong, Inchcape's chief executive for South Asia and managing director of Borneo Motors, will leave his post by the end of next month. The 57-year-old, who has been at the helm for nine years, could not be reached for comment.

Inchcape is likely to do away with a chief executive for South Asia, but a new managing director for Borneo Motors is likely to be appointed. In the interim, Mr George Ashford, Inchcape's chief executive of Asia, will oversee Mr Koh's roles.

The news has taken the industry by surprise, as it comes at a time when Inchcape is having record sales and high profitability in Singapore.

"It may be part of a group-wide strategy to become leaner in anticipation of a global economic slowdown and tougher business conditions," an executive from a rival group said.

According to its interim financial statement, the London-headquartered distribution giant said that its after-tax profit for the six months to end-June rose by 7.8 per cent to hit £165 million (\$293 million).

That came on the back of an 11.2 per cent rise in revenue to £3.8 billion.

Its trading margin for South Asia – of which Singapore is the main market – rose by one percentage point to hit 10.4 per cent, the best among all its other segments.

Despite its relatively small size, South Asia contributed £33.4 million in trading profit – the third largest after Britain and Australasia. Inchcape had declared an interim dividend of 7p per share, up from 6.8p in the previous corresponding period.

Looking ahead, directors singled out the strength of its South Asian and emerging markets. "Inchcape is well positioned to drive long-term growth," they noted.

The Straits Times understands that the restructuring will also involve moving finance and IT functions out of Singapore.

Mr David Leong, managing director of human resource firm People-Worldwide Consulting, said the news is not completely unexpected as companies and businesses are "not positive" about next year.

However, Mr Leong noted that most firms would cut the bottom and middle layers. That Inchcape is also cutting the top "suggests that they're right-sizing".

"At the end of the day, they're looking at the wage component," he said. "They want a lighter vessel in a more turbulent sea."

Mr Leong said a company's move to cut headcount despite a strong financial performance is likely to affect remaining staff.

"Morale will definitely be impacted," he said. "Retention won't be high."

The Straits Times understands that Inchcape will be trimming staff in other markets too, but Singapore is bearing the brunt of the exercise.

Inchcape plc was unable to respond to queries by press time.

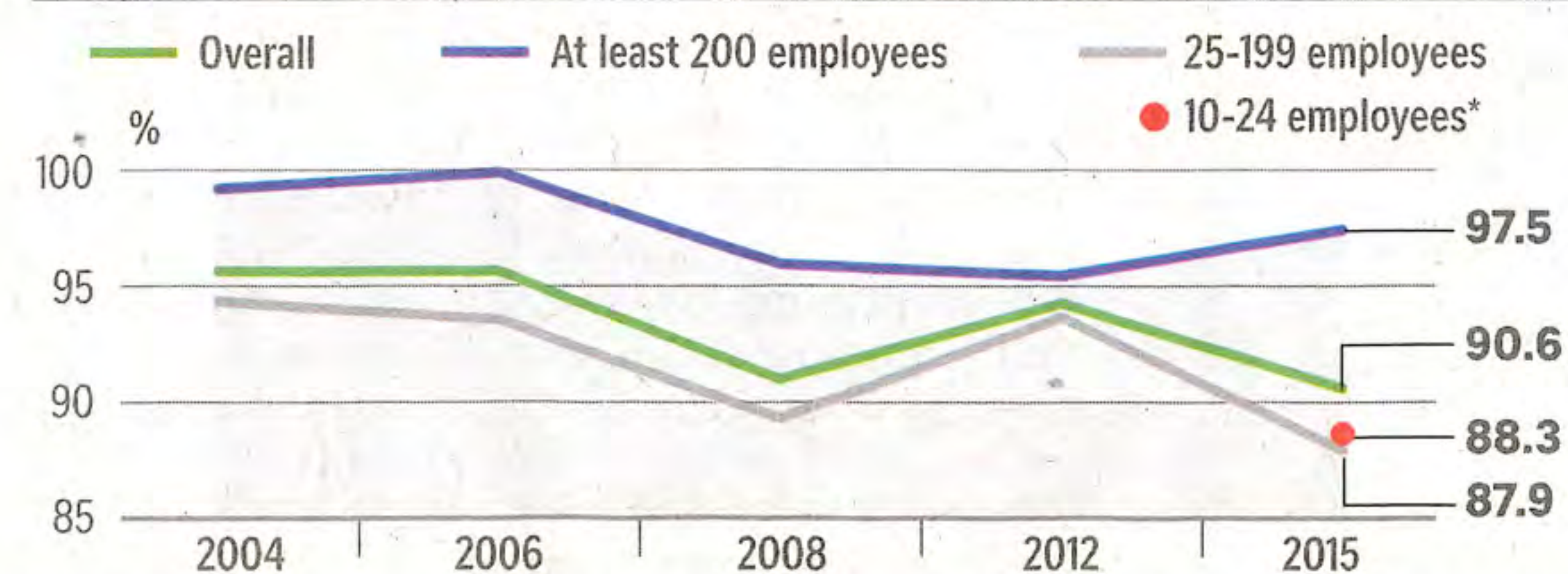
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Mr Koh, Inchcape CEO for South Asia and managing director of Borneo Motors, will leave his post by the end of next month.

Payouts more likely from bigger firms

Smaller proportion of employers paid retrenchment benefits to eligible locals last year.



NOTE: *Survey was expanded to cover companies with 10-24 employees for 2015 onwards

Source: MINISTRY OF MANPOWER STRAITS TIMES GRAPHICS

THIS WEEK'S TOPIC:

What event this year has had or will have the biggest impact on your business?

Goodbye, eventful 2016

Jessie Xia
Managing Director – Singapore
ThoughtWorks

With Britain's Brexit vote and the election of Donald Trump, businesses around the world will have to be prepared for more than economic uncertainty. We are witnessing the resurgence of insularity and protectionism that have the potential to spell greater social inequality.

At ThoughtWorks, it is our mission to not only revolutionise software design, creation and delivery, but also advocate inclusiveness and social change. As we enter a volatile year, we will continue to protect the foundational values that have made the technology industry great – supporting the open exchange of ideas and productive engagement with the outside world.

Leon Perera
Chief Executive Officer
Spire Research and Consulting

Donald Trump's election victory will have the greatest impact on us, though in ways that are not entirely predictable in 2016. He may become a pragmatic president. However, he is still likely to push economic policy in a protectionist direction and curb America's military and economic engagement with Asia.

In contrast, his commitment to domestic infrastructure spending – made credible by Republican control of both houses of Congress – may help boost the global economy. On balance, we are expecting a volatile and cautious outlook in 2017.

Prashant Dadlani
Founder
blu

The closure of Singapore's oldest department store John Little is the latest in a series of bad news for the retail sector this year. It is a wake-up call for Singapore to fundamentally rethink shopping experiences. As online retailers from abroad continue gaining ground, homegrown retailers – not only the likes of John Little, but also many other small and medium-size ones – ought to engage consumers more seamlessly both online and offline. This calls for a paradigm shift across the retail logistics ecosystem, towards greater integration of order fulfilment, automated inventory management, and last-mile delivery, including through self-collection ports. It's time for same-day collection of online shopping items to be a reality in Singapore.

Goh Swee Chen
Chairman
Shell Companies in Singapore

Hydrocarbons will be required in the energy mix for many decades more, and they will continue to be essential in the production of chemicals such as solvents and materials such as plastics. But to provide a better life for all on a healthy planet, our energy system must transform, and both governments and companies like Shell need to adapt to this energy transition. At Shell, we recognise the growing need to call upon all kinds of carbon-free energy sources like wind, solar and nuclear.

Last spring, Shell formally established a New Energies business to explore and invest in new low carbon opportunities. In many ways this complements Shell's existing businesses. It's an exciting and fast-moving landscape.

We think that a position in low carbon or renewable sources of energy will be important for Shell in the energy transition unfolding this century. And we are determined to be a winning company in that transition. But this will take time. "New Energies" also contains more than just traditional renewables. The theme encompasses the digital revolution, more electrification, especially in transport, and more customers with a wider choice in the energy mix.

David Emery
Founder and Chairman
Reciprocus International Pte Ltd

The velocity of change globally is unprecedented, creating new openings of opportunity while simultaneously posing more complex and difficult challenges. For Singapore, in this environment, the urgency and effort to improve resiliency has never been greater.

As part of the effort, we have seen markedly improved determination among government agencies and trade associations to support SMEs with overseas expansion. For our global advisory practice, 2016 was a milestone for greater investments into capabilities that assist local SMEs specifically implement such expansion agendas. This year we bet with confidence on the global competitiveness of Singaporean SME talent, ideas and innovation.

Nirvik Singh
Chairman & CEO, Grey Group
Asia Pacific, Middle East & Africa

Politics aside, the single most impact is the far-reaching progress that AI (artificial intelligence) has made in 2016. It has evolved to affect multiple industries including health, gaming, automobiles and business applications. For example, AI can decipher data patterns and aid businesses in targeting the right customers for a specific product providing them with insightful and relevant product recommendations, making the online shopping experience more personalised.

Or the way *Forbes* has employed "Quill" where structured data is transformed into a meaningful common language – AI becomes a storyteller. This can be used in research, analytics, social media marketing and for content writing.

In 2017, we will see an increase in the regulatory guidelines for the use and development of AI.

Wong Heng Chew
Country President
Fujitsu Singapore

2016 has been a watershed year in terms of businesses accepting the need for digital transformation. A series of developments has transformed the information and communication technology industry.

Technologies like Internet of Things and artificial intelligence are maturing and changing the way business and society functions.

Consequently, there has been an increased allocation of resources to meet the demands of the digital era through working with experienced and innovative technology partners. As cyberattacks become ever more sophisticated and frequent, businesses need to be responsible, including implementing policies and compliance with regulations. These guidelines need to be translated into technology requirements and considered in the overall IT strategy and design.



ILLUSTRATION BY: TEOH YI CHIE

Foo Siang-Tse
Managing Director
Quann

The high profile cyber breaches of 2016 demonstrated that no business or government is immune from cybersecurity risks and threats.

This underscores the need for a holistic and integrated approach to cybersecurity – government, enterprises and individuals all must play a part.

It is more than just a technology issue, but rather one where people, processes and governance must all be aligned to addressing this risk, bearing in mind the convenience and cost tradeoffs. On the bright side, we have noticed a tremendous increase in awareness among our customers.

Enterprises now recognise that cybersecurity is a risk that is worthy of the attention of boards. This is a critical first step towards taking effective collective action against this threat.

Ronald Lee
Managing Director
PrimeStaff

The election of Donald Trump as the next president of the United States is by far the biggest event of the year that will impact the global economy.

Stock markets appear to be rallying in the wake of Trump's victory but there is now added uncertainty to the economic milieu and uncertainty is never a good thing.

We do not know if Trump will follow through on his hard line on trade or soften his trade rhetoric. What we do know so far is that the Trans-Pacific Partnership is in jeopardy, and its fate will further impact the future performance of global markets.

Many business leaders like myself are therefore cautious and watching closely how this unfolds.

Robin C Lee
Group COO
Bok Seng Group

It has been a freaky economic year, with a myriad of nasty surprises that have gone against mass expectations and the forecasts of even the most intelligent analysts. Unfortunately, this seems to be the new norm, where events are rapidly evolving in dangerous, unpredictable patterns. Like in 2015, our industry continues to grapple with a dwindling job volume caused by the doldrums in the oil & gas sector and its subsequent ripple effect on the value chain.

This, unfortunately, has taken its toll on many businesses. 2016 is as good as done and we now look forward to the next year, resolving to ensure that our assets are wisely utilised, operations are lean and productive and that our efforts to firmly anchor our businesses in the expanding regional market are intensified.

David Leong
Managing Director
PeopleWorldwide Consulting Pte Ltd

The precipitous fall of oil prices has caused the offshore and marine sector in Singapore to crumble. Singapore has two world-ranking and arguably the largest oil rig contractors. The slowdown in the exploration of oil offshore is the result of the plunge in the oil price that began in mid-2014.

It makes any exploration and offshore drilling unfeasible. Singapore has a huge ancillary offshore and marine supporting industry with deep and wide value chains and infrastructure. Many contractors and subcontractors are affected and will go into judicial management or are bankrupted.

PeopleWorldwide supports the oil & gas, offshore & marine and process industry with manpower in a deep way and this sudden shrinkage of the business has serious repercussions.

It was a good 12-year run for the oil & gas, offshore and marine industry for PeopleWorldwide and it will take at least two to three years more for the industry to see the light at the end of this very long tunnel.

Uantchern Loh
Chief Executive Officer
Black Sun PLC

As the year draws to a close, we look back with awe and surprise at all the world events that have left us breathless and wondering what next. It's a familiar feeling each year, and perhaps we start to expect the unexpected. It's the new normal. It's not the unexpected that keeps us awake at night. It's the bombs that didn't go off that will keep us guessing about what we didn't know. Now that's scary.

Nick Evered
Senior Vice-President and General Manager, Asia Pacific
Concur

With direct bookings quickly becoming a norm, travel suppliers who embrace the change and collaborate will add to, and benefit from, the ecosystem of ready air and hotel partners. This is especially critical as Asia-Pacific continues its growth momentum as the world's biggest business travel region. This is the future of the travel industry. Concur's recent TripLink partnership announcement with British Airways and Iberia represents a significant milestone, not only for our business but the corporate travel industry. The partnership enables mutual customers to capture business travel bookings made directly on both airlines via TripLink.

Justin Lie
Founder & CEO
CashShield

The recent fervor behind all things machine learning and big data, driven by both the government and private sectors this year, has helped open minds to the urgency of future-proofing organisations via effective machine-decisioning and automation in the country. This is pivotal to the continued global competitiveness in resource-scarce Singapore. 2016 has been especially fruitful for the tech industry and CashShield as more companies strive to machine-optimize both internal and external processes for efficiency and profit.

Daniel Ng
Senior Director, Asia Pacific
Cloudera

2016 saw businesses, organisations, and individuals become more connected. Never before has information been this accessible and enterprises so data-driven. As a result of the burgeoning data economy, we also see a serious shortage of skilled data professionals. Organisations are struggling to find enough skilled data workers who can turn data into actionable insights.

In view of this, Cloudera introduced the Big Analytics Skills Enablement (BASE) Initiative this year. The initiative serves as a catalyst, bringing together partners from the private and public sector, to build an industry ecosystem that will cultivate more data professionals and help current data workers upgrade their skills. In 2017, we will continue to see initiatives like this have a great impact on businesses, industries, and nations as big data continues to evolve even further beyond analytics to areas like artificial intelligence and machine learning.

Toby Koh
Group Managing Director
Ademco Security Group

2016 has proven that terrorism is increasing and the risk is real in any part of the world. Terrorists struck in Brussels, Nice, Ankara, Orlando, just to name a few. Many terror plots were foiled in Singapore and our immediate neighbours Indonesia and Malaysia.

Risk is escalating and our clients are increasing measures to protect against losses. Clients are constantly relooking their security strategy and business continuity plans to protect their employees, clients and shareholders. Our American clients are especially concerned about their perceived value as a target – even more so now after Donald Trump won the election. Investment in security looks set to escalate in 2017.

Patrick Liew
Managing Partner
Greenpro Capital

The outcome of the US presidential election has caused anxieties and even fear in the market and may further trigger a slowdown in the economy. However, we have learned from past challenges that uncertainty is not an enemy; unpredictability is not a foe.

Economic downturns or lull periods are often some of the best opportunities to redesign business models, expand range of offerings, streamline and automate operations, and expand into new businesses to improve productivity and results.

During a downturn, prepare for an upturn. Conversely, during an upturn, prepare for a downturn. The greatest crisis is a lack of proactive action.

Rick Scurfield
President
NetApp APAC

The launch of Singapore's cybersecurity strategy in October brought into view the importance of cyber resilience in today's highly connected world.

Technology infiltrates our everyday lives and is driving the global push for digital transformation. The insights garnered from the plethora of data that is available to us as a result of this seismic shift is forming the foundation of our smarter cities.

However, underlying this evolution is the fine line between using data to innovate while making sure it is protected. The demand to ensure personal data is kept safe and secure at all costs creates many challenges that require strong partnerships between the public and private sectors, with the mutual goal being to safeguard citizens' lives, both real and digital.

Smart data governance and security is and will continue to be a cornerstone of Singapore's journey towards becoming a truly Smart Nation. As such, a spirit of collaboration will help further promote both knowledge and skills in the area of cybersecurity and data sovereignty – and our business and government leaders need to continue to champion the cause.

Andre Hesselink
Chief Executive Officer
GoBear

The recent announcement by the Monetary Authority of Singapore allowing insurers to offer the full suite of life insurance products online without advice is a future-forward step for the insurance sector and Singaporeans. It affirms our business model as a comparison site for insurance and financial products to empower people with the right to choose.

This philosophy has propelled GoBear into four countries this year together with the launch of three new banking products, and we have plans to launch more new insurance products including life insurance. To date, we have secured over 4.5 million users across Asia. Our rapid expansion since our founding in 2015 has gained recognition across the region.

Paul Henaghan
President, Southeast Asia
Dell EMC – Enterprise Business

The past year has been a historic one for us. Dell and EMC merged to form the world's largest privately-owned technology company – Dell Technologies, a unique family of businesses that provides the essential infrastructure for organisations to build their digital future, transform IT and protect their most important asset, information. At Dell EMC, our priority is helping customers transform IT to meet the challenges of the digital world.

This involves modernising their data centre infrastructure, automating their IT processes and transforming their organisation and operating model.

As we move into 2017, the Internet of everything will continue to accelerate the digital transformation of businesses and we will be a trusted partner to our customers, providing services and solutions that support our customers and partners' drive for innovation, enabling them to thrive in this rapidly evolving digital world.

Reuter Chua
Head
ACCA Singapore

ACCA (Association of Chartered Certified Accountants) focused its efforts on internal corporate development this year and this has brought about two new ground-breaking initiatives aimed at shaping future-ready professional accountants for Singapore's economy. This includes a global report, with extensive inputs from C-suite executives on seven competency quotients that professional accountants require to develop to remain relevant to the future economy; and the launch of a refreshed ACCA qualification curriculum that ensures graduates are work-ready forward thinkers.

This is in line with the Committee on the Future Economy's vision to transform and upskill the Singapore workplace to meet the challenges of the future digital economy. These initiatives have repositioned ACCA to support and promote skills upgrading initiatives, such as Singapore's SkillsFuture initiative, and lifelong learning; in line with ACCA's public interest remit.

John Keung
CEO
BCA

The opening of the BCA SkyLab this year marks a new milestone in Singapore's green building journey. It is the world's first high-rise rotatable laboratory for the tropics, fully equipped with integrative testing capabilities for energy-efficient building technologies. The SkyLab enables the industry to work hand-in-hand with researchers in developing and testing new green building solutions in an integrated manner at different building orientations reflecting real world conditions.

The green building technologies, once successfully test-bedded and adopted by the industry, will bring us closer to achieving our long-term aspiration of having positive-energy low-rise buildings, zero-energy medium-rise buildings and super-low energy high-rise buildings in Singapore.

THIS WEEK'S TOPIC

How should government and society respond to the seeming rise of a post-truth public?

'Truth' in the eyes of the beholder

Victor Mills
Chief Executive

Singapore International Chamber of Commerce

The "post-truth" world has evolved because of the availability and abuse of the Internet and social media. This is often fed by the anger and distrust many citizens around the world feel for their governments and leaders. Unlike Singapore, too many governments and leaders serve their own or vested interests instead of those of the majority of citizens.

More governments and leaders need to rediscover this role and practise it. Governments everywhere should be more transparent and share more data. Society meanwhile needs to learn to check its sources and to respond rather than to react to news or posts.

John Bittleston

Founder & Chair

Terrific Mentors International Pte Ltd

People want standards and freedom. Not dogmatic regulations, nor exhortations to behave better. Just workable, doable standards in an atmosphere of liberty. Walter Lippmann said: "There can be no liberty for a community which lacks the means by which to detect lies". So, if the basis of these aspired standards cannot be truth, what is it to be? Total distrust means forfeiting liberty. Can a government ask its voters if they want to be honest or prefer to be controlled? In their present mood, voters in many countries might opt for control. They won't like the police state that follows.

Helen Ng

Chief Executive Officer

General Storage Company Pte Ltd

The rise of post-truthfulness undermines social cohesion and damages business confidence. Governments should establish and accredit fact-checking websites to counter falsehoods put out by rogue websites. They should engage actively with civil society groups to promote open discussion forums online and offline.

Giving the public platforms to air their thoughts and views candidly, and taking their fears and concerns seriously, would help defuse the tensions that predispose them to believe fake stories. Encouraging critical thinking and participative citizenship is far more effective and enduring than clamping down on fake news sites.

Camilla de Villiers

Managing Director, Asia Pacific

HireRight

The prevalence of digital and social media platforms seem to have robbed people of their identity – people are trying to be someone else, frame of references are skewed, and self-confidence is largely undermined. As a result, we seem to be developing a generation of individuals with a herd mentality; without the ability to think for themselves or tap into their core value system.

In this context, "post-truth" becomes very dangerous.



ILLUSTRATION: SIMON ANG

Chia Ngiang Hong

President

Singapore Green Building Council

In this post-truth era, the need to engage with all stakeholders is now greater than ever. To pre-empt messages from being disseminated or distorted by other sources, organisations should ensure that all messages, positive or otherwise, are communicated directly and expeditiously to all relevant stakeholders. Organisations must also take greater effort to keep all messaging simple, clear and non-ambiguous.

Where government policies are concerned, the main consideration is how they are being perceived by citizens and their consequential impact on the society. It is therefore of utmost importance for the government to convey the key thrusts, significance and relevance of such initiatives clearly and succinctly rather than to dwell on the technicalities of their conception.

Uantchern Loh

Chief Executive Officer

Black Sun PLC

"What's in a name? That which we call a rose by any other name would smell as sweet." That's a quote from William

Toby Koh

Group Managing Director

Ademco Security Group

The manipulation of truth or fiction in this post-truth era is nothing new. Many have used it in the past as a strategy to lobby or change mindsets. However, it is only with the candidacy of Donald Trump that it has been executed with such gusto, culminating in a victory. It is the final effect of winning the election for Trump that has thrust post-truth into the limelight. Governments may in fact have precious little control over this. The best strategy is still openness and transparency so that everyone can try and draw a conclusion on what they read or hear. More importantly, the leading media must continue to present facts and opinion in a balanced way and cement themselves as the go-to source for information. Education of the public to discern between reality and facts versus half truths, and where to obtain real data, must continue.

Edwin Khew Teck Fook

President

The Institution of Engineers, Singapore

Engineering is based on the truth and nothing but the

Robin C Lee

Group COO

Bok Seng Group

With the easy proliferation and dissemination of information in today's world, controlling fake news is anything but simple. Even mainstream news channels are slowly losing their grasp on objective facts and banking more on juicy "storylines" to play on their audiences' emotions and biases, all in the name of ratings.

While how opinions are taken is ultimately left to the judgement of the beholder, untrue or fabricated news must always be called out. This can be achieved by countering them with hard facts and evidence, even if doing so proves to tedious. What Facebook and Google have done and are doing is a step in the right direction and I hope it continues. The right way is not always the easiest way.

Patrick Liew

Managing Partner

Greenpro Capital

Democracy is not the absolute panacea for all of society's problems. It works best if the people are mature enough to take an objective, rational, balanced and pragmatic approach to responsible citizenry.

That's why the authorities should continue to educate our people from young to ensure that they know how to conduct appropriate research, verify facts, think critically, and make better-informed judgements.

Our people need to know how to ring fence themselves from appealing lies, half-truths, and misconceptions, and not be moved by well-packaged promises, propaganda and persuasive pitches.

David Leong

Managing Director

PeopleWorldwide Consulting Pte Ltd

Truth can be nebulous and elusive depending on how we interpret it and from which angle we observe it. Information today flows in multiple channels and streams from all kinds of platforms. It is hard to manage such incessant flows of information and data and decipher differing degrees of truths in the stories.

Government cannot be seen to be blocking the info flows and to interpret truths for the public. Any such intervention by the government will bring about greater suspicions.

In today's context, the public must be vigilant and interpret such truths in stories themselves. We cannot believe everything we read. Readers, beware.

Zaheer K Merchant

Regional Director (Singapore & Europe)



▲大批警员到场调查，并将洋情侣逮捕。
(受访者提供)

洋女一度躲入厕所，之后被警方带回厕所调查。

李小姐透露，洋情侣被问话后，迅速被警方带离LV店，当时两人低着头，与先前自信的表情相比，判若两人。

据了解，洋女随后被警方带到位于三楼的一间女厕所调查。

“女厕所外站了几名警察，一度被封锁约半小时，相信在搜身。”

新明MMS
爆料

送\$50KFC礼券



传照片到

91918727

WhatsApp / Wechat

shinmin@sph.com.sg

美容师遭解雇获赔\$5212

雇主上诉得直

只需付\$600

李耀文 报道 leeyw@sph.com.sg

美容师称被拖欠两个多月薪金，到人力部投诉雇主，获赔5212元。不过雇主反指只欠半个月薪水，并出示美容师签收薪水的单据，到高庭上诉得直，最终只需付600元薪水。

拥有S准证的中国籍美容师金婷(译音)受聘于金文泰一间名为“Beauty Hair”的美容院，月薪2600元。不过美容师称，她去年8月19日工作，直到去年11月13日被解雇，只领取876元3角的薪水。她到人力部投诉雇主，助理劳工总监裁定美容师可获赔5212元。

不过雇主不满，到高庭上诉。

雇主代表律师表示，助理劳工总监在处理案件时没有给他们公平的审讯。律师说，美容院有两名合伙人，女合伙人当时怀孕，只能出席第一天审讯，其余只能由男合伙人代表。

律师说，助理劳工总监没将审讯展期，剥夺

女合伙人表明立场的机会，对美容院不公平。

不过审理上诉的高庭法官朱汉德认为，女合伙人在审讯第一天有机会表明立场，而男合伙人出庭时，也没有因案件续审而提出反对，认为助理劳工总监没有对两合伙人不公平。

雇主代表律师反指，美容师向美容院借400元只归还100元，而美容院发薪水时，美容师都有在单据上签名。美容院实际上只拖欠半个月薪水。

美容师解释说，她当时不懂英文，薪水单据是美容院让她预先签名。

法官认为，美容师没有任何书面证据支持自己的立场，而她在美容院上班时没向任何人包括同事投诉自己没领到薪水，反而在被解雇后才提出有关投诉，因此判美容院上诉得直。

雇主原本拖欠美容师900元薪水，在扣除美容师之前所借的300元后，雇主现只需付对方600元。

人力部公布调查： 雇主多倾向灵活工作制

周自蕙 报道 chchew@sph.com.sg

人力部昨天公布2016年的雇佣条件调查结果，报告显示，虽然大部分国人的有薪年假仍少于14天，但有越来越多职员的年假比14天多，其中年假在21天以上的职员比例从2006年的8.5%增至今年的11.3%。

报告指出，由于环球对人才的竞争，经理与执行级职员的年假条件一般较好，其中有四分之三的有薪年假在15天或以上，相比之下，蓝领员工则只有约20%享有15天或以上的年假。

此外，也有近半职员享有每周五天工作制，从过去的43.4%增至48.1%。其中，白领职员中每周工作五天者占大多数，达76.9%，而蓝领则只有27.5%。

仁立国际执行董事梁昌国指出，随着我国劳动人口逐渐减少且越来越精进，雇主会更加倾向提供灵活工作制和增加年假等各种各样的福利，才能吸引到人才。此外，人力部强调更公平的雇佣条件，政府亦鼓励亲家庭的做法，因此这些条件是大势所趋。



▲提供父母事假的公司比例，从2008年的5.9%倍增至19.5%。(档案照)

有助降低员工离职率

提供父母事假的公司比例，从2008年的5.9%倍增至19.5%。

虽然在我国雇佣法律下，雇主目前无需为员工提供特别事假、婚假、备考假或父母与孩子事假，但这么做的公司仍然显著增加。

报告指出，以行业来开，这些特别假的性质与公司职员的年龄相关，例如年

长职员较多的清洁、园艺和保安业等，较少雇主会提供婚假或备考假，但提供父母与孩子事假的比例却比一般要高。

越来越多机构愿意配合雇员需求，临时为他们做灵活工作安排，也有更多雇主提供高于法定标准的种种事假。这些亲家庭的工作安排成功地降低员工离职率。

国人雇用条件比例

	2006年	2016年
年假		
少于14天	58.3%	55.4%
14到21天	33.2%	33.3%
21天以上	8.5%	11.3%
每周工作日		
五天	43.4%	48.1%
五天半*	20.9%	18.9%
六天*	17.0%	18.3%
轮班制	16.8%	13.7%

*包括定时能休星期六者

THIS WEEK'S TOPIC

What needs to be done to attract more venture capital funds to Singapore?

Building a venture hub

Marc Mathenz
Senior VP and Asia Pacific MD
Fiserv

The move by the Monetary Authority of Singapore (MAS) to review current rules for venture capitalists (VCs) setting up shop in Singapore underscores the significant contributions by local startups in boosting the economy. The easier it is for VCs to come in, the more funding will flow for startups. Singapore needs to groom and attract talented entrepreneurs with the business outlook and ambition to grow regional and global.

Considerations should also be in place for the VC community and funding to cover the entire finance value chain, similar to how Silicon Valley, and now China, have been developing communities of successful entrepreneurs. MAS should also help establish exit paths like a strong IPO market and a legislative environment facilitating acquisitions.

Paul Tyler
Group MD, International
Telstra

Singapore offers stability, rule of law and access to good technology services, establishing itself as the preferred home of venture capital in South-east Asia. But as technology-driven startups grow in number and influence, it faces fierce competition for capital from other countries in the region and beyond. Singapore has to work hard to maintain its position as a preferred place to create, register and run new companies.

The country needs to create a favourable environment for startups and entrepreneurs to base their operations here, as well as reduce the friction of doing business by adopting digital practices, attracting skilled talent and updating legal practices to adapt to the unique needs of high growth venture businesses.

Carl Firth
Founder and CEO
ASLAN Pharmaceuticals

In biotech, there are limited investment opportunities in Singapore, so we need to create an environment that encourages VCs to be based here and to invest regionally, with some incentive if the fund invests in Singapore companies. But it is not just about capital. We need experienced entrepreneur investors to mentor and support budding companies in Singapore.

We also need to encourage investment in SGX-listed biotechs. Places like Taiwan have a booming public biotech market, which has led to hundreds of VCs focused on building new biotech companies, knowing there is a clear exit path for their investment.



FILE PHOTO

Edwin Khew Teck Fook
President

The Institution of Engineers, Singapore

People with the ability to innovate and generate new products and services are at the core of the disruptive technology revolution. Without a strong core of engineers and technicians to create and manage businesses in the new era, venture capitalists will find Singapore less alluring as an investment destination even if supportive regulations are in place. This is the case across all industries, from financial services to healthcare to manufacturing. The rapidly growing global competition for smart money has increased the urgency for Singapore to train, attract and retain engineers and technicians. Timing is essential if we want to capture this smart money to drive our future economy.

David Leong
Managing Director
PeopleWorldwide Consulting Pte Ltd

The venture capitalists' community in Singapore is shaping up well because of the government's strong advocacy in technology development and innovation with generous grants and co-investment schemes.

This is a supply-and-demand predicament. With greater growth of startups, particularly fintechs, more funds will come on the principle of like-attracts-like. The ecosystem thrives when there is a rich flora and fauna of startups with an enterprising generation who is willing to take risks to create value for the economy. When the mainstream education takes an early approach to introduce entrepreneurship as a possible career option, this can spur supply-side (startups) growth. Such early value inculcation of risks-and-rewards builds and prepares mindsets for greater innovation.

Venture capitalists hunt in packs and at the different stages of investments. When the government can persuade the big funds and VCs to come with liberal co-funding, and strengthen the evaluation of the quality of the startup corps, Singapore's fintech and technology ecosystem will be bound to thrive.

Patrick Liew
Managing Partner
Greenpro Capital

Venture capital funds flourish when there's a strong entrepreneurial culture and ecosystem. Unfortunately, as a country with a limited talent pool, it'll be harder for us to compete with countries that have a more developed economy and a larger base of entrepreneurs and enterprises.

Therefore, we should realign our immigration policies to attract targeted entrepreneurs and startups from across the world to set up in Singapore. We should in-

Jaya Dass
Country Director
Randstad Singapore

Cutting red tape and opening hubs like LATTICE80 recently are great steps but to make Singapore truly viable

Ronald Lee
Managing Director
PrimeStaff

Singapore already has a thriving VC ecosystem and culture, with more than 300 fintech startups in the city.

不断进修 生计不断

——商人20余年转型之路

文科毕业、原本对电器一窍不通的黄道復，20多年来不断上课进修，学习新技能，把藤竹用具家族生意转型成为先进水泵的供应和检修商。

林心惠 报道
limxh@sph.com.sg

自技能创前程计划推出后，越来越多国人意识到终身学习、提升技能的重要性，但在没有政府宣导与津贴的年代，上课进修更多是靠自发的精益求精。

56岁的黄道復20多年来就不断重返课堂进修，带领没落中的藤竹用具家族生意，转型成为供应和检修先进水泵的企业。

黄道復只有O水准学历，读的是文科，毕业服完兵役后，除了懂得帮父亲打理编织藤竹篮子等用具的家族生意外，并无其他专业技能。

但在上世纪80年代初，印度尼西亚推行经济改革，为了吸引外国投资者到印尼设厂生产，不再出口藤竹原料。原材料的主要货源中断，首当其冲的就是靠藤竹贸易为生的黄道復一家。

他受访时说：“我记得当时报章有个关于夕阳行业的报道，其中一个就是我们这种做藤竹编织的。这肯定做不下去，我们必须改变。”

1988年是他人生的转折点。黄道復说，当年有个外国水泵生产商要进驻新加坡，计划在本地加工安装控制板，掌握电机技术的哥哥拿下合同后，他从旁协助。

但由于对电器一窍不通，黄道復报读了职业专科学校（工艺教育学院前身）的课程，白天跟着哥哥“在职培训”，晚上去上课，四年下来顺利考取电器技术初级和高级证书。

后来，黄道復在工作中也常常思考下一步，根据对未来需求的分析，不间断地进修。1992年，电器加工生意逐渐上轨道，员工也越来越多，他便报读了中华总商会的工商管理课程；1995年，黄道復看准未来商机将转向更高端的电子行业，就去修读工艺教育学院的电子工程课程；1999年，他在建设局上自己向来感兴趣的水喉装置课程。

掌握专业知识 客户放心委托项目

由于办公楼和购物中心的冷气系统普遍都使用水泵，黄道復为争取供应和检修这些水泵的合同，于2002年也报读工教院制冷系统课程。

他说：“这些专业知识对我很有帮助，系统出问题时可以迅速分析哪里出错，怎么维修。跟客户谈项目，他们也会觉得我是行家，放心让我们负责。”

如今，父亲创办的“黄光兴私人有限公司”在黄道復带领



下，已从经营藤竹品转型成为市值450万元、旗下有70多名员工的水泵系统企业。

据他观察，人们对进修的观念已有所改善。“起初有不少朋友和同行不了解我离校多年为什么要回去读书。但到了90年代中，他们就不再取笑我。可能因为发生了亚洲金融危机，很多人的生意和工作都受影响，他们体会到学新技能其实很重要。”

传统生意模式受冲击 可用津贴进修精深技能

黄道復也认为，许多传统生意模式已受到新科技与运作方式的冲击，如今政府推出技能创前程（SkillsFuture）计划和提供培训津贴是及时的措施。

根据精深技能发展局较早前公布的数据，今年首八个月有超过8万名国人在技能创前程计划下



黄道復（右）通过多年的学习，从一名没有专业技能的文科生转型成为水泵专家。他平日管理水泵系统生意，不久前则与本地理工学院的学生合作，研究新型水泵与过滤系统。（梁麒麟摄）

报读课程，使用的培训补助多达2250万元。政府在今年1月推出该计划时，给予所有满25岁的国人500元培训补助。

人力资源公司仁立国际执行董事梁昌国受访时指出，许多工作在经济转型的过程中会被淘汰，因此进修掌握精深技能尤为

重要。

他举例说：“打字员的工作已经被淘汰，而如今许多移动平台都有时间管理和提醒事务等功能，企业对秘书的需求也会越来越少。我们必须做好准备学习新技能，减少这些消失的工作岗位带来的影响。”

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THIS WEEK'S TOPIC

What do you expect of US policy on Asia under the new Trump presidency? What will be the impact on business?

THE TRUMP EFFECT

Iain Twine

CEO

Edelman, South East Asia and Australasia

THE political consensus around free trade deals, including the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), has collapsed as Americans question who benefits from these deals. This sentiment is driven by a growing political divide between Americans who have benefited from globalisation and the technological revolution, and those left behind.

The refusal to pass TPP and similar trade agreements will have a short-term impact on America's bilateral relations with its Asian partners. However, the interdependence between the United States and Asia, from an economic standpoint, means that US businesses will continue to focus on Asia despite its government's position. American business survives and thrives despite its government.

Lim Soon Hock

Managing Director

Plan-B ICAG Pte Ltd

BASED on the campaign rhetoric of Donald Trump, businesses can expect the US to be more trade protectionist. This cannot be good for businesses, given that the US is a large consumer and an economic powerhouse. It is unfortunate that domestic politics has taken precedence over the larger global economic interests.

Should the US, as an ardent supporter of free trade, impose trade barriers, it would be regressive. It also opens to question the moral standing of the US and the values that America stands for.

That said, Mr Trump was almost statesmanlike when he delivered his victory speech, which was opposite to his persona during the campaign. If his campaign bluster and rhetoric was just to win the election, and he would, upon assuming office, act and speak in a manner that is befitting the office of US president, there is some hope yet.

That said, a VUCA (volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity) index will go up at least one notch higher post-US election. Businesses must brace themselves for tougher and more difficult times ahead.

Edwin Khew Teck Fook

President

The Institution of Engineers, Singapore

DONALD Trump's threat to cancel the TTP pact would certainly raise trade barriers for businesses from Asia, if he actually follows through with his campaign pledges. As Asia is the world's manufacturing hub with many export-reliant economies, businesses here will face new challenges and risks.

Among other concerns, the Trump presidency also does not bode well for the Paris climate agreement. Mr Trump's scepticism towards the legitimacy of scientific evidence supporting climate change would pose a huge setback to the global aim of curbing greenhouse emissions. These threats will affect businesses and engineers involved in manufacturing and projects adapting cities to climate change.

David Leong

Managing Director

PeopleWorldwide Consulting Pte Ltd

THINGS will not be the same with the United States under a Trump administration. He made many provocative statements about many things and various countries, and even named Singapore among several countries that he accused of stealing jobs from America. Such remarks say a lot about his foreign policy views, and Asia will need to brace itself for a tide change which can be choppy and tumultuous. Trade patterns are very likely to shift to become US-centric and more protectionist.

We may see the emergence of other trade alliances without the US. We may possibly see the further rise of China when US starts to turn inwards and protectionist. Whatever the case, businesses will need to ride on different waves with the tide change – but surely and certainly not a US one.

Dora Hoan

Group CEO

Best World International Ltd

THE election of Donald Trump as the new president of the United States came as a surprise to me. I am sure everyone will respect the decision by Americans. I hope that Mr Trump's win would mean a continuation of shared values – including freedom, democracy and enterprise.

My view is that Hillary Clinton – had she won the election – will continue current US policies but president-elect Trump, who is a successful entrepreneur with a bold mindset, will always like to think out of the box. He may make a lot of policy changes which may end up either as very good or very bad for the US economy and the world economy at large.

I think that people can only hope for the best and prepare for the worst, and keep their eyes open on what will happen in the near future. The election of Mr Trump as US president creates new uncertainties for the global economy. I think this uncertainty may affect the confidence of the market in at least the short term.

Patrick Liew

Managing Partner

Greenpro Capital

AS a seasoned businessman, Mr Trump will soon realise – if his advisers have not already told him – that pursuing an isolationist agenda will not serve the long-term good of the American economy. Still, it is expected that the new administration under his watch will review trade agreements and drive a hard bargain, especially under the banner of creating and retaining jobs in the US.

Moving forward, we cannot be over-reliant on the US, especially as it was our third largest trading partner in



PHOTO: BLOOMBERG

2015. We need to explore new avenues to complement and leverage on the American economy while at the same time diversify our trade with other countries and deepen our engagement in uncharted and less-favoured markets.

Ronald Lee
Managing Director
PrimeStaff

GLOBAL markets – the Asian economies in particular – initially plunged as Donald Trump edged towards victory on Wednesday and then rebounded by the next morning, taking their cue from Wall Street which reacted positively as America woke up to news of Mr Trump having been elected as the 45th US president.

Economists, however, continue to caution that a Trump administration may create new and greater uncertainties for global markets due to his lack of political experience and his protectionist policies – at a time when global growth is already fragile.

A Trump administration could put many global economies in a vulnerable position, including Asian markets. His campaign rhetoric included threats to penalise US firms that move jobs abroad, as well as threats to start a global trade war.

Mr Trump's policies are frankly very disconcerting and if he follows through on promises of a more aggressive approach towards certain trading partners, US import barriers could hit economies such as China and South Korea especially hard as they are already grappling with sluggish growth.

We can also expect, for example, the TPP – currently being negotiated by the Obama administration with Asian governments – to stagnate when Mr Trump takes office.

That said, his threats could just be election campaign rhetoric. I do not see any major changes in the near term given that signed trade agreements, treaties and pacts cannot be repealed overnight.

Bill Taylor-Mountford
Vice-President for Asia Pacific and Japan
LogRhythm

MR Trump's winning campaign slogan of "Make America Great Again" includes making American companies more profitable and boosting job creation. Ultimately, this will have a positive impact on the world economy. In the context of Asia, Mr Trump advocates tax incentives and strongly supports economic stimuli.

His international business exposure could also play well in shaping his policies to help American businesses thrive globally and particularly in Asia. This could mean re-examining all global trade agreements currently in place and taking a balanced approach in dealing with them. Some may argue otherwise, but it will lead to fair and equitable partnerships that will see all parties benefitting in the long term.

Christophe Duchatellier

CEO

Adecco Asia Pacific

FOLLOWING the longest and most contentious US election in memory, Donald Trump will be the next US president. He will face many challenges domestically and globally. Among them, China's rising power and aggressive stance towards countries in the region, the changing nature of the Philippines/US/China relationship, and the future of trade. The TPP, a key agreement to further global trade and talent mobility, has been opposed by both candidates, particularly Mr Trump. A protectionist stand by America will hurt the global economy. The impact on both manufacturers and consumers in US and Asia may lead to trade wars which will disrupt the value chain.

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<http://business-times.com.sg>

调查显示 若计通胀率

我国员工明年实际薪金增2.9%

周自蕙 报道

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调查显示,若计入通货膨胀率,新加坡工人明年的实际薪金增长约为2.9%,比今年的4.3%要低。

但人力专家指出,尽管大环境不明朗,我国如医药、教育与资讯科技等领域仍在积极征聘,因此开出的薪金条件也会更具竞争力。

《海峡时报》引述人力资源顾问公司ECA国际的年度调查报告,本地雇主明年准备为员工加薪约4%,但由于我国将从今年的0.3%负通货膨胀率进入明年的1.1%通货膨胀率,因此实际的薪金增长将在2.9%左右,比今年4.3%的实际薪金增长来得低,但比亚太区域的平均2.6%来得高。

这项调查访问了72个国家的国内大型公司及跨国公司等260个企业,由于通货膨胀,马来西亚明年的实际薪金增长为2%,也比今年的3.1%来得低。香港的企业则预计为员工加薪4%,但香港明年的通货膨胀率或达2.6%,因此员工的实际薪金增长或仅为1.4%,在亚太区排第三低。

越南则是亚太区薪金增长预测最高的国家,同时排名世界第二高,企业平均会为员工加薪5.4%。



调查显示,明年平均实际薪金增长约为2.9%。专家指出,我国一些领域仍有发展空间,但石油业等仍一蹶不振。(档案照)

了解前景 务实看待加薪

员工必须清楚所处领域的前景,务实地看待薪金增长。

百利达人才资源顾问公司董事经理李宏新指出,企业一般预计为员工加薪3%到6%,算入约1%的通货膨胀,实际薪水增长或介于2%和5%。不过,一些表现突出的企业,相信会提出更具吸引力的加薪率,这些领域包括医药、教育、资讯科技和新媒体等。

与旅游业相关的酒店业、航空业,若没有出现新的医药危机,兹卡疫情没有恶化,相信也仍有稳健的表现。

“另一方面,石油与天

然气、海事等领域仍然没有好转,这也对银行造成拖累,而随着房地产市场放缓,建筑业也受影响。实际上,一些石油相关企业不但将零加薪,甚至还可能减薪及裁员。”

仁立国际执行董事梁昌国也指出,失业率正在增加,一些雇主通过裁员等来减少薪金成本,因此更不可能为员工加薪,调查所提到的平均2.9%实际加薪,无法代表整体情况。

不过,有些公司在员工退休和辞职后不填补人手,而请员工分担原有的工作量,因此会给工作量增加的员工3%到5%的加薪。

芽笼

疑撞商场玻璃门 阿叔头破血流送院

黄康玮 报道

wkangwei@sph.com.sg

阿叔疑头晕失足,头部撞到商场玻璃门,结果头破血流但一度拒绝送院,直到女儿到场劝说,才肯上救护车。

这起事件发生在昨早11时40分左右,地点是位于芽笼路的丹绒加东大厦。

一名不愿具名的目击者表示,他看见一名年龄大约60到70岁的阿叔倒在商场外的地毯上。

“他看似割伤了额头,鲜血还滴在地板上。”

据了解,这名阿叔相信是头晕,在走进商场时失足,头部撞到了玻璃门,因此割伤了额头。

目击者表示,有几名店员和路人上前帮忙,并呼叫救护车,不过阿叔不愿意到

医院去。

“10多分钟后,阿叔的女儿被通知到场,劝了他一番之后,阿叔才肯到医院接受治疗。”

据观察,阿叔看似清醒地坐在担架上,头部被包扎,抬上救护车。地上则有两小摊血迹,并留下纸巾。

民防发言人受询时表示,他们派遣一辆救护车,将伤者送到莱佛士医院。



阿叔头部包扎,被送入医院。(受访者提供)

▲者提供
地上留下两摊血迹。(受访

卫生科学局
接纳提议

贩卖机可卖部分成药

林俐贤 报道/摄影

卫生科学局接纳佳宁药房的提议,修改条例批准一些成药从11月起通过贩卖机售卖,为公众提供更多便利也为业者减少人力开销。

贸工部属下亲商小组同新加坡工商联合会每年联办颁奖礼,颁发亲商奖以推动政府和私人企业的协作,同时也颁发“最佳建议奖”鼓励企业继续向亲商小组回馈。

贸工部政务次长刘燕玲今早出席年度颁奖礼致辞时说,没有一项建议是微不足道,有些简单的建议能让公众的生活更便利并让商家增加生产力。

刘燕玲以佳宁药房向卫生科学局建议,将普通成药如止痛药扑热息痛(paracetamol)、抗酸剂和木炭片改以贩卖机售卖为例说,当局同各方商讨、审查这项建议的可行性,确保这种储放供应方法不会导致药物变质后,便更改现有条例以批准这种销售方法,新条例自11月1日起生效。

刘燕玲也指出,亲商小组过去一年共收



贸工部政务次长刘燕玲(左四)将“最佳建议奖”颁发给佳宁药房总裁Sarah Boyd(右二),及支持机构卫生科学局的总裁庄美玲(左三),赞许成药贩卖机的点子。

到1900个建议,当局接纳了1000多个建议。

此外,政府机构今年的“亲商指数”持续上升,从去年的76.40平均分增至今年的77.64分,针对29个政府机构展开的调查,超过半数的机构的分数都进步了。

亲商小组调查显示,5000多名家受访企业中大多数认为政府机构常改进条例,实行时也具透明度。

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THIS WEEK'S TOPIC:

How far would the Health Insurance Task Force's proposals go to rein in rising healthcare costs?

Ensuring the right products and options for patients

Victor Mills
Chief Executive
Singapore International Chamber of Commerce

THE proposals are clear, sensible and timely. All of us – whether we are consumers or medical practitioners – need to change our behaviour to keep healthcare costs and insurance premiums affordable. Consumers need to take responsibility for their health before they lose it, by taking care of their diets and exercising sensibly. More doctors in the private sector need to stop treating patients and their insurers like cash cows. They need to stop asking patients how much insurance they have and stop charging to the limit. Instead, they should focus on holistic care and tests relevant to the patients' conditions.

Yeoh Oon Jin
Executive Chairman
PwC Singapore

THE Task Force recommendations will help with transparency of healthcare costs. Having diversity and "choice" as part of the healthcare provider panels will provide Singaporeans with the ability to make more informed and personal decisions about their healthcare choices.

A hybrid system that involves co-payment has many benefits, including patients taking greater ownership of their health. Clarification of the process through which insurers can raise issues such as inappropriate or excessive treatment to the authorities increases patient advocacy which is good moving forward. Prevention is always better than cure with raising awareness being key.

Educating consumers on the healthcare options available addresses just this.

Dileep Nair
Independent Director
Keppel DC Reit Management Pte Ltd

RISING healthcare costs seem a certainty in today's world. But these can be tempered by having people take more responsibility for their health and making better lifestyle choices. Employers have a vested interest in having a healthier workforce that is more productive. Incentives should, therefore, be given to employees who, say, enrol in gyms and meets BMI targets.

Similarly, health insurance companies should give discounts to people who, like safe drivers, take steps to ensure their wellness. For that matter, even Medisave should be allowed to be used for regular multiphasic health screening so that there can be early detection of any chronic disease and corrective action taken. An ounce of prevention is indeed worth more than a pound of cure.

Karl Hamann
Chief Executive Officer
QBE Insurance (Singapore) Pte Ltd

THE Task Force's proposals are a welcome step towards ensuring healthcare costs are kept affordable for the public. While Singapore has done its part for all citizens, the insurance sector also has an important role to play in keeping healthcare costs down. Rising claims put pressure on insurers to increase premiums, thereby lowering affordability. I think the recommendations put forth represent a holistic, multi-faceted approach that minimises potential abuse of the healthcare system and ensures citizens have access to the right insurance products and treatment options. In the long run, this promises sustainable and reasonably-priced healthcare for generations to come.

Dr S Nasim
Group Executive Chairman
Meinhardt Singapore Pte Ltd

JUDICIOUS implementation of the Medical Insurance Scheme is a challenge in most countries. Measures to control the rising costs of Integrated Shield Plans (IPs) need to be carefully calibrated.

While there is an inherent risk of hospitals prescribing unnecessary diagnostics tests and/or expensive treatment, where costs are covered by IPs, there is equal danger of the insurance companies (ICs) placing too many restrictions on hospitals to curtail even the necessary investigation and/or treatment simply to reduce costs.

Prudent measures to strike a reasonable balance may include:

- introducing guidelines for medical fees and diagnostic tests;
- deductibles or the insured covering a percentage of all bills;
- a published list of preferred healthcare providers (PHPs) who agree to abide by the guidelines;
- ICs should not be allowed to restrict the insured to consult one or two pre-selected PHPs; the insured must have access to the optimum treatment.

Bob White

President, Asia-Pacific
Medtronic

THE Health Insurance Task Force's proposals will bring alignment to the overall system – the first step towards rethinking how we should pay for healthcare. In particular, consistent guidelines for the care of costly, chronic conditions would promote integration across a patient's care continuum.

Healthcare systems need to shift from volume to value in order to manage costs more effectively. Stakeholders have to think beyond episodic care and focus on value-based initiatives that take into account clinical, economic and



FILE PHOTO

The measures will need to be fine-tuned from time to time, once we have had the chance to track their efficacy.

Ronald Lee
Managing Director
PrimeStaff

IT is indeed worrying that Singapore's healthcare expenditure has more than doubled from S\$4.7 billion in 2012 to S\$11 billion this year.

Our ageing population is the key factor contributing to rising healthcare costs.

Another contributing factor is inappropriate or excessive treatment. This tends to occur due to the prevalence of IPs – private insurance plans for hospitalisation – with many people buying "riders" that may cover the entire hospital bill without the patient needing to pay anything for the treatments. Hence, there may be a tendency for patients to undergo more tests and treatments than absolutely necessary. This pushes up healthcare costs for everyone, including insurance premiums.

The Task Force's proposal to include a co-insurance and/or deductibles (currently covered by riders) to ensure some co-payment by the insured should help to moderate rising costs in theory. However, with costs already so high, the public may not react well to this proposal as they will have to fork out upfront cash payments that might otherwise have been covered by their insurance plans.

The proposal to educate consumers on healthcare options to reduce the occurrence of excessive treatment seems a more palatable option and this should go in tandem with the authorities continuing to promote active lifestyles. With a healthier population, there will be less strain on the healthcare system.

JY Pook
Senior Vice President, Asia-Pacific
Tableau

THE Health Insurance Task Force is working to manage medical costs and improve insurance coverage processes in Singapore. Underlying this issue is the need for the government, healthcare sector, and insurers to come together and work smarter. But just like any other industry today, healthcare and insurance service providers need to take full advantage of the data that's available to them, and understand it, to improve patient experiences and operational processes. Consumers too need to make more in-

formed healthcare choices by tapping on data. Data analytics allows all these stakeholders to visualise and understand costs, needs, and outcomes to make the most of resources. This will be the main enabler that identifies cost drivers and trends, and improves the quality and cost of healthcare in Singapore in the long run.

Daniel CF Ng
Senior Director of Marketing, APAC
Cloudera

HEALTHCARE costs in Singapore will predictably rise and cause a strain as the population ages. Healthcare policymakers globally are increasingly tapping on the science of data analytics to understand disease and recovery patterns, and drive care planning as well as policy making. Data can also help planners identify areas where there is excess, need or wastage.

Already, healthcare institutions are among the world's biggest aggregators of data. I am sure data-backed policy-making will go a long way in addressing the key concerns raised by the taskforce to achieve a more effective healthcare cost structure.

Lim Soon Hock
Managing Director
PLAN-B ICAG Pte Ltd

IF the Health Insurance Task Force's proposals to rein in rising healthcare costs are to achieve the desired outcomes, more individuals must take personal ownership of their lifestyle and health. This is more so for those with chronic ailments such as diabetes. The demand side of the insurance costs equation must be managed. This means that those with chronic illnesses, who were previously not insurable and are now insured, must be required to commit to a regime of treatment of their chronic conditions, for example through telehealth consulting. Telehealth services – which offer triage management, chronic disease management and wellness management – have proven that costs associated with chronic conditions can be contained, if not reduced.

Patrick Liew
Managing Partner
Greenpro Capital

MY concern is whether enhancing healthcare affordability will induce artificial demand for such services. Therefore, the Health Insurance Task Force should look at ways to help consumers be more self-reliant, take responsible ownership for their health, and be more proactive to improve their health.

It's also important to promote preventative and anti-ageing healthcare services as they can be just as important as mainstream medical practices in contributing to overall wellness. These services include educating consumers about health-related issues and motivating them to adopt a healthy lifestyle.

Consumers should also be encouraged to look after their mental, emotional, social and environmental health as these factors can also affect physical health. In addition, health checks should also be made more accessible and affordable to them.

With rising healthcare costs, there's a need to look at how to capitalise on healthcare facilities on a regional scale, beyond Singapore. For instance, we can leverage on cost advantages of healthcare services in Iskandar Malaysia to strengthen our current healthcare ecosystem.

Zaheer K Merchant
Regional Director (Singapore and Europe)

Force must check this, especially with an ageing population. It's paradoxical that measures aimed at reining in rising healthcare costs can actually translate to a hike in premiums for certain age groups (especially older folks) due to insurance providers having to cut premiums while concurrently having to recoup their "losses" from the broader public. Hopefully in reining in costs, some form of broader subsidy and slight socialism in the form of more government subsidies can apply. If this would be done, perhaps we're on the right path.

David Leong
Managing Director
PeopleWorldwide Consulting Pte Ltd

THE dilemma stems largely from rising claims on IPs in recent years which have sharply squeezed underwriting profit margins. With an ageing population, healthcare costs are bound to rise. Medical claims are unlikely to come down. Hence, are hikes in premiums of IPs and IP riders to allow insurance companies to maintain a fair profit margin in any case? It's hard when policymakers need to balance the commercial interests of private insurance companies and the healthcare needs of Singaporeans and residents.

The real question to ask is not how to curb healthcare expenses but how to ensure people do not seek to game the system for selfish reasons. The Task Force should go all out to safeguard the healthcare interests of the public, with a strong bias towards keeping a lid on costs.

Robin C Lee
Group COO
Bok Seng Group

MEDICAL insurance claims in Singapore have escalated over the decade, coupled, unfortunately, with prominent cases of unethical over-charging and excessive servicing surfacing a little too often. Clearly, insurance riders are an open invitation for self-justified excessive treatment, medication and claims, all of which lead no doubt to a hike in insurance premiums for all. Therefore, co-insuring and levying excess, along with requiring pre-approval for certain treatments, should be encouraged even if it's all a bit tedious.

Fee guidelines should be published not just for benchmarking but to curb inflated and unexpected charges. More importantly, more information sources should be made available to educate policyholders on their medical conditions and treatment options, price-wise and prescription-wise, so that they can flag instances of inappropriate or excessive treatment.

Goh Yang Chye
Managing Director
GYC Financial Advisory Pte Ltd

PRESCRIPTION before diagnosis is malpractice!

Before one prescribes any solutions, it would be good to first investigate the spike in medical claims in recent years. Are these claims legitimate? Are medical costs really high? Were alternative, less costly, medical solutions explored? What's the profile of the people making these claims?

I would suggest that we conduct a data analytics exercise on claimants, insurance providers and medical service providers over the last three to five years. This will ensure that we have a good understanding of what is involved before prescribing solutions to reduce wastage. One cannot rule out the fact that the increased costs may be legitimate in the first place.

Teaching in Singapore

Helping teachers to manage their workload

Their attrition rate is 3%, low when compared to other sectors. Still, teachers tell **Amelia Teng** that there are challenges

REST AND RESPECT

Teachers, like the rest of us, are only human. That they play an often understated and unappreciated role cannot be an excuse to deprive them of the rest and respect that they deserve.



MR MIKE THIRUMAN, president of the Singapore Teachers' Union.

Teaching is undoubtedly a demanding job, but there are ways to manage the increasing workload to prevent burnout, said educators.

The workload varies across schools as it depends largely on the school leaders' approach in managing staff and students, they added.

Teaching today is not the same as it was in the past – there are higher expectations and additional sources of stress, from taking on more roles outside the classroom to being “on call” after school hours, said current and former teachers.

But figures from the Ministry of Education (MOE) show that the attrition rate of teachers has “remained low at around 3 per cent” in the last five years.

Earlier this month, The Straits Times reported that about 5,000 teachers had quit over the last five years. The top three reasons cited by MOE for these resignations were “for childcare, other family considerations and a desire for a change of job”.

Yet, many educators stay in the job for a long time, and the size of the teaching force has remained stable at more than 33,000.

Mr David Leong, managing director of human resource firm People Worldwide Consulting, said the 3

per cent resignation rate of teachers is “low compared to other sectors”. On average, a company could have a yearly attrition rate of 10 per cent, he added.

He also noted that the teaching profession is quite “stable”. “Whatever happens, teachers are not affected by a slowing economy – that is a huge perk.”

Still, over the last few weeks many concerned Singaporeans have come forward to say that more can be done to retain teachers.

More than 10 letters were published in The Straits Times' Forum page this month, calling for teachers to be given more rest and respect, and their administrative load and working hours to be reduced.

Madam Zann Lim, who has a daughter in Primary 5, felt that MOE should outsource programmes such as camps and co-curricular activities to people trained in these areas. “Teachers are not trained primarily to plan these activities, and they shouldn't be too burdened by them,” said the 40-year-old finance professional.

Mr Mike Thiruman, president of the Singapore Teachers' Union, said: “Teachers, like the rest of us, are only human. That they play an often understated and unappreciated role cannot be an excuse to deprive them of the rest and respect that they deserve.”

More can be done to strengthen the teaching profession, he added.

When contacted, MOE said that it values teachers' hard work and con-

tributions. “We are committed to work with schools to help teachers better manage their workload.”

A spokesman said that it has “enhanced manpower support to schools” over the years. On average, each mainstream primary and secondary school had 14 more teachers last year compared with 2005.

Today, there are also more than 2,100 allied educators and education and career guidance counselors across schools. This group of people support teachers in counselling work or helping students with behavioural needs, for instance.

MOE introduced student welfare officers last year, to help students with tough family backgrounds, and plans to hire more allied educators to cater to those with special needs.

Teachers told The Sunday Times that school leadership plays an important role in shaping the work culture.

A secondary school teacher of about 10 years said: “Selection of school leaders is crucial as some have different priorities, and they change every four to five years. For my school, you must be able to teach well first, then they look at the other roles you play.”

“Some other schools might focus on community work... The worst combination is having a demanding principal who breathes down the neck of heads of departments, and if these HODs don't communicate and split the jobs equally... you might end up being overloaded,” said the 33-year-old.

Ms Wang Ai Pei, a Hougang Primary School teacher, said: “During term time, we do work extremely hard, and there are days we are tired because of the long hours.”

“But there are also good days – simple things make my day, like a well-done two-page composition by a pupil who handed in one with just eight sentences before.”

A 27-year-old secondary school teacher said having a senior teacher as a mentor helped in his first year. “We met once a semester to talk about how I can improve my teaching and if I had any concerns.”

He added that schools also allow teachers in their first year to take on three-quarters of the full load of teaching time – provided they

48

Number of hours Singapore teachers spend at work each week, according to a 2014 OECD study – 10 hours more than the global average. They spend nine of these hours on marking and five on administrative matters.

3%

Annual attrition rate of teachers in Singapore over the last five years. On average, private companies have an attrition rate of 10 per cent.

33k

Estimated number of teachers in Singapore. This number has remained largely constant.

are not short-handed.

Some teachers said they learnt to pace themselves with more experience, and take advantage of perks such as school holidays and marking assignments in their own time.

Said the 33-year-old teacher: “It's give and take – there are days when I can leave at 1.30pm if classes end earlier... It's not so bad all the time if you are clever enough to manage your time well and fortunate to be in a good environment.”

Ultimately, educators said that teaching is more than a job – for some it is a calling.

Said Ms Wang, who has taught for about 19 years: “Our returns come in the relationships forged with students and watching them grow.”

“I have ex-students in university now who come back to visit me. It's a rewarding process.”

ateng@sph.com.sg





Mr Keith Lim has been with SMRT for 16 years and he is now more passionate about his work than when he started. With him is SMRT Trains deputy director (power) Edelen Ee.



SBS Transit rail engineer Muhammad Nazreen Osman, who works on the Downtown MRT line, says criticism does not dishearten him. "It encourages us to work even harder." ST PHOTOS: KEVIN LIM

Not fazed by rail critics

Mr Muhammad Nazreen Osman often meets his university course-mates but these reunions are not held over dinner or a cup of coffee.

Instead they happen at the Downtown MRT station where Mr Nazreen, an SBS Transit rail engineer, sometimes works, while his friends, all suited up, head off to their jobs at financial institutions in the Marina Bay area.

"The majority of my cohort ended up in the financial line," said the National University of Singapore civil engineering graduate.

Mr Nazreen said more lucrative pay attracted his peers to other industries. The 28-year-old, who works on the Downtown MRT line, added: "Engineers have to get their hands dirty, which is not appealing to some people."

He stayed in engineering because of his passion for the field, he said.

While Mr Nazreen, who joined SBS Transit in 2014, works office hours on most days, he has to work past midnight once or twice a week for maintenance work. This includes grinding worn rail tracks to restore their original profile.

Sometimes, he also gets called out of bed to attend to problems such as burst water pipes. "You always have to be alert and have your phone nearby because anything can happen at night," he said.

Mr Nazreen, who got married last year, said his wife has become used to his schedule. "She gives me the occasional frown but she's used to it."

Mr Nazreen is working to achieve chartered rail engineer status, a form of professional accreditation.

Criticism of rail reliability here does not dishearten him, he said. "It encourages us to work even harder."

Rail operators woo engineers

Zhaki Abdullah

Singapore is short of almost 1,000 rail engineers, as it strives to improve service standards while rapidly expanding the rail network.

Operators SMRT and SBS Transit, together with the Land Transport Authority (LTA), have been stepping up efforts to make the job more attractive – including higher salaries, better training and more opportunities for promotion.

Still, many Singaporeans are put off from joining the profession, said the operators.

The manpower shortage has had some impact on operations, they acknowledged. Rail reliability has been a grouse since December 2011, when two breakdowns on the North-South Line left tens of thousands of commuters stranded.

More recently, a two-hour breakdown on the North-South and

East-West lines during the evening peak period in July last year affected more than 200,000 commuters.

This is even as the MRT network here is slated to double by 2030, with 360km of tracks criss-crossing the island. There is also the upcoming High Speed Rail (HSR) project linking Singapore to Kuala Lumpur, expected to be ready by 2026.

"Globally there's a railway engineer crunch," said SMRT human resources vice-president Madelene Lee, adding though that SMRT has managed to double its number of rail engineers since 2011 to more than 400, of whom 95 per cent are Singaporeans and permanent residents.

But it still needs about 700 more over the next three years for maintenance of its operations, which currently include the North-South, East-West and Circle MRT lines, in addition to the Bukit Panjang LRT.

Its competitor SBS Transit hopes to hire 100 more engineers and

technicians over the next year to work on its North East and Downtown MRT lines, as well as the Sengkang and Punggol LRT lines.

The LTA website listed more than 80 rail engineering-related positions, with a quarter of those positions related to the HSR project.

Earlier this year, SMRT announced a slew of initiatives aimed at improving services and increasing staff strength. They include a pay rise of at least 5 per cent for rail maintenance line managers, and linking a greater percentage of bonuses to how smoothly trains run.

LTA human resource director Goh Boon Hui also said that the authority ensured "attractive and competitive" remuneration for its rail engineers.

However, many factors still deter job seekers from joining the profession. As maintenance work on train lines here is conducted only after the lines end operations for the day,

this means late hours for engineers.

LTA deputy project manager Chan Jie Yee, 26, said she does night work – from midnight to 5am – two or three times a week.

SMRT's Ms Lee said: "What they do is very onerous." But she added that it wasn't all about getting one's hands dirty.

Said Ms Chan: "On some days, I could be in my hard hat, safety boots and vest attending to issues onsite while on other days, I could be desk-bound responding to e-mail or in a meeting to attend to issues."

Higher pay elsewhere also lures the engineers away.

SMRT said it pays more than the median salary for engineers, but declined to give figures.

The median gross salary for engineering graduates from universities here ranges between \$3,200 and \$3,700 monthly. Earlier this year, it was announced that engineering graduates joining the public sector can expect salaries of at least \$3,800.

This, however, pales in comparison to more lucrative sectors such as banking, to which many engineers often switch midway through their

careers. There, they can expect to be paid at least 30 per cent more.

The operators and LTA will simply have to offer more, said Mr David Leong, managing director of recruitment firm PeopleWorldwide Consulting.

"It will finally boil down to the dollars and cents issue, the bread and butter part – Is it worth it to be in rail engineering?"

Engineers who have stayed on say that the rewards of the job go beyond the monetary aspect.

Ms Chan said she is able to see the fruits of her labour whenever she takes the train.

Mr Keith Lim, 45, said he decided to join SMRT as a rail engineer 16 years ago because it was similar to his previous job in manufacturing. But after working for some time, he has developed a fervour for the job.

"Compared to when I started, I feel more passionate about my work now," said the signals and communications deputy principal fellow.

"It's about pride in the rail industry," he added.

azhaki@sph.com.sg

Zhaki Abdullah

THIS WEEK'S TOPIC:

What would be the impact on business of a growing backlash against globalisation in the major economies? How should policymakers respond?

A global pushback



PHOTO: FREEIMAGES

Mark Billington
Regional Director
ICAEW South East Asia

GLOBALISATION has delivered increased prosperity and reduced poverty worldwide. However, it is often made a scapegoat for local problems such as income inequality and unemployment. Companies can mitigate this by building bridges with their local communities.

When companies pay chief executives vast multiples of workers' salaries, where boards do not reflect the diversity of their societies, or where companies are seen to be avoiding paying taxes they owe, they will find themselves facing this backlash. Companies that engage with stakeholders, are open and transparent, and act with integrity, will find they can build trust with their local communities.

David Emery

Founder and Chairman
Reciprocus International Pte Ltd

DECADES of global integration have resulted in unprecedented reductions in extreme poverty, alongside surges in literacy, longevity and liberty. From Singapore to most corners of the world, access to opportunity is greater now than any time in history. However, disruptions – migration, global warming, gaping inequality – have not been adequately addressed. Resulting strife and eroded trust in institutions expose fault lines that undermine our much greater collective potential. Reversing globalisation is not a solution. Policymakers must champion cooperation models that translate to broadly shared gains, while rejecting political agendas peddling cynicism and fear as a way to serve narrow interests.

Henry Tan

Managing Director
Nexia TS

THE growing backlash against globalisation in the major economies will have a huge impact because this is tantamount to all human beings locking themselves behind closed doors at home. They grow their own vegetables, rear their own fish, cows and pigs. The waste is used as fertiliser and animal feed. They cook their own food, teach their children to learn and speak only among themselves, and practise only their own family culture.

This family will become inward-looking, do only what it knows to do, and will not even be able to procreate. Cut off from the world, they fail to understand what's going on around them, and will eventually lose the ability to relate to, and interact with, others. Such communities and economies will regress in the long run and eventually die.

Policymakers in smart economies will keep their doors open against the rising nationalistic tide – and they will have the last laugh when the closed economies become redundant and eventually extinct.

Ronald Lee

Managing Director
PrimeStaff

GLOBALISATION certainly brings positive benefits in and of itself. However, when domestic policies are not effective and economies remain sluggish for an extended period of time, the local population becomes disgruntled, resulting in the rise of anti-globalisation sentiment. One negative consequence has been the rise of anti-immigration sentiment.

We have seen in our own backyard, for example, how such sentiment has taken root, resulting in our policymakers tightening policies on the hiring of foreigners. As a result of these policy changes, local businesses are now hurting because of the very challenging manpower issues they are grappling with. We have to start by finding effective ways to lift the economy. When the economy is prosperous, people are happy and have less to gripe about.

Once the basics are handled, we can then work on addressing the other social effects of globalisation such as health, security, social cohesion and income inequality.

Ho Meng Kit

CEO
Singapore Business Federation

GLOBALISATION, just like disruptive trends such as uberisation, will continue to impact people and businesses across the globe, regardless whether we welcome it or not. It is crucial that policymakers face it head on and find equitable solutions that benefit all – government, businesses and workers.

The backlash against globalisation in developing Asia is less prevalent than in advanced economies. Asia must learn the lessons from Brexit. While Brexiters got their wish, the dreadful repercussions on the British economy continue to loom large. These will take many years to resolve, if at all. We can avoid a Brexit in Asia if countries work together to start implementing policies to deal with the consequences of globalisation.

There is no time to wait. Within Asia, we can do a better job of explaining and convincing our citizens that they should not fear globalisation. Countries should share how they have adjusted domestic policies to assist threatened industries and vulnerable communities. Advanced countries in Asia have the responsibility to build capacity in poorer countries.

More emphasis should be placed on developing and supporting micro and small businesses in Asia. If we can do these well as we simultaneously pursue liberalisation and integration, Asia will continue to reap the benefits of globalisation and yet manage its downsides. We will have thriving economies, business growth, good jobs and remuneration for all.

Victor Mills

Chief Executive
Singapore International Chamber of Commerce

Isolationism and trade protectionism are populist cancers. If not treated, they threaten to severely weaken international trade which has lifted millions out of poverty in the last 70 years.

Countries which take trade protectionist positions try to ignore that the world is more interconnected than ever before. This is unwise and dishonest. Fair and just domestic policies are needed to help mitigate free market inequalities like excessive executive pay. This needs good governance which we are fortunate to have in Singapore. Policymakers elsewhere should put their houses in order first before blaming an interconnected world for their societies' challenges.

Uantchern Loh
CEO, Asia Pacific
Black Sun Pte Ltd

ONCE upon a time, there was a monk who lived in a temple at the top of a hill. He had a daily chore of carrying a bucket of water up the hill. One day, another monk arrived at the temple. The first monk shared the chore with the second monk, carrying buckets of water up the hill. Then a third monk came along and soon the monks started to expect that someone else will take on the chore. Consequently, no one fetched water even though everybody was thirsty. One night, a rat in the temple knocked over a candle, causing a fire that destroyed the temple as the monks looked on with empty buckets. Anti-globalisation will lead to the same fate as the three monks.

Lim Soon Hock
Managing Director
PLAN-B ICAG Pte Ltd

IT is worrying that the United States, a champion of free trade, is becoming more protectionist. It will negate many years of economic progress that has been achieved by globalisation. When that happens, the US, as the world's economic powerhouse, will be like a turbo engine performing at less than full throttle. Businesses will then have much to worry about. Countries that are anti-globalisation should instead direct their attention, energies and resources to tackling their domestic problems, rather than blame their socio-economic ills on globalisation.

Unfortunately, it has become a battle of politics versus economics. Businesses may have to brace themselves for tougher times ahead.

Tan Chong Huat

Managing Partner
RHTLaw Taylor Wessing LLP

EXPANDED global trade has raised incomes around the world. Unfortunately, as the Brexit vote demonstrated, the backlash against globalisation is real. It is increasingly clear that policymakers have underestimated the rise of nationalism and the sentiment of having been left behind felt by sections of society. Policymakers need to help workers affected by globalisation to retrain and get back into the labour force quickly. Economies like Singapore need to remain open and embrace globalisation. This is the only way to create jobs and raise incomes. For example, Singaporean businesses must press on in the Asian markets. At RHTLaw Taylor Wessing and the RHT Group of companies, we are actively growing our external wing through our Asian Plus initiative. This is evidenced by the recent launch of RHTLaw Taylor Wessing Vietnam.

Wong Heng Chew

President
Fujitsu Singapore

GLOBALISATION has created an interconnected global economy which has driven global growth for the past few decades. Businesses gained access to worldwide markets, creating opportunities for expansion, increased profits driven by economies of scale, access to a global talent pool and driving innovation through exchange of technology amongst markets. If policymakers reverse the policies which drove this growth, it will have an adverse effect on businesses which in turn will impact the economies. Investors will seek alternative markets that are more conducive for businesses and overall global economic growth could slow down.

Naveen Bhat

Managing Director
IXIA APAC

Free markets simply allocate resources according to demand; the rest is up to policymakers to invest the proceeds judiciously, such as in education or social programmes that help to prepare a country's people to navigate macroeconomic shifts. Pinning the blame on globalisation is convenient, but there is no room for such defensive thinking in an increasingly interconnected and digital economy. Unlike businesses which can be discouraged by protectionist policies, cybercriminals are keen to play their services anywhere in the world. Thankfully, in the arena of cybersecurity, policymakers have bucked the trend and are sharing more information than before, to ensure a safer world for all.

Simon Fiquet

General Manager, Southeast Asia & India
Expedia

THERE has been a surge in globalisation in the last two decades leading to an increasingly interdependent and interconnected world. National barriers to the flow of goods, capital and people are breaking down and platforms, processes and policies are standardising. Within the travel and tourism sector, globalisation has opened many new opportunities in facilitating growth through developments in electronic technology, communication and transportation.

It has also affected worldwide suppliers and computerised information and reservation systems, which have become more flexible and cost-effective; decreased costs of air travel; and offered easier access to destinations. Above all, disruptive technology and a sharing economy have remained the underlying technological force. To ride, weather, and leverage each wave of globalisation, leaders have to help their citizens understand, and more importantly, adapt to the underlying technological force. This involves embracing new ways of learning, reskilling, and new ways of doing business. In this vein, the Singapore government has done a good job in helping Singaporeans adapt.

Also, at Expedia, one of our key beliefs is that travel bring people closer – they learn to see the world through the eyes of others. Policymakers everywhere should encourage dialogues between people from different cultures and origins, which in turn would make their citizens even more able to find innovative paths.

Reuter Chua

Head
ACCA Singapore

AS the key driver of globalisation, business must be done sustainably. Immediate improvements can be made in capturing and reporting all relevant costs and benefits – beyond the bottom line – so that the true value of the business to society can be ascertained, and made readily available. Increased transparency will allow for more meaningful discussions with stakeholders, and enable constructive forward planning. I imagine that the Professional Accountant of the Future will rise to meet this challenge, implementing better metrics and new roles that will enable businesses to be a sustainable force for good.

Tirupathi Karthik

Chief Executive Officer
Napier Healthcare

AS countries review their stand on globalisation, we can expect restricted immigration and consequently a squeeze on work permits, like the H-1B visa in the US, especially for the IT industry. Most IT businesses depend on foreign (but not necessarily cheap) talent to fill the skills vacuum in a country. Consequently, IT projects slated to run in the next one to two years could be impacted due to staffing issues. That will most certainly put pressure on policymakers to come up with measures in the shorter term to alleviate the problem or face slower economic growth. In any case, this will be like watching a dance of elephants – slow and difficult to orchestrate. These are difficult headwinds for sure.

David Leong

Managing Director
PeopleWorldwide Consulting Pte Ltd

WHEN the multilateral trade treaties are subject to fresh reviews from the major economies, it means that they are taking the "to-each-its-own" posturing. Such regressive positions mean that we may be witnessing in the near future a period of global trade contraction. The rhetoric propounded by the US Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump verges on a major trade pullback and if this scenario does pan out, the world may go into a cold turkey state for a while. Trade dealings would have to be renormalised at a new level.

Globalisation spurs growth for the world, particularly for a small nation like ours. Singapore needs all the trade alliances and connectivity to stay in the game. When globalisation is impacted because of a shift of policy directions in the major economies, the new normal will be more painful for businesses. Singapore has to restitch each alliance, trade pact and treaty to ensure we remain relevant to Asia and the world.

Callum Laing

Asia President, International
The Marketing Group

SMALL companies are the backbone of the Singapore economy, accounting for around 99 per cent of businesses here and contributing to over 50 per cent of GDP, and yet, the needs of this group have been largely ignored in the push towards global free trade. The recent backlash reflects this disparity and a demand that the benefits of globalisation be shared with a greater proportion of the population. Policymakers should recognise the needs of the many small business owners and empower talented entrepreneurs by reducing trade barriers and red tape, and levelling the playing field so small businesses can compete with larger competitors.

Edwin Khew Teck Fook
President

The Institution of Engineers, Singapore

ANTI-globalisation sentiments, when taken to the extreme, will impede business growth in all sectors. Regional policymakers need to be wary of allowing negative narratives from US and Europe stemming from policy let-downs on trade and investment to affect their economies. They should learn from other Asian policymakers and adapt their policies in line with their own markets.

From an engineering perspective, indiscriminate "infiltration" of this notion could limit cross-border exchange of ideas and assimilation of knowledge, critically needed to create technological innovations to address global challenges such as climate change. To this end, IES promotes and encourages the mobility of engineers amongst Apec economies and provides a platform for discussion at the World Engineers Summit biannually.

Robin C Lee

Group COO
Bok Seng Group

ESPECIALLY for a tiny nation without natural resources, globalisation is a vital cornerstone of Singapore's success by enabling us to leverage our strengths in free trade and investment to generate positive economic benefits. However, globalisation at all cost, with no regard to the possible strains on the local community, can easily create rifts in an already fragile social fabric – an unfortunate result seen in many countries.

Hence, it is imperative that policymakers anticipate and feel the ground to control the valve of globalisation, ensuring that when the floodgates open, more good than bad pours in. In Singapore, this has been sensibly done in terms of curbing free-rein property speculation and tightening the foreign employment policy. It is a perpetual balancing act, and I think our policymakers have embraced globalisation well.

Eric Lim

Immediate Past President
Institute of Internal Auditors Singapore

WITH the weak global economy, Singapore's economic activities have slowed down, with some sectors badly hit. Retrenchment is inevitable and new graduates will find it harder to secure jobs. For policymakers, it is important to focus on "economic survival" and lead Singapore out of the doldrums. Being a small country with no "hinterland market", it needs to rely on trade pacts for free flow of goods and services. The current skill sets may no longer be relevant in the new digital age. Disruptive technologies may make certain jobs redundant or disappear altogether. Therefore, policymakers must prepare their citizens for this new wave of technologies and an ever changing landscape, for long-term survival.

Christophe Duchatellier

CEO
Adecco Asia Pacific

TODAY, we are seeing a more digital form of globalisation. This has led to a rapid transformation of the e-commerce space with even the smallest of e-commerce companies recording some form of cross-border trade. The world is more connected than ever before, with individuals using digital platforms to find work regionally and globally. Domestic policies need to keep up in various areas of education, business, welfare and infrastructure, so that all major and developing economies may continue to participate in global opportunities.

Zaheer K Merchant

Regional Director (Singapore & Europe)
QI Group of Companies

IT is inconceivable that the momentum of globalisation could be reversed. The economic growth and business proliferation that globalisation has created have been nothing short of phenomenal in every aspect, from declining trade barriers, cross-border transactions to fewer restrictions and tariffs. It's a chilling thought that economic isolationism can set businesses back and significantly reduce the volume and quality of global trade and the free movement of human capital. Globalisation has advanced the world on so many levels but its crowning glory (ie full and unrestricted trade) is still ensnared by populist protectionism. Policymakers must respond with openness and recognise that globalisation works only when it works for everyone collectively. Prosperity should be shared by all and not by a select few. A clear policy of refuting protectionist sentiments and allowing global trade to flourish is really the key.

Derrick Chang

Acting CEO
PSB Academy

We live in an interdependent world, and a retreat from global trade will send ripples that impact the already-anemic growth of major economies and affect the equilibrium of soft power in various hot spots across the globe. Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong framed this quite aptly in his recent visit to the United States, that trade is strategy. Yet beyond the distribution of wealth, globalisation facilitates the exchange of information, the movement of high calibre talent and cultural intermingling which oftentimes results in the creation of shared interests among economies, but more importantly, a sense of shared destiny amongst peoples of different countries and regions. As a private education institution with 35 per cent of students from abroad, PSB Academy plays a role in helping to foster this sense of goodwill. Our cosmopolitan campus community is a microcosm of Singapore as a global hub, where students are prepared for the global marketplace.

Patrick Liew

Managing Partner
Greenpro Capital

Globalisation is a multi-layered phenomenon. There are competing perspectives, with many players promoting their partisan ideologies, values and interests.

It's one of the tectonic plates that can change socioeconomic landscapes, with downsides such as promotion of unfair trade practices and negative impacts on the environment.

As a country that relies on free trade and open economies, we should explore ways to champion a socially-responsible and environmental-friendly model of globalisation. This includes helping to promote policies and best practices to resolve the downsides of globalisation.

By doing so, it will strengthen our position as a global city that practises sound governance and pro-humanity services. It will help us build bridges to the global community and strengthen goodwill for a brighter future.



New online jobs marketplace 'needs to draw employers'

Observers suggest ways for it to entice bosses to list jobs, instead of using private portals

Olivia Ho

To truly succeed in tackling local unemployment, a new government-run online jobs marketplace will need to attract employers to list their jobs, said observers yesterday.

This means the new "one-stop and non-stop" platform that Manpower Minister Lim Swee Say announced in Parliament on Monday must differentiate itself from existing online jobs portals, they added.

To do so, they suggested, the marketplace can look at providing more services, such as verifying the qualifications of job applicants.

It can also use big data to forecast job trends and prepare workers for future jobs. National Trades Union Con-

gress (NTUC) assistant secretary-general Patrick Tay said: "The best would be if the Manpower Ministry could aggregate everything into one space and get everyone on board."

The jobs marketplace will be a revamped version of the National Jobs Bank, a free national jobs portal set up in 2014 as part of the Fair Consideration Framework.

Employers must first post vacancies for jobs with a monthly salary of below \$12,000 on Jobs Bank for

at least 14 days, before they can apply for employment passes for foreign workers to fill the openings.

In its new form, the marketplace aims to be a tool for not just jobseekers, but even workers who are employed in industries under threat, Mr Lim had said. He did not reveal when it would be launched, but said it would make use of the skills frameworks being introduced for various industries that map out how workers can build up their skills and move up the career ladder.

Human-resource experts said the marketplace will have to "add value" to draw employers away from private job portals.

Mr Kannan Chettiar, managing director of recruitment and screening firm Avvanz, said helping to verify job applicants' qualifications would give it an edge and make it "a real magnet for employers".

As for benefiting workers, NeXT

Career Consulting Group managing director Paul Heng said employers should be obliged to list jobs on the marketplace at least six weeks before opening them to foreigners.

He added that the new platform would need a "more robust search engine", saying he has previously struggled with navigating the listings on Jobs Bank.

Mr David Leong, managing director of recruitment company People-Worldwide, said the new marketplace should put together consolidated profiles for workers that reflect when they have gone for skills upgrading. "The system could then use data analytics to see what kind of jobs you should trend towards, and make recommendations," he said.

Mr Lim told Parliament on Monday that to date, about 180,000 people have used Jobs Bank, which has about 25,700 employers registered and gets some 7,000 job applications daily. Its website had more than 65,000 vacancies as of last night. Major recruitment site JobStreet.com showed around 49,320.

NTUC's Mr Tay said data gathered from the new marketplace could even be used for predictive forecasting. What would set the new marketplace apart is a focus on "jobs that morph due to technology, or jobs that you and I don't even know exist yet", he said.

For a start, the new marketplace had hosted a virtual career fair last month, with 51 employers offering 500 vacancies in sectors such as biomedical science and aerospace.

But jobseeker Tay Siew Hoon, 58, found the jobs on offer at the fair "too specific and high-skilled". The counter service officer has been looking for work for two years, and hoped it would also list jobs suitable for middle-aged workers who may not have high qualifications.

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THE STRAITS TIMES
GLOBAL OUTLOOK
POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC DIRECTIONS FOR 2017

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2017:
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HomeBriefs

Man gets probation for illegal racing

A full-time national serviceman who took part in a racing competition with another motorist, without a police permit, was given 12 months' supervised probation yesterday.

Jandej Goh was 19 when he

Patrick Sim
Senior Vice-President
Orange Business Services Asia Pacific

AN effective C-suite executive must possess key soft skills such as leadership and empathy. In a high-pressure society like Singapore, the fear of failure may hold us back from achieving more. This is why I am always constantly challenging the team at Orange to approach problem-solving in different ways; reminding them that it is alright to fail, as long as they are able to identify the problem and solution quickly. Only by gaining a deeper understanding of one's team can a C-suite executive become an emphatic leader and realise their full potential.

In terms of hard skills, today's increasingly digital economy means that the consummate C-suite executive needs to be able to think and strategise like a digital native. For a small market like ours, it is imperative that C-suite executives be very forward-looking and agile in order to keep pace with technological advancement, anticipate potential disruption, and steer the course for his/her organisation.

Yeo Kong Nee
Managing Director
ENGIE Services Singapore

TODAY'S environment is very connected, digitally. As such, millennials are well-positioned to thrive in this environment and create their impact and space in the organisation. While Singapore executives have a robust education to build core skills, to succeed in a leadership role, soft skills are critical: Collaboration, proactivity, and an open mind. In addition, overseas assignments are important because few countries operate like us and Singapore businesses need to grow beyond our shores. Therefore, learning about the external environment is vital. What I learned early on in my career was to volunteer for assignments and use any opportunity to practise leadership skills. In this way, you increase your visibility and recognition by your peers and managers as a leader.

Lionel Lim
Vice-President and Managing Director, Asia Pacific and Japan
Pivotal, Inc

THE business landscape today is continually disrupted by newer and smarter technologies. To stay ahead of the innovation curve, a digital mindset is an imperative for business leaders. There should no longer be a question of how IT can support the business but how technology can spearhead innovation. The ability to leverage software and data intelligence will become increasingly important. To this end, today's leaders must have the ability to constantly rethink the business, driving creativity and innovative thinking throughout the organisation. Having the digital mindset is about prioritising agility and speed to market and unlocking the startup mentality to propel business outcomes through technology innovations.

Matthew Johnston
Area Vice-President, ASEAN & Korea
Commvault APAC

IN a resource-challenged market like Singapore, C-suite executives must drive innovation and be adaptable to thrive in a digital era where speed and operational efficiency bring competitive advantage. They must be data-savvy, and use data as a key strategic asset organisation-wide in this knowledge-driven economy. The establishment of regional economic initiatives such as the Trans-Pacific Partnership and Asean Economic Community brings new opportunities for growth. In this new economic paradigm, leaders must be able to stay flexible, develop human cap-

Rosalynn Tay
CEO
Dentsu Aegis Network Singapore and Dentsu Singapore
BEING book smart is not the be all and end all of life – being street smart and having international experience are equally important in giving us a broader and deeper perspective. It reduces the myopia we have on things and increases our consideration, tolerance and appetite for diversity to prepare for the future. Having the drive and determination to achieve your goals are also essential. As the iconic catchphrase “to infinity and beyond” goes, there's no limit to self-growth; go beyond what you think you are capable of and you will find infinite potential.

Ronald Lee
Managing Director
PrimeStaff Management Services

STRONG business acumen with a proven business track record are a given to make it to the C-suite, along with well-rounded experience including cross-functional stints and overseas exposure.

As an individual climbs the corporate ladder, however, technical and functional expertise begin to matter less than leadership skills.

Fundamentally, corporate leaders need to inspire their workforce to want to perform their best for the company. The biggest and most successful brands in the world are helmed by inspirational leaders such as the late Steve Jobs and Richard Branson. Any corporate executive eyeing the C-suite should therefore aspire to become such an inspirational leader.

There is also this growing phenomenon of the “social CEO”, where the most influential CEOs have a prominent and engaging social media presence focused on their thought leadership and even personal lifestyle and values. I believe this is an important facet that should be considered to engage the millennials who will soon make up the majority of the workforce.

Yaj Malik
Executive Vice-President and Managing Director
Sage Asia

TODAY'S business environment embraces “innovation” and “change” to stay ahead of disruption and this has become the new normal. As a leader, it is important to inspire, be innovative and be forward-thinking to achieve purpose within the organisation to exceed expectations. Clarity, transparency and data-driven capabilities are essential to enable innovation-led growth. Having an agile outlook and the ability to navigate ambiguity reveals the entrepreneurial instinct. This is especially crucial as Singapore positions itself as the regional centre of excellence for the formation of the Asean Economic Community. Here, leaders have to realign their benchmarks for success; going beyond the dollar chase to focus on building sustainable businesses that are ready for a more complex global marketplace.

Dora Hoan
Group CEO
Best World International Ltd

I FEEL that international exposure, cross-functional experience and specialised skills are what you need to reach the C-suite, but it actually takes a very different set of skills to be an effective C-suite executive. To be a successful leader, one must have the vision and commitment, know the business inside out, to take it to new heights. The ability to make the right judgement and decisions, ability to build effective business models and strategise: the ability

Axel Pannes

Managing Director
BMW Group Asia

There is no secret formula to becoming a C-suite executive, but there are things you can do to tip the scales in your favour. First, don't be afraid to take risks and challenge yourself. Second, embrace the opportunity to gain cross-functional experience in order to understand how a business operates from different perspectives. Finally, in today's global work environment, be culturally aware. Throughout your career you will encounter people from all over the world. Your ability to understand those with different cultural values, beliefs and perceptions can have a significant impact on your success in your organisation and the industry.



Wong Ka Vin
Managing Director
1-Net Singapore

FOR C-suites, soft skills like leadership abilities or interpersonal acumen will take precedence over technical and functional expertise. Such skills are even more crucial in Singapore, where digital technologies and evolution have fundamentally altered how we work globally. Sharp foresight to identify and adapt to trends accordingly is also essential for C-suites to lead teams in today's fast-moving economies.

I believe C-suites must understand people are the most vital asset in all organisations. At 1-Net, our staff and engineers are highly valued as they are specially trained to ensure high data availability for our mission-critical infrastructure. Developing and retaining these talents will provide assurance to our customers and enable our long-term growth.

Patrick Liew
Managing Partner
Greenpro Capital

C-SUITE executives are not just custodians of realities but also creators of possibilities. They have to know how to study and interpret trends, evaluate new and emerging developments, and think strategically about how to create a desired future.

In a global economy, they have to go from being I-shaped executives to being T-shaped intrapreneurs. They should have the ability to acquire a wide range of knowledge and expertise to help improve profit, advantage and growth.

As they come to grips with disruptive forces, they have to not only be good firemen, they need to also know how to set up firewalls. Their job is to respond to fire in the marketplace and also be proactive in becoming disruptors and preventing any virus from disrupting their ever-improving business models.

To take the company to a higher level of growth, they have to not only be a leader but also be a leader of leaders. By developing more and better leaders, they can help the company achieve a more sustainable growth.

Jaya Dass
Country Director
Randstad Singapore

Francis Fong
Managing Director
SAS Singapore

IN the wake of Singapore's Smart Nation initiatives and Industry 4.0, emerging technologies will disrupt business landscapes indefinitely – and so future leaders must be adaptable and agile enough to tackle new challenges. During the ascent to the top, the foundation for operational excellence must be set in stone by focusing systemically on performance for individuals, teams and the organisation. Aspiring leaders should also harness the drive for lifelong learning to develop and hone competencies, as well as inject passion into making a difference, be it within or outside the workplace.

David Leong
Managing Director
PeopleWorldwide Consulting

TO the C-suite, it's all about managing relationships, charms and outcomes. The pathways may not always be through academic excellence alone. Leadership, ability to narrate, to influence, to perform and to win over stakeholders are key attributes. Taking risks and responsibilities for the outcome of the risks are equally important to success at the C-suite.

Edwin Khew Teck Fook
President

The Institution of Engineers, Singapore

OUR focus is on grooming engineers to assume C-suite positions across industry sectors. The rapidly evolving disruptive technology landscape has made advanced technology management knowledge a critical requirement for corporate leaders. It will empower them, from leading new product innovation development to large-scale engineering projects implementation. In collaboration with NTUC, IES has launched the Young Engineers Leadership Programme and Advanced Engineers Leadership Programme targeting young and senior engineers respectively, under the Engineers Progression Pathway. These unique programmes offer industry-relevant curriculum, cross-disciplinary and cross-cultural learning opportunities and mentorship by eminent engineers to nurture young engineers into the next generation of future-ready engineering leaders for Singapore.

Seah Kian Peng

CEO
NTUC FairPrice

DIABETES is the bane of every society with a debilitating effect on those affected. As a responsible retailer with an aim to make lives better, we proactively tackle diabetes by encouraging the community to adopt a healthy lifestyle that includes making healthy food choices. We also empower them with options to a variety of healthier foods.

Together with our business partners and the Health Promotion Board, we organise education campaigns to promote healthier options such as wholegrain rice and healthier choice products. Our house brand products have been reformulated to eliminate trans fat and we promote awareness of the Healthier Choice Symbol to encourage healthier eating. We encourage all to embark on this journey in this war against diabetes. Do it for ourselves, do it for our family.



is through active campaigning like showing how smoking kills. The grotesque photos on cigarette boxes speak a thousand words.

Hence active campaigning to show the ills of over-consuming sugar and rice with photos will set people thinking and hopefully, change habits.

Second, habits must be inculcated when young. It can start in school canteens. Schools can encourage healthy living through healthy food, and discourage the consumption of sweet/sugary drinks and food with calorie measures for each food type. This is to start the habit of disciplined eating so as to reduce weight problems which may eventually lead to diabetes.

Diabetes is an avoidable affliction and the Ministry of Health and Ministry of Education can teach about healthy living, and instil good eating habits, early.

Laletha Nithiyanandan
Managing Director
Behavioural Consulting Group
Head, APSCO Asia

I DON'T think the problem is just diabetes as one disease is often linked to another. Singaporeans need to be encouraged to become conscious consumers of food and go back to basics to enjoy more home-cooked meals. Eat-out options are not always healthy and even though healthy food options are cropping up at hawker centres, these need to be encouraged more actively.

Just imposing taxes on sugar and white rice will not solve the problem; it's about making healthier options available for people. There is also the danger of sugar-free products that people need to be educated on as some of these options are equally damaging to one's health. We must continue to drive home the importance of a healthy lifestyle and regular exercise; just attacking sugar alone is not a holistic solution.

Patrick Liew
Managing Partner
Greenpro Capital

THE success of tackling diabetes is only as good as the commitment of the last person on the street in preventing diabetes and living a healthy lifestyle. Tackling diabetes

should, therefore, start from young and continue at every stage of the formal educational process and throughout the life-long learning journey.

Teachers should serve as models of good nutritional and lifestyle habits. They should train their students on how to design and implement a healthy lifestyle plan. They should discuss with students their journal of food intakes and exercise routines and motivate them to improve their lifestyle choices.

Schools should ensure that they offer only healthy food on their premises. They could even arrange for school buses to stop a distance away so that students can get adequate daily exercise. They should work closely with parents and healthcare professionals to conduct regular health checks to ensure that students are fit and healthy.

By taking more proactive support and interventions in what students do after school hours, they can help students make living a healthy lifestyle a vital and habitual part of their lives.

Annie Yap
Group MD and Chief Strategy Officer
AYP Group

BEHAVIOURAL change is probably the strongest weapon we can wield in this war. To encourage people to acquire a healthy lifestyle and good eating habits, Singaporeans should be rewarded when they consume healthy food. Government bodies can collaborate with certain nutritious food outlets to come up with promotions to encourage healthy food consumption.

Further, the risks of diabetes should be communicated to all Singaporeans in order to raise awareness. This can be done by launching a number of social media campaigns. Also, Singaporeans should be educated on the symptoms to make sure that the condition is diagnosed early and complications are prevented.

Christian Mason
Managing Director, South-eastAsia
Virgin Active

THERE are two main risk factors of diabetes we should tackle – diet and exercise. Yet, many find it hard to make significant lifestyle changes. I believe that real and sustainable change can start from within the workplace. Companies can have corporate wellness initiatives that incentivise and reward employees for work-life integration to promote a culture of active living. It could be motivating them to learn a sport, join fitness classes with colleagues, or

partner with health and wellness organisations to run lunch-time workouts. Small changes like these can have big pay-offs, and help keep diabetes at bay.

David Leong
Managing Director
PeopleWorldwide Consulting Pte Ltd
DIABETES is an affluence-related affliction and a health concern for developed countries. It stems from, among other things, over-consumption of sugar. Eating habits lead to the disease, and the most effective way to tackle it

The full list of views from CEOs
is available at
<http://businesstimes.com.sg>



India plays catch-up in workers' skills training

It faces dire lack of skilled labour in sectors like manufacturing, construction and retail

Nirmala Ganapathy
India Bureau Chief
In New Delhi

Mr Sandeep Rao completed a two-year course at a government vocational institute more than a month ago with the hope of getting a job at a car company.

But within weeks of completing the course to become a turner – a highly skilled worker who makes metal components such as screws – the 22-year-old was back in the classroom, this time at a training centre run by IL&FS Skills, a private vocational training company.

"I needed to get some practical training on an advanced machine. Today's industry demands are as such," said Mr Rao, who is nearing the end of the 45-day course.

At a government-run Industrial Training Institute, he had trained mostly on manual machines, but car production lines now are mostly automated.

"I now feel a lot more confident about getting a job," he said.

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's hope of turning India's demographic dividend into an advantage for the world's fastest-growing economy hinges on not just creating jobs, but also making millions of young Indians like Mr Rao employable through training programmes.

It is key to his "Make in India" manufacturing drive.

A mere 2 per cent of Indian workers have formal skills training and 10 million are undergoing training this year. In contrast, 90 million are trained in China annually.

India has a dire shortage of skilled workers in sectors such as manufacturing, construction and

retail because of inadequate training, outdated curriculums, high school dropout rates and a negative perception of skills training, which is seen as being for those who cannot get into college.

To make it worse, India's caste system dictates the social perception that manual jobs such as plumbing are for the lower castes.

India produces thousands of software engineers, leading Nobel laureate Amartya Sen to remark that while Indians do well in high-skills-related jobs such as information technology, "in the middle-skills segment, we are very bad".

The education system leaves much to be desired, with a dropout rate of 40 per cent, which translates into millions.

Vocational options are limited for dropouts as there are only 13,505 Industrial Training Institutes, which are supplemented by about 8,000 private training centres that offer short courses.

Many major businesses have in-house training because many Indians who have had skills training still fall short of industry requirements.

At Wave Infratech, a real estate firm, in-house training is provided for entry-level jobs such as security guard and housekeeping attendant. But nearly 40 per cent of the unemployed young people they train often return to their villages.

"We find that training young people is not a problem, but retaining them in jobs is the biggest challenge. They hear about the long hours and suddenly they don't want to work any more," said Mr Manjir Ghosh, the firm's head of corporate social responsibility.

In the villages, they earn at least



Workers at a manufacturing plant in Rajasthan. Just 2 per cent of Indian workers have formal skills training and 10 million are undergoing training this year. In contrast, 90 million are trained in China annually. PHOTO: BLOOMBERG

5,000 rupees (\$8100) a month under the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme. They can earn more – about 8,000 rupees – in the city, but living expenses and rent take up a bigger chunk of their pay.

What makes this a problem is that 60 per cent of India's population live in the rural areas.

Experts have suggested that one solution is for the government to bring jobs closer to areas where there is a large captive workforce, such as by setting up industrial clusters in poor states like Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, and to provide affordable housing for workers like in China.

"In labour-surplus states (which witness large-scale migration), the government should promote those industries that have a large manpower requirement," said Mr Narayanan Ramaswamy of KPMG in India. "Local aspirations and needs should be taken into account."

IL&FS Skills chief executive officer R.C.M. Reddy said vocational training institutes have to be brought on a par with other institutes of learning. "The only way to make jobs aspirational is to inte-

grate skills with education and create very high standards in skills education," he said.

Mr Modi has made skills training a priority area and has set up a skills ministry. He is known to be keen on replicating Singapore's success in vocational training, with a proposal under discussion to recreate Singapore's Institute of Technical Education in every Indian state.

"We can take the best practices from Germany and Japan, but it will take time (for them) to be grafted. Anything from Singapore would be acceptable. Singapore fits in very well with our system," said Mr Rohit Nandan, the top bureaucrat in the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship.

He said the picture was not all gloomy on the skills front, with the government seeing a 36 per cent jump in the number of people who have undergone skills training this year.

"Our system is also evolving... We are in the process of learning and adopting the best practices from all around the world," he said.

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Rajasthan chief minister a veteran politician and ex-princess

Rajasthan Chief Minister Vasundhara Rajé, a princess from an erstwhile royal family, is known for her flamboyance and style.

When she was chief minister from 2003 to 2008, Ms Rajé took to the catwalk at a fashion show in 2006 to promote khadi, a handspun cloth, earning criticism from conservative quarters in the western desert state.

Since she was re-elected as Chief Minister in 2013, she has been more low-key but has not shied away from implementing tough reforms.

She changed labour laws, allowing companies to lay off up to 300 workers, up from 100, without the need for government permission, sparking an uproar from trade unions. She simplified land acquisition regulations to facilitate the setting up of factories.

These two reforms are what Prime Minister Narendra Modi has been struggling to implement. Ms Rajé and Mr Modi are both from the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

Ms Rajé has also been trying to attract foreign investment and has focused on cooperation with Singapore and Japan. In 2014, she visited Singapore and, according to officials, has been personally monitoring and following through on initia-



Ms Rajé, 63, is known for her flamboyance and style. PHOTO: VASUNDHARA RAJE/FACEBOOK

tives on skills, water management and urban development.

Ms Rajé, 63, was born into the royal family of Gwalior, a one-time princely state that was absorbed into India after independence. Her father was the last maharaja, or ruler, of Gwalior. Members of her family have branched into politics and joined rival parties.

Her elder brother Madhav Rao Scindia was a prominent Congress leader who died in a plane crash in 2001. Her nephew Jyotiraditya Scindia is a Congress MP, while her son Dushyant Singh is an MP in the same party as she is.

Ms Rajé, who completed her undergraduate studies in economics and political science at Sophia College in Mumbai, entered politics in 1984. In a political career spanning three decades, the politician, who is comfortable whether at a high society dinner party or a political rally in a remote village, has been both a federal minister and a state minister.

The five-time MP was minister of state for external affairs when Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee was prime minister.

In 2003, she became Rajasthan's first woman chief minister but lost the 2008 state election to the Congress party. But she made a comeback to power in 2013.

However, analysts said Ms Rajé faces some challenges politically, and in pushing Rajasthan as an investment destination, in her second term.

She has many detractors within the BJP and, last year, Mr Modi skipped the Resurgent Rajasthan investment summit, given the controversies surrounding her links to businessman Lalit Modi, who was being investigated for financial irregularities.

She also faces an uphill task in trying to attract industry and investments into her state, which neighbours economic powerhouses Gujarat, Delhi and Maharashtra.

Tourism remains the mainstay, with nearly 35 million tourists visiting the state in 2014 to 2015.

Mr Rishi Sahai, managing director of investment bank Cogence Advisors, said: "The state holds a lot of potential but it has to find its own competitive advantage and try to capitalise on it. It faces huge competition with Gujarat on one side and Delhi on the other."

Nirmala Ganapathy

Training centre in Rajasthan a collaboration with Singapore

Over the past year, Singapore has been working closely with the state government of Rajasthan to set up a training centre in Udaipur, a top tourist destination known for its lakes and palaces.

Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong, who begins a five-day working visit to India today, will attend the launch of the Centre of Excellence for Tourism Training (CETT) in Udaipur, a collaboration between

the Republic and Rajasthan, on Thursday.

The centre will train students in the various aspects of the tourism and hospitality sector. The response so far has been good.

Professor Ashok Singh, a member of the CETT, said: "There is a lot of response even though admission season is over."

"Students and parents are coming continually to register. The re-

STEADFAST

This is a friendship that is going to endure.



RAJASTHAN CHIEF MINISTER VASUNDHARA RAJE, on her state's growing ties with Singapore.

sponse is because of the Singapore connection."

About 400 students have registered for the CETT's five courses – food production, food and beverage services, housekeeping, front office, and travel and tourism. Classes are likely to start at the Mohanlal Sukhadia University campus next month, said Prof Singh.

The curriculum is prepared by Singapore's Institute of Technical Education Education Services.

The Udaipur project is part of the skills development collaboration under the India-Singapore Strategic Partnership signed in November last year.

The western state of Rajasthan, with a population of about 73 million, is an emerging state with im-

proving infrastructure, good law and order, and progressive policies.

A 2014 visit to Singapore by Rajasthan Chief Minister Vasundhara Rajé, who officials said has been keen on collaborations with Singapore, set the foundation for the skills initiative.

This has been followed by partnerships in other areas. Singapore is providing help in developing two new townships in Rajasthan, and has undertaken a programme to train 100 government officials in water management.

On her state's growing ties with Singapore, Ms Rajé said last year: "This is a friendship that is going to endure."

Nirmala Ganapathy



STRAITS TIMES GRAPHICS

Joe Manning
Vice-President, Pacific Asia
Abbott Nutrition International

Building trust begins from within. It starts with employees who represent and uphold the values of a company, and is sustained through our actions in society. Businesses should work with employees to continue fostering a culture of integrity and a spirit of collaboration to cultivate an open and transparent workplace environment. With trust at the core of business, companies can empower employees to succeed in their jobs and live up to their fullest potential – which is good for them, good for business and good for society.

Rick Scurfield
President
NetApp APAC

The widening trust disparity between governments, corporations and stakeholders is a real challenge in all corners of IT and technology-driven industries, particularly when it comes to the privacy and security of data.

Bridging the trust gap can be achieved when governments and corporations work together to build a bullet-proof infrastructure that protects citizens' personal data; boosts innovation to empower stakeholders; helps to improve competencies through technology; and increases transparency in every stage of the data lifecycle.

Governments and businesses can no longer be complacent when it comes to building accountable frameworks with solid data foundations. They need to start galvanising data security and privacy measures before the widening trust gap begins to negate the incredible progress that globalisation and technology have brought about.

Gery Messer
Managing Director, Asia Pacific
CenturyLink

People build organisations, so it is imperative that creation of trust starts with employee engagement. Leaders need to inspire trust in the form of character – integrity, respect and faith, and competence – capabilities and commitment to excellence.

At CenturyLink, we frame trust in economic terms and create them with an explicit objective – we ensure that employees understand what the organisation's goals are, and clarify what is needed from them to reach that goal. In that process, we listen and find out on a personal level the challenges they face and factors for success. Building trust does not happen overnight, but leaders can certainly take steps to foster that climate to impact business results over time.

Mao Gen Foo
Vice-President, Asia
OpenText

As a technology provider, confidence and trust are essential. However, technology terminology and complexity can be confusing, and that confusion can too easily lead to mistrust. Technology brands are also increasingly sensitive to trust issues, because of incidents such as data breaches and subsequent concerns around privacy. For this reason, technology firms need to focus on demystifying the subject as much as possible.

To do this, we depend on our staff to be trusted advisers to customers, prospects, and more broadly within the industry too. That reflects throughout the organisation including business leaders and our customer-facing staff.

Jessica Tan
Managing Director
Microsoft Singapore

We live in a remarkable time when computing has been democratised and organisations are increasingly dependent on technology. Today, technology has outpaced the laws that govern so many of the capabilities and services that are essential to global commerce and innovation.

It is now more important than ever before for companies to build trust with customers and stakeholders. Increasing interconnectedness and sophistication of cybersecurity threats make a consistent approach to security and privacy necessary.

This means that we have to continuously update our security controls to protect our customers and stakeholders; be transparent in sharing how customers' data are being collected and used, and set clear privacy guidelines for customers to determine how their data can be shared and used, in order to collectively build greater trust in technology and all that it promises.

Gary Tom
President, Asia Pacific
Walton International Group

Business leaders are accountable to their stakeholders. In this regard, it is imperative that they not only communicate well with them but also be transparent in their corporate activities.

With over 30 years of experience in land acquisition and administration, Walton, as one of North America's premier land administrators, understands land and regards it as a lasting investment. In view of this, it is crucial that we inform our investors that investing in the parcels of pre-developed land is not a "get-rich" quick scheme but a long-term investment.

Walton gives full disclosure of our investments' risks and we also encourage all investors to do their due diligence before committing to any type of investments.

Mark Billington
Regional Director
ICAEW South East Asia

Companies can help build trust by publicly acknowledging that they have a broader range of responsibilities than simply maximising profit. They should state what these are, and how they are meeting them. They can also state openly what their values and principles are. Business environments will change and they will have to develop coherent responses but if they are upfront about what they believe in, they will be seen to be accountable. This will give them a solid foundation for building trust with stakeholders and society.

Allan Robertson
Senior Vice-President, Sales, Asia Pacific
Intralinks

There is a fundamental shift in the world whereby we are moving towards a new world reality shaped by mistakes of past regimes and digital technologies with a new generation coming into being. The confluence of these will and has caused friction, hence, issues of trust have emerged. Transparency and ethical code of conduct are all key to building trust, and these in turn are all part of good corporate and governmental governance. Technology also has a role to play – enabling more ways for people to communicate, be more productive and most importantly, collaborate securely in an environment of trust.

Ronald Lee
Managing Director
PrimeStaff

Transparency and credibility are key. It always starts at the top, with the leader of the organisation walking the talk. Gain the trust of internal stakeholders first and foremost and then validate this by the help of an independent third party.

For example, companies can voluntarily comply with the Code of Corporate Governance, which is currently not mandatory. Making additional financial and non-financial information available to the public will certainly help build more trust with investors.

Dipal Patel
General Manager, Pharmaceuticals
GSK Singapore

At GSK, we believe how we do business is as important as what we do. We are the first healthcare company to introduce patient-focused interactions with healthcare professionals. We've changed the way we compensate our sales representatives and have stopped paying external doctors to speak about our prescription products. GSK is also committed to making the results of our clinical trials publicly accessible and we are the first company to open up our clinical data to external researchers.

In order to bring innovative medicines to people in poorer countries whilst continuing to incentivise innovation, GSK is leading the way by implementing a graduated strategy for intellectual property, as well as a tiered approach to pricing. Through these changes to the way we work, we are becoming more transparent and in turn gaining the trust of our customers.

Tan Chong Huat
Managing Partner
RHTLaw Taylor Wessing LLP

At the risk of over simplifying the subject, I would recommend that business leaders and companies remember the acronym "GRACE" ie Governance, Risk, Anti-Money Laundering, Compliance & Ethics. These are important virtues when it comes to building trust.

The embracing of each and every one of them will be essential to guide and promote trust, and prevent the destruction of trust that have been established, built over time and maintained between companies and stakeholders.

Good governance that delivers performance and profitability which complies with regulations (among others, anti-money laundering as in the recent BSI / JMDB case), conforms with good ethics, and is equipped with adequate and effective risk management will offer a good trust-enabling framework.

Needless to say, the honesty, diligence and accountability of business leaders will be of foremost importance in determining the trust quotient of the companies they helm. Examples include Dr Cheong Choong Kong (Singapore Airlines) and Warren Buffet (Berkshire Hathaway), just to name a notable few.

Over time, some of these companies become great institutions which are trusted and loved by their stakeholders, with a distinctive culture of honour and integrity. Hence the importance of "GRACE"

Tan Tiong Cheng
Executive Chairman
Knight Frank Pte Ltd

In this unpredictable and somewhat troubled world, the virtue of trust becomes more elusive to attain. Yet, this necessary hallmark of trust has been the key to Singapore's success. Our unwavering mission to instil integrity and honesty starting from the government down to businesses and communities has nurtured a strong culture of trust, building a national brand reputation for Singapore and in forging a safe haven status sought after by people around the world.

At Knight Frank, our mission to be a trusted advisor is the cornerstone that inculcates our virtue in serving our clients – to consistently provide advice to what is in our client's best interests with sincerity and to do what we say we are going to do.

Our key to professional success is to gain the trust and confidence of not just our clients but with our colleagues in the Knight Frank family, building truly special and enduring relationships with them.



Turid Solvang

Co-Founder and Managing Director
Norwegian Institute of Directors

A company's greatest asset is its stakeholders' trust. We know too much today to focus solely on maximising profit. As companies, we have a contract with society, and every board of directors should ask themselves: What is the purpose of this company – what do we want to contribute, what role do we want to take on in society? If we compromise our bond of trust with society, we lose the trust of our stakeholders, and with that, our licence to operate. Whichever industry we are in, we are first and foremost in the business of trust, so we need to make trust our business.

Karl Hamann
Chief Executive Officer
QBE Insurance (Singapore) Pte Ltd

How companies gain and maintain the trust of all stakeholders depends on various factors, including a company's ability to consistently deliver on their promises to their customers as well as protect their shareholders' interests. Specific to corporate governance practices, it is no longer enough to adhere to regulations. Firms today must employ additional measures reinforcing transparency and fairness at every level, while illustrating a commitment to strengthening and institutionalising positive ways of doing business. Effective corporate governance is essentially another form of business insurance as it requires companies to meet the expectations of shareholders, customers and employees.

Toby Koh
Group Managing Director
Ademco Security Group

Trust in any company begins with its board of directors, good corporate governance and transparency. Companies must adopt best financial reporting practice in line with latest norms. Internal audit should be an integral part of a company's review process to mitigate risk to shareholders, clients and staff.

The board may not be able to have clear visibility into every facet of the business. Hence it is good practice for directors' contact details to be made available openly so as to facilitate whistle-blowing. Employees must be rallied that it is everyone's responsibility to safeguard the company's interest.

Jaya Dass
Country Manager
Randstad Singapore

Organisations and leaders must keep promises made to their employees. As obvious as this may seem, not honoring your word can cause employees to lose trust in its leaders to deliver a rewarding and trustworthy environment to work in.

Maintaining a robust internal audit and compliance process also helps to instill trust in an organisation. It sends a loud and clear message that customers can trust in that organisation to deliver to a high quality ethical standard. Organisations that articulate a clear strategy and vision are also creating pathways to building trust. When there is transparency and a clear direction towards an organisation's future, a sense of security and trust is cultivated. Building a principled, transparent, future thinking organisational climate goes a long way in instilling and building trust.

Chrisol Correla
Director, Market Planning
LexisNexis Risk Solutions

Financial transparency is recognised by the Singapore government and others worldwide as a critical condition for effective identification of terrorism financing, money laundering, tax crime and corruption crimes.

As such, it is imperative that corporations provide fuller financial transparency as markets globally become increasingly complex and interconnected.

Companies that develop a culture of financial transparency and accountability will benefit from more effective financial crime controls and the business benefits of an enhanced reputation for trustworthiness.

Amid a rise in digital transactions, we are seeing greater concern around data security and sharing personal details. Without trust, individuals withhold information, making financial institutions and regulators less able to monitor for and trace financial crimes. Building trust between individuals and institutions prompts financial inclusion. This in turn creates a virtuous cycle in which financial inclusion and transparency propel the highest standards of behavior that are critical to fight financial crime.

Thomas Wai
Director, Asia Pacific
Talent Plus, Inc

Low trust causes friction, high trust generates engagement. Trust is the key leadership competency of the global economy. In working with business leaders over the years, we recognise that true leadership is about leading by example, inspiring trust and loyalty.

The means used and end results are equally important. Leaders need to be direct, transparent, demonstrate care and loyalty, and when required – call a spade a spade. Not showing care for employees, withholding bad news, delivering half-truths, wrongfully claiming credit, and manipulating the truth, are all acts that destroy trust. Leaders need to ask themselves – when was the last time they taught their executives how to build trust?

Amanda Goh
CEO
Edelman Singapore

Balancing communications around purpose and profit matters. This year's Edelman Trust Barometer survey found 78 per cent of the population expect the CEO to be visible in discussing societal issues, be involved in public policy discussions and have a personal view on these issues. This is seen as more important than discussing financial results at 71 per cent. In Singapore, the survey found that businesses should focus on access to education and training. Meeting these societal expectations while keeping pace with change gives businesses an edge in building trust. This can be achieved through in-house training programmes, collaboration with schools, or aligning with ongoing government initiatives.

David Leong
Managing Director
PeopleWorldwide Consulting Pte Ltd

Trust in business is the epitome in all dealings. Without trust, there will be resistance and friction. Trust is the strength of bonds between clients, staff and people. Without trust, businesses cannot function properly.

Businesses need to be set up with a culture of trust that begin from the top to bottom and peer to peer. Trust is needed in inter-company, inter-personal, inter-stakeholder interactions and as business leaders we must show trust, be trustable and trusting at the same time. We must show trust to subordinates so that they can share the same trust to their peers. Clients must have trust that we deliver our best for them with their interest at heart in our dealings. With trust, dealings become easier.

Building trust is about doing the right things, making the right decisions for each other – trusting that each interaction, each relationship will reciprocate the same trust throughout the web of relationships in interpersonal and inter-company dealings.

Christophe Duchatellier
CEO
Adecco Asia Pacific

The proliferation of communication channels and how stakeholders consume information are changing how business leaders connect with stakeholders. Business leaders now need to be seen as more visible and approachable. By harnessing digital channels for transparent and open engagement, leaders can address the need to be more accessible to their key stakeholders who are actively consuming information on those channels. Leaders can communicate beyond the business, to include personal stories and values through creative story telling formats for respective platforms. Governments need to lead with authenticity and transparency and the same applies with business leaders and companies.

Private school players weigh in on job survey

More established schools cite their own survey results, saying CPE poll should not lump institutions together

Rahimah Rashith

Private schools should not be lumped together when considering employment rates for the sector.

This was the response from the more established private schools, such as the Management Development Institute of Singapore (MDIS), to a survey released yesterday which found that employment rates of graduates from nine private schools compared poorly to those from public institutions.

The Council for Private Education (CPE) survey found that 58 per cent of those who graduated from nine private schools in 2014 found full-time jobs within six months of completing their studies.

This is much less than the 83 per cent for graduates from the Nation-

al University of Singapore, Nanyang Technological University and Singapore Management University.

The Singapore Institute of Management (SIM) said its own survey for the class of 2014 found 73 per cent of its global education graduates had full-time jobs within six months. More than half of those surveyed had two or more job offers.

It also reported an average gross monthly pay of \$2,766 for graduates with full-time jobs, compared with the survey's \$2,700. The median starting pay for those from the three public universities was \$3,200.

SIM's global education arm, which has an enrolment of 20,000 students with 16,400 locals, said "the employability of our graduates is a priority", adding that it has been putting in place measures to enhance the employability outcomes

of its graduates. For example, it provides career counselling and offers internship opportunities.

MDIS secretary-general R. Theyvendran quoted a 2014 survey done by the school which found that about eight in 10 of its students found full-time or part-time jobs six months after graduating.

He said: "It was not fair to put all the schools in one basket."

The CPE survey looked at nine schools of varying repute. In addition to the more established players such as SIM, MDIS and Curtin Education Centre, the survey included ITC School of Laws and Trent Global College of Technology and Management, which are less well known.

James Cook University Singapore, the first of two private schools to win the EduTrust Star – the highest quality mark given to private education institutions here, said its own survey of students who graduated at the end of 2013 and in 2014 found more than seven in 10 were settled in jobs within six months.

Job outcomes

	Full-time job rate	Full-time and part-time job rate	Monthly starting salary
Private school graduates	58%	79%	\$2,700
NUS, NTU, SMU graduates	83%	89%	\$3,200

NOTE: 4,200 graduates who graduated in 2014 from nine private schools (Curtin Education Centre, ITC School of Laws, James Cook University, Kaplan Higher Education Institute/Kaplan Higher Education, Management Development Institute of Singapore, Ngee Ann-Adelaide Education Centre, Singapore Institute of Management, SMF Institute of Higher Learning, Trent Global College of Technology and Management) were surveyed by the Council for Private Education. Job rate is based on percentage of students who were able to secure full-time or part-time jobs within six months of completing their final exams.

Source: COUNCIL FOR PRIVATE EDUCATION STRAITS TIMES GRAPHICS

About half had salaries of between \$2,001 and \$3,000.

Private school graduates interviewed about the survey findings had mixed reactions. Some said the CPE's findings were reflective of the market, while others felt the 58 per cent job rate was too low.

Mr Mohammad Kader, who graduated from SIM in 2014, said he has not been able to land a full-time job since graduation.

The 26-year-old accountant, who has been in and out of temporary jobs lasting between four months and a year, said: "Companies usually prefer public university students and they are even willing to pay more for them."

SIM graduate Shahirah Khalid said she found a job before graduation. The 25-year-old, who graduated with a Bachelor of Business this year and is working as a forex broker,

said: "Some of my friends are starting with a lower pay but that is expected with a private certificate. After a couple of years, the pay will rise according to how well you perform."

Job expert David Leong, who runs PeopleWorldwide Consulting, said the market is tougher now compared with two years ago, and private school graduates may find it even harder to land jobs.

Highlighting the availability of Earn and Learn programmes, he said: "My advice to polytechnic grads who don't get a place in a public university is to work first, instead of going to a private school."

"In a slowdown, employers prefer poly grads instead of those with degrees, especially if the qualifications are from less reputable universities."

rahimahr@sph.com.sg

THIS WEEK'S TOPIC:

What would be the impact of Zika on Singapore? In addition to the "Mozzie Wipeout" initiative, how should Singapore combat the Aedes mosquito?

This fight is everybody's business



PHOTO: REUTERS

Ronald Lee
Managing Director
PrimeStaff

I BELIEVE that the economic impact of Zika on Singapore should be low to nil, as Zika is said to be generally a mild disease and less serious than dengue. Apart from the risk to pregnant women and their unborn children, the symptoms of Zika are mild, with the majority of those infected not even showing any symptoms – so the risk of mortality is low even should an epidemic erupt. There is no cause for widespread panic and therefore economic fallout, if any, should be minimal.

The Zika virus is transmitted by the Aedes mosquito, which also spreads dengue. With dengue on the rise and expected to hit a new high this year, it is perhaps worth considering deploying our scientists to develop a way to genetically modify or eradicate the Aedes mosquito once and for all.

Or Toh Wat
Group Managing Director
OKP Holdings Ltd

SINGAPORE'S economy may be affected and, in particular, the construction industry. The inherent risk of mosquitoes breeding at construction sites, if not managed properly, may lead to work stoppages and consequent delays to construction projects.

It is imperative that corporates also contribute to the effort to combat the Aedes mosquito. OKP consistently conducts frequent briefings to educate work-site employees and combs sites to eradicate mosquito breeding.

Precautionary steps taken include spraying mosquito repellent on exposed hands and necks, and the taking of daily temperature so as to identify potentially infected personnel and prevent the further spread of Zika.

Victor Mills

Chief Executive
Singapore International Chamber of Commerce

IT is far too early to predict the long-term economic impact of Zika on Singapore. What's needed now is for everyone to focus on controlling the spread of the virus. Every household needs to do its part by being responsible and by consistently practising the simple but effective steps of the "Mozzie Wipeout". It is not someone else's responsibility, it's ours. The spread of viruses like dengue and Zika is often caused by thoughtless behaviour in our neighbourhoods. If every household does its part, we and Singapore will be better off. That's the best way to limit Zika's impact.

Lim Soon Hock
Managing Director
Plan-B ICAG Pte Ltd

I SHARE the same sentiments as many that, unlike Sars, there would not be any long-lasting impact on Singapore. This is because Zika has been around for a while. It just got heightened recently. Businesses and the tourism industry will carry on as usual.

The fight against mosquitoes is everybody's business. One person's negligence in not preventing mosquito breeding can cause an outbreak in the local community, and potentially across the nation. While the government can continue to carry out more public education and intensify environmental checks, the ultimate responsibility lies with the individual. Everyone of us must and can play a proactive part in the "Mozzie Wipeout", not only when there is an outbreak. We must have the discipline to discharge this responsibility at all times.

Zaheer K Merchant
Regional Director (Singapore and Europe)
QI Group of Companies

IT is inevitable that the Zika outbreak poses a downside risk to the tourism industry and the near-term economic outlook. There is, however, no reason to believe that there will be a big impact on the overall economy, at least not unless the epidemic turns out to be protracted and presents more severe medical effects, which in turn lead to rapid escalation of the disease.

While the "Mozzie Wipeout" campaign is a positive step in stemming the outbreak, Singapore's larger response should be to prioritise research on the Zika virus and devise a method for quick and efficient diagnosis, possibly resulting in a vaccination. Last but not least, citizens must be advised on the importance of proper sanitation and to

maintain emphasis on vector control to first prevent mosquito breeding.

Dora Hoan
Group CEO
Best World International

AS Zika is generally a mild and self-limiting illness, the impact on Singapore could be negligible. However, it is more worrying for those who are planning to start a family or already pregnant. The risks may put family plans on hold, and compromise productivity and social life of the pregnant, with some choosing to work from home and cutting down on social gatherings. Tourism and retail would be the areas most affected by Zika.

A two-pronged approach is necessary to combat the Aedes mosquito – the "Mozzie Wipeout" to prevent the breeding of mosquitoes, and targeted surveillance and control to destroy breeding sites.

Grassroots leaders can use multiple languages to reinforce the "Mozzie Wipeout" through door-to-door interactions and various social media platforms. Together with the National Environment Agency (NEA), clean up potential breeding sites, with an eye particularly on abandoned sites.

Tan Mui Huet
President and CEO, Asia
International SOS

FOR now, it is too early to tell if Zika will have an economic impact on Singapore. The most probable industry that might be affected could be tourism.

Nevertheless, it is likely that in the long run, Zika would continue to simmer in Singapore until we move from an epidemic to endemic stage.

Resolving the issue of Zika requires a multi-stakeholder approach involving health authorities, private corporations and individuals. While the Singapore government is intensifying efforts to eradicate the breeding of Aedes mosquitoes and monitoring closely the Zika situation, businesses need to play their part to ensure that their employees are well informed on preventive measures and also be vigilant in checking for potential mosquito-breeding sites and conduct fogging when necessary.

Since the outbreak, International SOS has been conducting education sessions for both clients and employees on Zika and its prevention. Companies also play an important role in protecting their employees in the vulnerable group – pregnant and/or married employees planning to start a family – with flexible work arrangements and initiatives such as issuing mosquito repellents, etc.

Daniel CF Ng
Senior Director of Marketing – APAC
Cloudera

A VIRUS that can be passed prenatally, Zika is harmful not only to every man in the street, but also to our future, yet-to-be-born generations. Singaporeans will need to come together as one to overcome this epidemic.

Many of our customers in the healthcare and life science industries have been successfully tackling deadly diseases and other medical challenges with Big Data and analytics. Big Data can be effective for identifying early signals and detecting virus contraction, discovering spread patterns, and more. Whether it involves collecting the exomes of every newborn and carrier mosquito genomes, or

analysing how to prevent transmission in the future, Big Data and analytics will continue to play a significant role in our efforts to curb this virus outbreak.

Patrick Liew
Managing Partner
Greenpro Capital

AS we come to grips with the Zika outbreak, one major concern is the lies, half-truths and misconceptions about the outbreak floating around the Internet and in public places. Many of the rumour-mongers seem to believe they are contributing to the situation without realising they can potentially cause a backlash of anxiety and even panic and unrest.

While the situation is very much under control, the authorities have to proactively prevent, respond to, and resolve negative communications throughout the battle against Zika and ensure that the misinformation do not take root and go viral. They should provide key information and regular updates to help our people stay calm and collected. They should help our people become more confident in taking appropriate protective measures.

There should also be systems in place to recruit and retain volunteers to help carry out plans and activities to educate our people and help contain the spread of Zika.

Annie Yap
Group MD and Chief Strategy Officer
AYP Group

ZIKA is mild for most people but it can be severe for pregnant women. This will create a big impact on Singapore's population, birth rate and, of course, the general well-being of our people.

Singaporeans should take extra precautions by using insect repellent, wearing long sleeves or long pants and checking for mosquito breeds in their homes or workplaces. The government should increase screening to facilitate early detection of cases and take appropriate precautions to prevent mosquito breeding.

David Leong
Managing Director
PeopleWorldwide Consulting Pte Ltd

THE Aedes mosquito cannot be decimated out of existence. The only way to combat Aedes is through citizenry activism and participation by forming habits to clear stagnant waters and being mindful of the dangers of these mosquitoes.

The Aedes genus of mosquitoes are known to transmit the viruses that cause dengue fever, yellow fever, West Nile fever, chikungunya and Zika, among others. Whether it is dengue or Zika, there will be panic if a disproportionate number of people get infected and the spread of the virus becomes aggressive.

Public education and habit-forming campaigns must continually be carried out. We must combat the mosquitoes' aggressive propagation. The strategy is to break the cluster-effect infections by stopping the spread through ring-fencing. Active citizenry participation to combat the Aedes is key.

The full list of views from CEOs
is available at
<http://business-times.com.sg>

Sanjay Rohatgi
Senior Vice-President, Asia Pacific and Japan
Symantec

SECURITY remains a huge focus for the Singapore government – and rightly so. As government agencies help firms to adapt by innovating and upscaling the workforce to drive productivity, the reliance on technology will also mean that IT infrastructure will be more susceptible to evolving security threats. As our digital economy embraces disruption as the new norm, it is critical to ensure that ICT strategies are strongly interwoven into the fabric of the wider city evolution strategy.

This involves Critical Infrastructure Protection regulatory efforts as well as engaging in strategic policy discussions, and organisations must recognise the importance of and adopt a cyber defence strategy that protects against advanced attacks.

Tan Tiong Cheng
Executive Chairman
Knight Frank Singapore

THE waves of disruption and uncertainty are real phenomena that Singapore needs to deal with amid strong geopolitical shifts. In highlighting the sensitive yet important issues relating to diversity – race, religion, globalisation and immigration – the Prime Minister has signalled the need to tackle these issues head on.

His emphasis on the consequences of intolerance for diversity – such as Brexit – is a sharp reminder of the importance of citizenry responsibility and the need for us to look beyond our individual needs to the nation's future. His wish for Singapore to be blessed with a divine discontent is inspiring. We need to strive to do better and embrace change even amidst discomfort lest we become obsolete. At the same time, we can count our blessings and be thankful for our achievements over the last 50 years of independence.

Pauline Goh
CEO, Singapore and South East Asia
CBRE

DISRUPTION is a defining challenge, but it also creates opportunities. Shoppers do not perceive online and offline channels the way businesses view them.

Rather, the shopper is influenced by convenience, choice, value and experience. Retail players therefore need to break down the silos between online and offline channels for consumers.

One option for landlords is to acquire established e-commerce platforms and set up their own logistics network and online platforms to create an omni-channel business for their tenants and consumers. Such a model increases the number of touch points between shoppers and the shopping mall, its retailers and products. Another way is to build a positive “retail-tainment” associated with the mall amongst shoppers, an experience which the digital platform cannot replicate.

Lynette Seah
CEO and Founder
Alpha7

PM Lee accurately pointed out that disruption will be the defining challenge for Singapore. We live in a world where old models are under threat, with technology bringing challengers from beyond our borders. We've been actively helping local businesses digitally transform for over two years, and we see that business leaders are unaware of what's possible or don't know what to do.

David Emery
Founder and Chairman
Reciprocus International Pte Ltd

DISRUPTION is rightly described as being the defining challenge faced by Singapore. However, it may very well also be a defining opportunity in the next chapter of Singapore's economic story. We are indeed a small society and as such find ourselves vulnerable to the unexpected consequences of disruption. But, our agility can help us re-frame challenge into opportunity. We are flexible and nimble. At our disposal is an abundance of talent, ideas and capital. A growing entrepreneurial spirit pulses through our society. Future success will hinge on how far we can invent, harness resources, improve and export innovation globally.

Ronald Lee
Managing Director
PrimeStaff

THE National Day Rally covered broad themes from the challenges confronting the world such as recent adverse geopolitical developments and escalating incidents of terrorism to domestic concerns of economic challenges, need for good politics and governance, and race relations.

From a business perspective, the emphasis on skills development was pertinent, as it is the key to help buttress our economy given the macro issues of diminishing competitiveness that our nation is facing.

This is particularly relevant to our industry, as we provide the very competencies the Prime Minister referenced, such as career transition services, which are needed given the current state of the economic and business climate.

His focus on SkillsFuture is also aligned with the nature of our business as a human resource consultancy. Talent management and development have never been more crucial given the growing pressures that Singapore businesses are currently facing.

Francis Fong
Managing Director
SAS Singapore

TECHNOLOGICAL changes will impact nearly every industry, and organisations must be prepared to disrupt or be disrupted. As old jobs become obsolete and new ones created, we must continue to build new skills for the future workforce – especially with data analytics being a key driver in Singapore's Smart Nation initiatives.

It is imperative then that companies partner relevant industries to train professionals through programmes like the Company-Led Training Programmes. This will allow the future workforce to embrace disruptive technologies like artificial intelligence and machine learning to gain insights that will enable them to accelerate business growth and productivity.

Alexandre Parilusyan
Vice-President of Business Transformation in Asia
Pacific South
Dassault Systèmes

PM Lee Hsien Loong highlighted that Singapore business needs to transform to adapt to slowing economic growth and technological disruptions during his NDR speech. My key takeaway is “How can businesses best transform?” I believe businesses need to look beyond automation and digitalisation as disruption is sweeping across industries fast.

They need to work on a new hyperconnected and net-

Lionel Lim

Vice-President and Managing Director, Asia Pacific and Japan
Pivotal, Inc

Disruption is the name of the game for many industries. What companies such as Uber, Grab and Airbnb have in common is their use of software and intelligence, to fundamentally transform their industries. Singapore has been immensely successful in its transition to a knowledge-based economy and is now taking bold steps towards a digital future. Businesses now would do well to adopt a culture that has served Silicon Valley so well – taking chances and building the right capabilities to capture the new opportunities of a digital age powered by software.



FILE PHOTO

“disruptions”. There is no doubt that these disruptions – through technologies, innovations or processes – will impact the way we live, play, interact and work. It will also determine how businesses need to be conducted to survive and thrive. Therefore, it is imperative that no matter what business one is in, we must anticipate constant changes and be nimble enough to transform and adapt to the new environment.

Melanie Lim
Managing Director
Builders Hub Pte Ltd

HOW Singapore must secure its place in the world amid strong geopolitical developments. This is a question a small country like Singapore will face and must conquer. We have to continue to push ahead to develop physical infrastructure, upgrade education and skills, and strengthen market infrastructure.

As a small economy, we must continue to be outward-oriented. As global trade and production reconfigure, we too must adapt and restructure from time to time. I see great potential for Singapore to develop niche growth areas in modern services.

Edwin Khew Teck Fook
President

The Institution of Engineers, Singapore

PM Lee's emphasis on disruptive technologies as the predominant force determining our economic growth is most timely. It adds impetus to IES' focus in promoting engineering as engineers and skilled technicians are needed at the frontline of the disruptive force.

It sets the tone for IES to nurture innovators and quick adaptors to embrace and seek opportunities out of disruptive technologies. In this respect, IES will be setting up an incubator and accelerator to support the next wave of local engineering innovations and hope that it will be the birthplace of the next global disruptive phenomenon.

Zaheer Merchant
Regional Director (Singapore & Europe)
QI Group of Companies

THE Prime Minister's earnest and all-encompassing speech at the 2016 National Day Rally is significant in many ways, but two things stand out for me.

First, it was made clear that Singapore needs a network

David Leong
Managing Director
PeopleWorldwide Consulting Pte Ltd

AS a “small red dot”, Singapore needs to have a certain paranoia – it is surrounded by two larger neighbours. Strong leadership in government – a government with grit, tenacity, perseverance, that constantly innovates to get ahead of the development curve – is a must. Succession planning therefore must be taken seriously as we cannot afford to lose our mojo and slip into mediocrity to eventually become irrelevant. Singapore must constantly balance and re-balance its interests against its neighbours and the rest of the world. The biggest takeaway is we have a dedicated prime minister who is a staunchly loyal and committed son of Singapore. For him, succession planning is for the future of our country, and not about his own political continuity. He worked to the point of physical exhaustion and near collapse during the National Day Rally and chose to finish his speech. Singapore's flyaway success is premised on such strong and dedicated select individuals who put in their very best for the country, and we cannot take this for granted.

Patrick Liew
Managing Partner
Greenpro Capital

THE possibility of disruptive forces changing your work and life is not just a warning but part and parcel of life in the new world of disorder.

We are better off learning how to proactively embrace and leverage on disruptive forces to propel us to the next level of growth. To do that, we need to build open, digital and dynamic systems that will help us interpret trends, evaluate the impact of new and emerging developments, and take proactive actions to shape and influence our future. We need to cultivate the capacity for bigger and better results and the capability, agility, and tenacity to become the disruptor and not the disrupted.

Lee Fook Chiew
Chief Executive Officer
Institute of Singapore Chartered Accountants

WITH technology disruption and globalisation, industries, professions and even entire economies need to think critically about the future and embrace change. Accountancy, as one of the oldest professions, has survived centuries because of its ability to successfully adapt to and embrace

Florence Ng
Managing Director and Founder
Straits Talent Pte Ltd

JOSEPH Schooling. Talent. Passion. Hard work. Determination. AND parents who provided unwavering support in nurturing his talent. In the USA. While we see overwhelming parental commitment in the area of academic excellence and conventional career pursuits, such commitment in the sports arena is rare.

Considering that most great athletes start to peak in their early 20s and given that it takes about a decade to prepare them for their Olympics debut, our future Olympic champions are currently hanging out in primary school canteens fiddling with mobile phone apps, or busy preparing for their PSLE.

What needs to change is the mindset of Singaporean parents and our education system – in the grooming of our nation's future Olympians. We have made some progress. This will no doubt take time. It took us 51 years to produce our first Olympic gold. Let's keep going and aim for more! Together, we can.

Thomas Wai
Director, Asia-Pacific
Talent Plus, Inc

WE first need to be able to spot talent. Parents, sports institutes, and schools have a big role to play in identifying young talent and giving them the right training and support needed to realise their full potential.

The mindset that we do not have good sportsmen and women needs to change. Investment in our athletes needs to start at the early stages to give them the confidence, experience and know-how. We need to "think big"! A champion isn't built overnight. We need the supportive environment, appreciative culture, great coaches and understanding parents for more winners.

Zaheer Merchant
Regional Director (Singapore & Europe)
QI Group of Companies

IT should be noted that Schooling's success at the Olympics had little cultivation from the public sector. It was his parents who sponsored him. It is actually disappointing that there is a dearth of infrastructure in Singapore to cultivate success in sports, and even then we seem to try to cherry pick particular sports (without notable success either at that).

Our focus on economic growth and commerce has plusses but some minuses too. With Schooling's win, it is hoped that the nation will change its mindset, first off that sports is a worthwhile endeavour. Practical ways to encourage participation in sports like

John Bittleston

Founder & Chair
Terrific Mentors International Pte Ltd

NO success is achieved without discipline. Whether sports, social, political or commercial, discipline – a strict observance of restraint and control of base desires – is essential. Discipline is what built Singapore. There are now siren voices saying it is too strict. I disagree.

But what Singapore was disciplined about 50 years ago and what it needs to be disciplined about today are two different things. Top-down discipline was necessary at the outset of modern Singapore. Self-discipline and self-motivation is what we need today. That is only achieved by thought and the acceptance of personal responsibility. Is that what our young are learning?

incentives and infrastructure building, specialist schools (think Germany and its football programme), grants and endowments for sports, and greater openness towards sports training will certainly help. A better public-private sponsorship programme with funding and donations will all go a long way if repeating the success at Rio is to be achieved.

David Leong
Managing Director
PeopleWorldwide Consulting Pte Ltd

PRODUCING an Olympic champion eluded Singapore for a long time. We became a developed nation in less than five decades but it has taken us 51 years to get our first Olympic gold.

Schooling's Olympic gold broke the imaginary ceiling for Singaporean athletes and will inspire more aspiring sportsmen to aim to achieve better. Better government support, financial and other commitments like education and national service deferment must be put in place to cultivate the sporting talents. Winning podium positions at the Olympics is national service too. The training is gruelling, demanding not only for the athletes but also for their families.



Without a supportive framework by the government and countrymen, it will be a tough journey for the athletes. Their sacrifices, high physical demands with strict discipline, must at least be appreciated by Singaporeans. Soldiers in national service learn to fight to protect the country; sportsmen toil for the nation's glory and pride.

Vijay Iyengar
Managing Director, CEO
Agrocorp International

THERE are two aspects to this question. As a people we need to change our mindset and expectations to see athletic success (and success in art, music and other pursuits as well) as being as important as academic success. This might mean making our academic system slightly less rigorous and encouraging our children at a young age to keep pursuing passions outside the classroom. The Australian model where students have to play sports in school could be adopted.

On the nurture side, we have seen some strong efforts by the government in boosting infrastructure

support for our athletes in the form of world-class training facilities and access to quality coaching. Sustained exposure to international competitions is also needed.

At the same time we should be encouraging our best athletes to take the Schooling route and go overseas to train and compete with the very best day in and day out. Scholarships and grants need to be set up to allow them to do so. And not least, a clear policy on NS deferment needs to be established, instead of the current case-by-case basis. And people in Singapore must want to pay to watch sports – well-attended sporting events are an additional inspiration to aspiring sportsmen.

Edwin Khew Teck Fook
President

The Institution of Engineers, Singapore

JOSEPH Schooling's triumph reinforces the need for society to encourage the young to discover and pursue their passion so that a self-perpetuating drive for success can be developed over time. A culture that values a determined pursuit of one's interest instead of pure academic grades creates champions not just in sports but in engineering and other fields.

For children with a knack for engineering, allow them to develop their interests outside of the classroom to imagine, innovate and create. In doing so, Singapore will produce more than Olympic medallists, but global champions on multiple fronts to ensure sustained long-term economic growth.

Damien Wong
Vice-President, General Manager
Red Hat Asean

JOSEPH Schooling's feat is a testimony of sheer perseverance, dedication, and self determination. We would like to applaud, along with him, his parents and coaches who encouraged and supported him every step of the way. His achievement in the Olympics shows us that having grit and the right attitude can lead to the overcoming of seemingly insurmountable odds to triumph and win against more established rivals.

We should continue to inspire the next generation so they are courageous in their sporting endeavours, and stubborn in their pursuit of success.

The full list of views from CEOs
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Karl Hamann
Chief Executive Officer

QBE Insurance (Singapore) Pte Ltd

THE plot to launch an attack on Marina Bay has alerted Singaporeans to a harsh reality – the perils of terrorism are now hitting home. The reinforcement of both physical defences (such as intensified security checks) and cyber security measures, can minimise vulnerabilities.

However, for a truly holistic approach, one additional consideration for individuals and businesses in Singapore is specific insurance protection that mitigates or transfers terror-related risks. A reinforced defence, complemented by an adequate portfolio of protection policies, can help mitigate impacts brought about by acts of terror.

Annie Yap
Group MD & Chief Strategy Officer
AYP Group

TERRORISM remains one of the most enduring challenges to international peace and security that we face. Combating terrorism is no easy task and it is not something that can be done overnight. Every citizen deserves to feel safe walking on the street, going out for dinner or simply just living their life. Ordinary citizens should take part in safeguarding that sense of security by being educated on how to respond to a terror attack.

Constant education would help people realise the need to report to the authorities if/when they come across any unattended item in a public place, or someone whom they suspect is possibly radicalised. All Singaporeans must become more alert to the risks, not only for safety reasons but also out of duty of care as committed citizens.

Zaheer Merchant
Regional Director (Singapore & Europe)
QI Group of Companies

TERRORISM in all its forms and manifestations must be unequivocally condemned. In Singapore's context, the most imperative action against terrorism must at the outset identify and deal with the circumstances that contribute to radicalisation (which subsequently leads to recruitment).

Then, as a matter of national security, the defence and protection of our borders must be prioritised.

Finally, Singapore must enhance the existing frameworks of international cooperation and intensify its policing efforts with neighbouring countries, especially in sharing intelligence on terrorism. The fight against terrorism is an international effort and Singapore will do well to be actively involved at the global stage in this regard.

T Chandroo
Chairman & CEO

Modern Montessori International Pte Ltd

TERRORISM is not a distant problem any more and Singaporeans cannot afford to be complacent and detached from what occurs around the world.

Ronald Lee

Managing Director
PrimeStaff

IT is hard to imagine a terrorist attack in our own backyard, as we have had the privilege of living in a country known for being safe.

It is therefore all the more important that citizens and the authorities alike do not take our safety for granted.

Our military and special task forces need to be expertly trained not only to handle a terrorist attack but also to pre-empt and foil potential attacks. The people of Singapore need to be vigilant as well.

International cooperation, especially with our neighbours, is essential, as Singapore is the most cosmopolitan country sitting in South-east Asia and therefore a potential target.



We now see posters in place to educate Singaporeans about looming terrorist threats and the presence of armed officers at key locations around the island. These efforts produce a sense of security and act as deterrents. Reinforcing these measures to ensure vigilance and prompt action from the public must continue.

Countering terrorism must be the unanimous effort of an entire nation. We must stand together against what we believe is wrong and unjust. A united front will be a tough wall to break down for a growing terror threat.

Lawrence Lim
COO
CoAssets

WHILE the government has established sound plans and measures to counter terror and deal with the aftermath of an attack, more needs to be done to educate the public on how it would fit into the government's larger plan, and visibly demonstrate our collective resolve against potential perpetrators.

To effectively deter those who wish us harm, the "burden" of dealing with the growing terror threat should not simply be borne by the government, but

must now be shared across the broader spectrum of society through co-creation. This will mean more robust plans, ensure our collective readiness and imbue greater societal resilience.

David Leong
Managing Director
PeopleWorldwide Consulting Pte Ltd

THE terror threat is like a cancer growing within society – the risks are real and uncertain, the cancer cells propagate and spread in uncertain ways. The attacks are usually random and arbitrary since the radicalisation of individuals is as unpredictable as their attack formats.

Early detection is still key and instead of discovering the activity late at Stage 4, we can eliminate and neutralise the threat at Stage 1 through active monitoring from the citizenry who must all play a part in the fight against terrorism.

Apart from being vigilant about the growth of such cells in societies and monitoring of self-radicalised individuals and groups, Singaporeans must report any suspicious group that promotes extreme ideologies or engages in deviant practices. We should not leave it to only the Ministry of Home Affairs or the police.

Cancer cannot be fought with fear but with positive

assertiveness. Terrorism too must not be fought with fear but be dealt with through citizens' collective assertiveness.

Benedict Soh
Chairman
Kingsmen Creatives Ltd

POLITICAL leaders speaking openly about the real threats of terrorism is a step in the right direction. Singapore has experienced threats as well as real bomb explosions in the city over 50 years ago, lest anyone should forget.

Individuals and society at large should be mentally prepared for any such attack; at least a state of panic can be avoided. There should also be more concrete steps to ensure that all strata of society will be united and in sync, should any terrorist event actually happen.

Patrick Liew
Managing Partner
Greenpro Capital

OUR defence against a terrorist attack is only as good as the readiness of the last person on the street to prevent, respond to, and recover from such an attack.

Therefore, every Singaporean should take responsibility for his own security when he's in Singapore or overseas. He should stay vigilant in reporting suspicious activities and helping to prevent a terrorist attack.

In case of an emergency, he should know how to ring-fence himself and the people around him while at the same time, know how to live normally without falling into a state of unhealthy fear and paranoia.

Joshua Yim
CEO

Achieve Group

A TERRORIST plot to attack Singapore from Batam Island was unexpected. Its foiling serves as a real wakeup call to all of us.

As we go about life in our comfortable citadel, we should not and cannot take things for granted for the terror threat is real and could strike us.

In the wake of this incident, it is imperative to educate the public and heighten terrorism prevention in order to protect our country and community against these schemes.

Our national security forces, in cooperation with the international league of anti-terrorist forces, augment our efforts towards acting against these brutal units that create havoc in our civilised world.

However, stakeholders ought to do their part in educating their employees about how to take measures against such acts.

The full list of views from CEOs
is available at
<http://business-times.com.sg>

Phillip Beniac
Regional Vice-President, Asia Pacific
Qlik

Singapore is at an important crossroad today with vast opportunities to become an even more competitive, modern, and liveable country.

As we work towards becoming a smarter city, empowering businesses and people with data, and improving our infrastructure, we should also be leveraging data for social good. By using data in more agile ways than ever before, and connecting it with people and ideas, we can improve the lives of Singaporeans, their health, and their environment.

Clement Goh
Managing Director, South Asia
Equinix

An issue facing Singapore as a data centre hub is adapting to a rapidly evolving technology landscape. With the rise of fintech and IoT, there is an increased need to provide better connectivity between back-end networks and applications for businesses to deliver value-added services.

By leveraging an interconnected platform that links multiple cloud and networks service providers, businesses are able to adapt more quickly to new technologies, scale up globally, accelerate time to market and improve business performance.

Boon Liang Seng
Director, Southeast Asia
Lutron Electronics

Climate change is a silent yet serious issue that threatens not just Singapore, but the entire planet. Even as Singapore celebrates her 51st birthday, we must keep in mind our ties with Mother Nature and the climate pledge we made as a nation.

Lutron regards the overconsumption of electricity as the biggest challenge to sustainability. Lighting can contribute up to 21 per cent of electricity usage in a commercial building. As such, we encourage all to reduce power consumption through lighting control technology such as daylight harvesting, lighting dimmers and occupancy-based sensors.

Lee Fook Chiew
Chief Executive Officer
Institute of Singapore Chartered Accountants (ISCA)

As Singapore crosses the half-century mark, it's timely for the country to reflect on how it can position itself amid the changing economic landscape for sustained growth. To achieve this, we need to leverage Singapore's highly skilled human capital, and encourage our workforce to be ready for the jobs of tomorrow and adopt a lifelong learning mindset. The accountancy profession is no exception, and needs to constantly develop its skills. Regardless of future changes in the economy, the fundamental attributes of ethics and integrity, which is the bedrock of the accountancy profession, remain key to Singapore's future economy and reputation as a financial hub. Recent cases of financial lapses have shown that there cannot be investor confidence without a commitment to ethics and integrity. In this regard, Singapore's recent move to set up dedicated departments to combat money laundering and strengthen enforcement is in the right direction.

Yaj Malik
Executive Vice-President and Managing Director
Sage Asia

Singapore has come a long way in establishing itself as a key business hub. In driving Singapore's economy, both multinational corporations and small & medium enterprises (SMEs) play significant roles in nation building. While SMEs make up 99 per cent of the businesses here, many struggle to keep pace, regionalise and manoeuvre in an increasingly digital business landscape. SMEs need to be empowered with the same opportunities larger enterprises have with technology.

This allows them to perform and contribute more productively to Singapore's economic growth. Automation, big data, IoT and cloud are some areas that SMEs can embrace to gain insights, make better decisions and achieve business expansion. All these help SMEs to circumvent their resource limitations and better focus on business outcomes.

Gery Messer
Managing Director, Asia Pacific
CenturyLink Technology Solutions

As Singapore embarks on the journey to the next jubilee, we see digital transformation and innovation as both opportunity and challenge for the nation. A holistic approach to development is necessary for us to evolve. Singapore has already taken progressive strides towards creating a smart nation and continues its quest for improvement. Being a part of this outstanding nation, we must all do our part as it will require our collective involvement to stay relevant and help achieve its end goal. We must encourage every leader, organisation, business, and individual to be open to change to propel Singapore forward.

Toby Koh
Group Managing Director
Ademco Security Group

The security of Singaporeans' unity will be tested from economic, religious and social angles. Our government has a challenging task to ensure every Singaporean is economically viable in the ever changing business landscape. The continual push for upgrading through education is one key tool. Inevitably, a major act of terrorism will strike Singapore one day.

We need to continue building upon the glue that will keep us cohesive through trying times as one people. It is our duty as Singaporeans to defend our common ideology, our peace and our homeland from destructive influences which will come from different mediums and channels. We need to protect our country so that the next 50 years will be even better for our future generations.

Daniel Ng
Senior Director, APAC
Cloudera

Since its Golden Jubilee, Singapore has continued to make progress in becoming a smarter and more technologically-enabled nation. Improvements in our transportation system and the use of data analytics in healthcare are some benefits that we are already seeing from the government taking a data-driven approach to decision-making and improving lives.

However, all these are only possible thanks to the data professionals working in the background. The demand for skilled data professionals will only continue to grow across both the public and private sectors as we drive towards an increasingly digitalised world. It is therefore crucial that we have the right policies and programmes in place that will allow us to continue to cultivate talents in the area of data and analytics.

Kong Chee Min
Chief Executive Officer
Centurion Corporation Limited

Amidst the growing threat of global terrorism, maintaining harmony across all stratum of society matters more

than ever. A society built around the inclusiveness of all racial and religious groups is not only pivotal to countering both external and homegrown threats, but can also inculcate a sense of belonging.

At Centurion, we believe that the migrant workers residing in our dormitories are an integral part of the community. They are also our partners in strengthening Singapore's collective resilience. We hope that every year, Singapore can continue to progress from racial and religious tolerance to acceptance, and eventually to mutual appreciation.

Marc Dragon
CEO
Y3 Technologies

The only constant is change. That is so applicable today.

A rising China, an emergent middle class especially in Asia, the accelerated pervasiveness of technology, the seeming democratisation of information, and the shifting balance of power between the traditional and new global corporations – these and many more are macro-issues facing Singapore and the world.

However, I feel that still the single biggest area that Singapore would need to address is education.

The need for our education system to be relevant, the need to educate Singaporeans to the realities of the very competitive world, and the need to learn and explore outside of Singapore

Chia Ngiang Hong
President
Singapore Green Building Council (SGBC)

As an island city defined by the numerous buildings dotting its surface, Singapore's built environment remains critical to the country. From housing and workplaces to recreational spots, the demand for more buildings will rise as our population continues to increase. Therefore, we have to be more efficient with our construction methods and building design while still ensuring the sustainability of our environment. We can "go green" with a variety of different initiatives and programmes, but the general public must also reciprocate the efforts made and play their part as well.

Robin C Lee
Group COO
Bok Seng Group

So much is happening in the world that no one can put a finger on what is going on. So, instead of attempting to predict and influence how the world should be, the best way to survive and thrive is to be a cohesive and progressive nation in the face of the VUCA world we are finding ourselves in.

At home, plenty has been done in the past years to address ground issues such as ensuring the care of our seniors, curbing the liberal hiring policies on foreigners, taming runaway property prices and improving public transport reliability. However, one of the biggest issues remains our shrinking and inverted-pyramid population which warrants more attention. A healthy population growth augmented with extensive public infrastructures is critical to sustaining our economic activities that keep Singapore ahead.

Karl Hamann
Chief Executive Officer
QBE Insurance (Singapore) Pte Ltd

Singapore's small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) comprise 99 per cent of all businesses locally, employ more than 70 per cent of our workforce and contribute nearly half of Singapore's GDP.

Clearly, the Republic's continued economic success relies on a thriving SME community. However, our research shows that many SMEs here are underprepared for dealing with common business interruptions that can cause loss of income. In fact, we found that one in seven smaller Singaporean SMEs still have no business insurance. The continued evolution and increasing sophistication of Singapore's SMEs, as they strive to compete in today's environment, will be an important issue going forward.

Ronald Lee
Managing Director
PrimeStaff

One of the biggest challenges that a mature economy such as Singapore faces is stagnating growth.

We need to hasten the economic restructuring process, which has been ongoing for several years now, and quickly identify new areas of growth that will help Singapore retain its competitiveness. Many companies have already begun moving out of Singapore and this does not bode well for the economy.

It is also critical that we develop a stronger framework to bolster the core Singaporean labour force. The acute manpower crunch especially in certain industries is hurting businesses that are already struggling in the face of global economic headwinds and a sluggish market.

Dolly Goh
CEO
Singapore National Co-operative Federation (SNCF)

While the government can introduce measures and infrastructure that are more elderly-friendly in view of the ageing population, it is important that we embrace self and mutual help to address rising social needs and reduce dependency on government-driven solutions. For example, like-minded Singapore residents can come together to form co-operatives which are regulated social businesses to help themselves and others. Like any other businesses, co-operatives need to be viable and sustainable to do well and do good. Examples include Silver Caregivers Co-operative and The Good Life Co-operative which engage and provide their members with quality support and healthcare services.

George Chang
Vice-President
Fortinet APAC

Economists have forecast a slow global economy for the next several years. To thrive in such an environment, Singapore businesses must get more creative, become bolder, and increase collaboration with industry stakeholders.

Encouraging a culture of innovation at the workplace will boost creativity. Harnessing new technologies will also help. In tandem with the greater use of IT though, the risk of cybersecurity breaches rise. Enterprises must put in place appropriate measures to protect their intellectual property and client privacy.

Becoming bolder means companies need to move out of their traditional comfort zones, and enter new markets or businesses. Increasing collaboration will let firms tap a larger business ecosystem. Singapore companies must look beyond their traditional partners and tie up with organisations that can put them on new pathways to growth.

Francis Fong
Managing Director
SAS Singapore

Manpower is our greatest resource and grooming our talents must be continuous to ensure they are well-equipped in this competitive landscape. Analytics will play a big role



PHOTO: DELOITTE SINGAPORE

Philip Yuen
Chief Executive Officer
Deloitte Southeast Asia and Singapore

Singapore celebrates this National Day amidst continued economic slowdown and global uncertainty resulting from significant political changes in other parts of the world including Brexit and changing leaderships in the UK and USA.

Within Singapore, digital technology increasingly permeates our way of life, bringing with it opportunities to innovate, and the challenges of data and cybersecurity. Jobs are evolving, and skills upgrading is becoming more essential to keep the workforce relevant. The threat to national security is real and it is utmost important to keep Singapore united as one people.

Even with the obstacles, the road ahead for Singapore is bright, with the government committed to address these issues and grow the future economy, and the people taking pride in the strength of its unique, cohesive multi-racial and cultural society.

in disruptive technologies like machine learning and cognitive computing, and our workforce must be agile enough to harness them to its best potential.

To alleviate Singapore's burgeoning analytics skills gap, we have launched new initiatives like the Smart Nation Sandbox Environment to kickstart innovation in Smart Nation solutions and capabilities. This will allow businesses, government agencies and local technology companies to build their analytical capabilities that will play an important role in the Smart Nation journey.

Rick Scurfield
President
NetApp APAC

Singapore has always been future-focused, but the biggest challenge it faces as it moves into its next half century is how it will maintain its relevance and attraction as the region's leading business hub.

The digital transformation of cities, and the businesses and people that call them home, is happening at a rapid pace. To ensure Singapore stays ahead of the digital revolution and brings its vision of a smart city to life, it needs to continue to harness transformative, data-driven insights and put them into actionable intelligence.

It also won't be enough for Singapore's infrastructure to be future-ready – its people must be too. While Singapore has been investing in enhancing its people's capabilities, the demand for IT talent is growing exponentially. Even as new technologies, to some extent, mitigates this manpower shortage, the speed of change demands an ever-growing supply of strong IT talent.

Despite these challenges, I am confident that Singapore remains well-positioned to be a global leader, and home to both the region's and world's leading businesses.

Reuter Chua
Head
ACCA Singapore

While Singapore's openness to global trade has been our source of growth in the last 50 years, it is likely that future growth will depend more on regional opportunities.

To overcome increasing market complexity, we will need to depend on the uniquely Singaporean government-and-business partnership, to develop opportunities that will help build a new robust and interconnected regional economy.

Smart technologies and increasing market access present both opportunities and threats; this is where the success of government initiatives, like SkillsFuture and Smart Nation, and partnership with influential global professional bodies can drive fundamental improvements in infrastructure and human capital to support the future information-driven economy.

Patrick Liew
Managing Partner
Greenpro Capital

Local enterprises, especially SMEs, are struggling through the double whammy of an economic slowdown and rising business costs. They operate in a tight labour market and face headwinds competing with online businesses and other direct and indirect players in an open and global environment.

As disruptive technologies change landscapes of the marketplace, SMEs have limited size, strength, scale and scope of operation to respond to the changes.

Perhaps the authorities can look into how to strengthen strategic and long-term support and services to help SMEs transform business models, identify new opportunities, and strengthen competitive edge and value addition.

Kim Douglas
Vice-President & MD, SEA
SapientNitro and Razorfish

There's little doubt that the global economic situation presents challenges for countries worldwide. In 2015, the Singapore economy grew just 2 per cent. Moving forward, Singapore's biggest test therefore will be how it maintains a strong economy.

Fortunately, Singapore has a clear focus around where opportunity lies – in transforming the economy through enterprise and innovation.

Singapore's size – and that of its workforce – and relative lack of natural resources can be a challenge. Hence it must build up expertise and skills in new high-value areas that can act as a catalyst to scale businesses without the need for more "people" or "raw materials".

In short, we have entered a new era of business transformation, and in order to scale and sustain a robust economy, businesses will need to rethink the way they go to market. Technology and the "thinking" around it will sit at the very heart of Singapore getting there.

Sanjay Rohatgi
Senior Vice-President, Asia Pacific and Japan
Symantec

Cybersecurity continues to be a growing threat for Singapore, as companies and government agencies continue to face attacks. Symantec's Internet Security Threat Report volume 21 revealed that globally half a billion personal records were stolen or lost last year, and we saw a record total of nine mega breaches.

As we progress towards our Smart Nation Vision, cybersecurity needs to be embedded from inception – whether a local or national policy!

But it's difficult to take on the threat landscape alone. Symantec works with governments and law enforcement partners globally to protect the world's information. By working with our industry peers and governments across the world, we can better protect and manage the onslaught of these threats.

Lim Soon Hock
Managing Director
PLAN-B ICAG Pte Ltd

It is all about meeting the expectations of Singaporeans and delivering the promise of a better life. In this regard, the underpinning issues of low fertility, ageing population, high costs of living, and the threat of terrorism will have to be tackled. Singapore will have to do a better job of planning for the future, as any under-planning is bad planning. The government can listen more, through many of the committees, such as the Committee of the Future Economy, and that for a Smart Nation, SkillsFuture, etc, that have been set up, to ensure that we are not repackaging old policies as new ones for the future.

Annie Yap
Group MD & Chief Strategy Officer
AYP Group

The world is experiencing dramatic changes, and Singapore is similarly undergoing various transformations. Traditional manufacturing industry has been greatly buffeted by the economic slowdown and industrial upgrading. Instead, emerging industries such as cleantech, artificial intelligence, robotic automation, and biotechnology are on the rise. Meanwhile, population aging has placed great pressure on society. As a leader in the HR consultancy and recruitment industry, one of my concerns is whether our labour market can adjust and adapt to these fluctuations and rapid change. And whether Singapore can overcome these challenges may depend on how fast we can expand the workforce in key industries and equip our people with the skills in demand.

Zaheer Merchant
Regional Director (Singapore & Europe)
QI Group of Companies

Singapore, like the rest of the international community, faces the rise of global terrorism, which is undoubtedly the biggest and most serious challenge as we celebrate our 51st National Day. Apart from the killing of innocent lives, terrorism, through its vast and varied network, seeks to influence and change the political and economic order, and social stability. This is achieved by terrorist organisations being funded either from legitimate or illegitimate sources. In this respect, Singapore's financial institutions can and must maintain a robust surveillance system to disrupt the financial flows used to fund terrorist networks.

Singapore also faces the imminent challenge of an ageing population. This affects our ability to sustain a vibrant economy and to remain relevant. Not least, as a multi-racial and multi-cultural society, the need for citizens to live harmoniously is more imperative than ever in the face of global events. As a nation, our greatest strength lies in our unity in diversity and certainly, as we mark our 51st year of independence, this is a core value that we must reaffirm and reinforce if we are to remain successful.

David Leong
Managing Director
PeopleWorldwide Consulting Pte Ltd

As Singapore celebrates its 51st year as a nation, we must continue to reorientate our economic, political and social relevance within Asean, and with the rest of the world.

Brexit is an example of how UK's problems with Europe can create issues and opportunities for Singapore. Or consider how the Kra Canal opening may impact Singapore's maritime interests. The idea of digging a shipping canal through southern Thailand is not new but is gaining traction because of China's One Belt One Road initiative. So it is about how Singapore can leverage on the Belt and Road initiative to carve out a useful trampoline role for others to jump onto China's huge consumer market through us.

Hence the biggest issue is for Singapore to preserve our economic leverage and relevance among giants in the region and around the world so as to keep this little red dot humming and beating in tandem to the global heartbeats.

Kimi Jiang
Vice-President, Asia-Pacific
Hotel Reservation Service (HRS)

In the face of the ongoing economic downturn, growth in Singapore's travel tourism industry has taken a dip. Business tourism, nevertheless, remains bullish, largely supported by the strong MICE segment. Businesses that build their efforts around a strategic and sound travel management programme that is streamlined and more consumer-centric will benefit in the long term. After all, traveller centricity is the new frontier of travel management and making this a priority will play an immense role in enhancing not only the consumer experience, but Singapore's travel ecosystem as the centre of a bustling travel network in this region.

Derrick Chang
COO
PSB Academy

Mr Heng Swee Keat said last year that education alone will not guarantee Singapore's success. Technological and socio-economic "disruptions" will continue to impact jobs, and in the face of growing uncertainty and talent shortages, the challenge to raise productivity becomes ever more pertinent.

Hence, PSB Academy's mission continues to be to groom industry-ready talents with skills critical to the future economy. The launch of our \$515 million Future Academy initiative reaffirms our mission, and with our industry partners, strengthens our focus on evolving education to meet the needs of the changing modern workforce, by taking an active, concerted role in upskilling, and reskilling, our Singapore core for our Smart Nation.

Singapore leaders visit Nathan in hospital

They express sadness at former president's grave condition

Lee Min Kok
and Yuen Sin

President Tony Tan Keng Yam headed a line of Singapore leaders and retired office-holders in government who visited former president S R Nathan in hospital yesterday after he suffered a stroke.

The President and his wife Mary were among the first to visit Mr Nathan, 92, at the Singapore General Hospital (SGH) in the afternoon.

He said he and his wife were saddened by the news and "will keep Mr Nathan in our prayers".

Others who went to see him included Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon, Acting Prime Minister Teo Chee Hean and Defence Minister Ng Eng Hen. Emeritus Senior Minister Goh Chok Tong and former Speaker of Parliament Abdullah Tarmugi were also among his visitors.

Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong, who is on an official visit to the United States, said he was saddened to hear of Mr Nathan's "grave condition".

He also posted on his Facebook page a picture of a maple tree Mr Nathan had planted at the Singapore Embassy in Washington, DC where he was ambassador from 1990 to 1996. "He made many good friends for Singapore, and planted



At the Singapore General Hospital to visit Mr Nathan yesterday were (above) President Tony Tan and Mrs Tan, and (below) Acting Prime Minister Teo Chee Hean and Mrs Teo. They were among the Singapore leaders who visited the former president after he suffered a stroke. ST PHOTOS: ONG WEE JIN, MARK CHEONG

many seeds, including this beautiful antique Littleleaf Japanese Maple," Mr Lee wrote.

Mr Goh wrote on Facebook that the attending doctor told him Mr Nathan's vital signs were stable, but that it was "too early to say how he would progress". Earlier, he told reporters at SGH: "He is a fighter. He has gone through this many times."

Mr Nathan had a stroke in April last year and was at SGH for nearly three weeks. He had been undergoing dialysis for kidney failure in recent months. Mr Goh said they last met three or four months ago in Mr Nathan's home in Joo Chiat.

One of Mr Nathan's latest public appearances was in end-May at the launch of the book *Majulah! 50 Years Of Malay/Muslim Community In Singapore*.

Former Senior Minister of State Zainul Abidin Rasheed, who was at the book event, told reporters he met Mr Nathan last week. "He was

in top spirits and talking about the contributions of the Malay/Muslim community," Mr Lee wrote.

Mr Abdullah said that although people knew Mr Nathan had been ill for some time, the news that he had a stroke was still very shocking. "I think all Singaporeans are quite shocked and concerned."

Dr Ng disclosed on Facebook that Mr Nathan had written to him last week, saying he had a stroke a year ago and recovered. "He then added pensively that he had 'soldiered on and hoped to stay active for another year, before I call it a day'."

"What a remarkable man, I thought to myself. It could not be easy, but even at this age and with declining health, Mr Nathan still wanted to contribute and make a difference in the lives of others, at least for another year," he wrote.

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Graduation joy may turn to job hunt blues amid economic gloom

Olivia Ho

Amid the tossing of mortarboards and joyful jump shots that characterise university graduation season, the gloom of entering a sluggish economy looms on the horizon for young job seekers.

Recruitment experts believe that the class of 2016 will enter a slower job market than last year's.

Randstad Singapore country manager Jaya Dass said: "Fresh graduates are coming into a global economy that is... experiencing slow growth and where large multinational corporations aren't undergoing massive expansion."

Graduates hoping for entry-level jobs in these MNCs might find fewer opportunities, she warned.

The National University of Singapore (NUS) and Singapore Management University held their graduation ceremonies last month, while those at Nanyang Technological University are ongoing.

Preliminary figures from the Ministry of Manpower (MOM) released last Thursday painted a gloomy picture of the labour market.

The unemployment rate for Singaporeans and permanent resi-

dents was 3 per cent last month, the highest since end-2010. Layoffs also reached a seven-year high.

In a survey of 89 companies by Human Capital Singapore and Remuneration Data Services, 45 per cent had frozen or plan to freeze recruitment this year, compared with 27 per cent last year.

But there are still bright spots. ManpowerGroup Singapore country manager Linda Teo named financial technology - or fintech - as one of the most promising industries.

"With the Government investing resources in developing fintech, there are plenty of opportunities for fresh graduates to consider."

She suggested they go into payment or personal finance start-ups, or even explore start-ups in blockchain technology, a new transaction technology.

Digital marketing and e-commerce are other areas of growth. Adecco Singapore country manager Femke Hellemans said: "Fresh graduates looking to enter the media, public relations and advertising industry can expect good prospects."

NUS Business School senior associate director of career services Sybil Fitzgerald suggested graduates contemplate roles in the grow-

ing healthcare sector.

Other sectors with a dearth of takers are engineering and sales. In a recent graduate placement by recruitment website Glints, only eight out of more than 500 applicants keen on people-centred roles wanted sales careers.

In contrast, finance remained oversubscribed, with more than 100 fresh graduates applying for an internship at a boutique investment firm. Glints co-founder Oswald Yeo said: "Job seekers should be open to alternatives or parallels to finance, including fintech start-ups."

Employers are also increasingly on the lookout for those with digital skills. Mr Sanjay Modi, Asia-Pacific and Middle East managing director of job site Monster.com, pinpoints social media management, search engine optimisation and analytics, and user-experience design as some of the most desirable skills.

Fresh graduates should not turn their noses up at contract roles, said Kelly Services vice-president and country general manager Foo See Yang. "Sometimes due to attrition or business expansion, companies may offer them permanent positions in the future."

NUS political science graduate Ernest Puey, 25, is looking for a media job but is expanding his search to corporate communications.

He said: "My key considerations are how far my first job sets me up for the rest of my career. But sometimes you have to take what you can get. I'm not at that stage yet, but if things get from bad to worse, being patient can take me only so far."

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Rise in EP qualifying pay could affect bottom lines, say observers

Joanna Seow

Recruiters and companies said the move by the Ministry of Manpower (MOM) to raise the qualifying monthly salary for Employment Passes (EP) would likely place a strain on businesses' bottom lines, but it could help to draw Singaporeans back into industries where pay was depressed.

Foreign professionals will need to be paid at least \$3,600 from next January if firms want to hire them on EPs, up from \$3,300 now, the ministry announced last week.

There were 187,900 EP holders here as of last December. The MOM did not provide the number of workers on EPs now or the number currently earning between \$3,300 and \$3,599 who would be affected when their passes are up for renewal.

With the tight labour market and a limited supply of local workers to substitute for foreigners, observers said the move would likely add to business costs.

"Couple that with rentals and wages still being quite high. It could contribute negatively to companies' investment intentions and foreign direct investment," said Credit Suisse economist Michael Wan.

If firms have less to invest in business development, this could ad-

versely affect productivity growth.

Bosses of some small and medium-sized enterprises in the information technology and engineering industries voiced concern the move would ultimately affect their bottom lines and competitiveness.

Mr Ang Yuit, chief executive and founder of digital consultancy The Adventus Consultants, said his firm had tried, and failed to hire a local software developer about three years ago. Now, his team of 11 still has no software developer, and he has to outsource the work to people overseas. He said: "There's a logic to the change but the impact will be on smaller firms which don't have so many processes or staff to deal with all these human resource changes."

"Maybe a more calibrated approach may be needed. We should look at which industries, which size of business and which job type we are really trying to deal with."

But others said the impact may not be as large as some EP holders already get paid more than the minimum as they are in higher-skilled jobs where there may not be such talent among local workers, said Mr David Leong, managing director of PeopleWorldwide Consulting.

Even if the applicant meets the minimum salary criteria, he may not be given an EP, as "besides remuneration, the candidate's educa-

tion qualification, experience and job scope are also taken into consideration in any EP application", said Ms Linda Teo, country manager for ManpowerGroup Singapore.

Employers could hire foreigners on the next tier of work passes - S Passes, which have a qualifying salary of \$2,200 - though this could mean having to adjust their headcount as there is a quota on the foreigner-to-local ratio for these passes, as well as a monthly levy.

Alternatively, they could expand the job scope of EP holders to justify the higher pay.

A positive outcome would be if firms facing rising labour costs take the plunge to invest in technology, said DBS economist Irvin Seah. An upward push on pay could also help raise wages in sectors where they were previously depressed, and entice local workers to join them.

At environmental engineering firm Netatech, human resource director Elinda Gan said she has had to rely on a few EP holders to fill engineering and procurement roles as she could not find local workers to do the jobs. But things appear to be changing. "We've started to be able to find local engineers and business analysts. I think the economy is softening," she said.

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电召后闹失踪 还恶整司机

1德士司机‘永久禁用’Grab服务

林刚贤 报道 lxleng@sph.com.sg

SMRT德士司机被指恶整司机，滥用私人召车服务及骚扰司机，被Grab下达“终身禁令”。

一名男子常在三更半夜电召私人德士Grab后却“闹失踪”，或谎报上车地点和目的地，恶整私人召车司机。

《海峡时报》报道，这名男子相信是一名三四十岁SMRT德士司机郭彼得（译音）。

男子被指曾以乌敏岛为目的地召车，自去年11月起的九个月不断进行各种恶作剧。

除了提供假资料，郭彼得常在司机抵达他注明的上车地点后，给司机诸多借口不上车，例如说他已搭德士离开。

这不仅害司机白跑一趟，男子还不自行取消召车预约，迫使司机得取消预约，导致司机的预约取消率提升，影响了司机的薪金奖励。

Grab对一名滥用电召服务SMRT德士司机下达“终身禁令”。（档案照）



网上骚扰女司机

男子还在网上骚扰Grab的女司机。Grab旗下的司机沈小姐告诉《海峡时报》，男子透过WhatsApp群组及面簿群组骚扰她。

沈小姐申诉，虽然网上有其他司机埋怨男子恶作剧的行为，但对方却看她是女人，觉得容易对付才骚扰她。

沈小姐指男子说她是“chio bu”（美女）和长得不错，做出很歧视女性的言论。

对方也被指一直从沈小姐个人面簿取得她儿子照片后，在面簿公开和在网即时聊天群组转载。

即使沈小姐再三向男子表示不满，要求他不要这么做，但男子仍继续转载她儿子的照片，而沈小姐上周三（20日）已报警处理。

Grab: 严重个案转交警处理

私人召车平台Grab表示，调查旗下司机的申诉后，决定永久禁止男子使用电召服务。

Grab发言人说，“我们谨严对待滥用Grab服务平台的人。无论滥用者是司机还是乘客，都会撤除对方使用平台的权力，严重的个案将转交警方处理。”

Grab发言人强调，这是孤立的个案，不能代表广大有专业精神和互相尊敬的司机社群。

SMRT将调查

SMRT将进行调查，但一般相信司机以个人名义在私人时间进行的活动，不受公司干涉。SMRT企业资讯与通讯副总裁丹戎复询问时说，SMRT正调查此事。

据了解，郭彼得虽是SMRT旗下的德士司机，但他以个人名义进行恶作剧，又无造成他值班时服务上的疏失，在没有“失职”投诉的情况下，一般相信SMRT不能采取任何行动。

明年1月1日起 就业准证最低薪金 上调至\$3600

周自慧 报道

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就业准证薪金门槛调高至3600元，人力专家指这对聘用真正高素质外籍员工的雇主影响不大，但那些报大数的雇主可能面对阻碍。

人力部昨天宣布，明年1月1日起调整就业准证（Employment Pass）最低薪金要求，从目前的3300元上调至3600元，确保它能跟上本地薪金增长步伐，维持外籍劳动队伍的素质，更好地与本地劳动队伍互补。此前，人力部在2012年将门槛从2800元调至3000元，并在2014年进一步上调至3300元。截至去年12月，我国共有18万7900名外籍员工持就业准证。

新调整设有过渡期，现有准证如果在明年1月1日前到期，可在旧标准下更新延长准证三年；如果准证在明年1月1日至6月30日到期，也可在旧标准下延长准证一年。

仁立国际执行董事梁昌国指出，最新的300元增幅是正面的调整，真正有高科技的就业准证持有者，其实薪金早就超过这个新门槛，因此对职员和雇主影响都不大。

“但另一方面，这能减少薪金在这个数目边缘的外籍员工取代新加坡人的效应，这个族群之后只能申请特别准证。”

议员吁人力部 严防企业报大数



▲人力专家指出，我国不少持就业准证的外籍员工有高素质和高技能，甚至担任管理层职位，因此就业准证薪金门槛调高对企业运作影响不大。（档案照）

提高门槛 公平求职

工运议员呼吁人力部严防企业和外籍员工，为满足薪金要求而为新水报大数。

梁昌国指出，确有不公公司看中就业准证无需付人头税，也没有配额限制，而夸大员工薪金以符合就业准证要求，再私下要求员工退还部分薪金。

“薪金收入须反映职员每月的账单中，门槛调高了，可能也会造成一定的阻力。”

负责专业人员、经理和执行业务（PME）事务的全国职工总会助理秘书长郑德源，在面簿贴文指出，调整能让就业准证最低薪金要求跟上我国白领的中位数薪金增长步伐，确保我国继续引进高素质外籍员工。但他同时提醒，一些企业和外籍员工可能会“耍花招”为新水报大数，因此呼吁人力部严防这样的做法。郑德源今早也说，门槛提高让本地和外国PME都有公平的求职机会，不会让大家觉得请外国人较“便宜”。

专助40岁以上专业人士 职业起航计划 为25%待业人士找到工作

刘玮琳 报道

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我国经济环境持续低迷，为帮助40岁以上的待业专业人士，政府去年实施的职业起航计划，已为25%待业人士找到工作。

职业起航计划（Career Activation Programme）由全国职工总会和社会企业卓悦（GioCareers）合作推出。

计划主要是让40岁以上的待业专业人士、经理和执行业务（Professionals, Managers and Executives, 简称PME）参与，让他们与有类似经历的义工进行一对一的谈话，摆脱事业困境。

全国职工总会助理秘书长郑德源今早在记者会上表示，计划取得良好反应，去年7月实施至今已有超过100名待业的专业人士参加。

“而当中有25%成功找到适合的工作。”

接下来计划将按需求扩大，帮助更多中年及年长的待业PME。



▲全国职工总会助理秘书长郑德源表示，职业起航计划得到了良好反应。（档案照）

郑德源指出，计划现有30名“职业起航义工”（Career Activists），他们也是中年PME，曾面对过事业上的起伏。

“我们会让义工接受进一步的专业训练，取得证照，才能更有效地帮助其他PME。”

卓悦总裁林城伟补充，希望计划能帮助更多待业专业人士，不仅是帮助他们找到适合的工作，更让他们能在工作领域上发挥所长。

商业或公共大楼改建及加建 须建无障碍设施

林佳敏 报道 limkamin@sph.com.sg

从明年起，现有商业及公共设施大楼在改建及加建时，都必须建造无障碍设施。

国家发展部长黄循财今早出席新加坡通用设计周（Singapore Universal Design Week）开幕典礼时，针对现有建筑宣布了新条例。

在新的强制条例下，业主在大楼进行改建及加建工程（addition and alteration works）时，须打造基本的无障碍设施。这包括在大楼入口处设立无障碍设施，有一间方便轮椅使用者的厕所等。所有商业大楼及公众常进出的公共设施大楼如学校、民众俱乐部、熟食中心等，从明年起都必须遵守这项新条例。

为鼓励更多业主在改进或扩建建筑时采纳通用设计概念，建设局将延长“无障碍建设基金”的申请期限至2022年。此外，高达4000万元基金的涵盖面也将更广，包括为建筑增添视觉和听觉无障碍设施等。每个建筑可呈交多达两项设施的申请，让更多业主受益。截至今年6月，已有135份申请获批准。



▼明年起，商业及公共设施大楼在改建及加建时，都必须建造无障碍设施。（档案照）

若能当半天总理 你会做什么？

李总理邀国人发表答案 有机会参加国庆群众大会

若能当半天总理，你会做什么？

今年的国庆群众大会将在8月21日（星期天）于工艺教育中学院举行。李显龙总理的面簿今早发布消息，邀国人以“若能当12小时的总理，你会做什么？”为题，在社交媒体上发表自己的答案，再以#InviteMeToNDR的专属标签（hashtag）分享，然后连同个人全名和身份证号码电邮到ndr@pmo.gov.sg，就有机会受邀参加国庆群众大会。



#InviteMeToNDR

▲国人只需回答“若能当12小时的总理，你会做什么？”，就有机会受邀参加国庆群众大会。（李总理面簿）

佛欢喜日

盂蘭盛會

ULLAMBANA 2016

3rd-20th Aug 2016

七月初一至十八

请电: 64663720

特别项目

面燃大士 保安祈福大法会

\$12 每名

六月三十 2/08 8pm (星期二)

祈福如来灯★

\$12 每盏灯/每名

供养日期: 七月初一至七月十八 2/08 - 20/08

佛陀欢喜月之 佛光照耀禄位

\$20 每名

特别推荐于16岁以下的孩童

* 本寺将在 17/08 七月十五 (星期三) 11am 回向功德予参与者

增福项目

佛前上供盂兰圣盆

\$338 每份 (个人/合家/公司)

据记载，佛在《盂兰盆经》中说，若人欲报现世与过去七世父母恩情，并累积无量福德，应于农历七月十五佛欢喜日，敬供盂兰圣盆予诸佛菩萨与十方大德僧众。

(盂兰圣盆敬供: 七月十五 17/08 11am)

设席祭拜祖先或 普施冤亲债主

\$328 每桌 (每名/合家/公司)

普施仪式将在七月十一 (13/08), 星期六 3pm 举行 (仪式将由南都仁波切带领，请注明是否出席当天仪式)

设席普施饿鬼

\$198 每桌 (每名/合家/公司)

普施仪式将在七月十二 (14/08), 星期日 3pm 举行 (仪式将由南都仁波切带领，请注明是否出席当天仪式)

超荐往生者

\$20 每名

超荐历代祖先往生父母

\$108 每名堂上历代祖先牌位可加至四位往生者姓名

婴灵莲位(流产/堕胎)

\$20 每名

\$12 上师赐名

追荐累世冤亲债主

a) \$20 每名

b) \$138 每名或公司

追荐累世我所食之众生

\$20 每名

追荐累世我所残害之众生

\$20 每名

感恩供品★

予祖先/往生者/婴灵/冤亲债主/无主孤魂

\$10 每套 (每名)

敬供时间: 11am - 2pm

★ 本寺将安排敬供日期

THIS WEEK'S TOPIC

How will Singapore's Climate Action Plan impact your organisation's business operations?

Fighting climate change

Victor Mills
Chief Executive

Singapore International Chamber of Commerce

EACH of us, as individuals and companies, directly cause climate change by our collective behaviour. Climate change affects everyone on the planet. It is, therefore, our collective responsibility to act now to reduce emissions. Singapore's Climate Action Plan provides a national framework for each of us to think about and adopt. Individuals can reduce food waste and the amount of water and power used. We can recycle and reduce the amount of plastic bags we use. Businesses can further reduce packing materials and recycle them. Changing behaviour starts with each person and each company. The future is in our hands.

Tham Sai ChoyChairman of KPMG Asia Pacific and
Managing Partner at KPMG in Singapore

SINGAPORE'S Climate Action Plan offers a robust framework to build a climate-resilient Singapore. Together with the aim of a carbon-efficient Singapore, the action plan provides businesses challenges as well as opportunities.

KPMG is helping clients, across sectors, to develop a holistic long-term view of operating in a low-carbon economy. It has been critical that climate change implications and mitigation plans are weaved into the business strategy that then flows through the entire organisation – board level downwards. Our work has helped businesses to find responsible cost-saving avenues and surprising new business opportunities, laying the foundation for a more sustainable Singapore.

By carefully planning and executing our energy conservation measures, we have accelerated our goal, set in 2010 to reduce our 2015 carbon footprint by 8 per cent, to achieve a 27 per cent reduction and win a Green Mark Gold award in the process. We continue to explore opportunities for a carbon-efficient operation and share our experience as widely as we can.

Axel PannesManaging Director
BMW Group Asia

SUSTAINABILITY characterises the thoughts and actions of BMW Group. With BMW i vehicles in particular, from design to production, from the useful life of the vehicle to its disposal, every detail is based on sustainability. In 2014, BMW launched the BMW i3, an emission-free car, in Singapore, and has since also invested in public charging stations island-wide.

As Singapore aims to reduce emissions intensity by 2030, BMW will do its part by continuing to introduce emission-free and low-emission vehicles to the market. BMW will also further invest in electro-mobility R&D, including exploring the use of renewable resources to produce energy for electric vehicles.

Steve O'NeilChief Executive Officer
REC

AS a leading solar panel manufacturer in Singapore, REC is passionate about providing affordable clean energy and welcomes Singapore's Climate Action Plan to be more carbon-efficient. At 40 per cent, the power sector is the largest single contributor to greenhouse gas emissions. The new emissions targets will encourage companies to embrace renewable energies and boost Singapore's position as Asia's hub for clean energy.

REC's solar panels serve the need for eco-friendly rooftop and floating systems in Singapore's limited space. Our polysilicon is made using planet-friendly hydroelectric power. Since REC commenced production in 2010, we have reduced our own carbon footprint by more than 25 per cent.

Alexandre ParilusyanVice-President of Business Transformation in Asia Pacific
South

Dassault Systèmes

AS Singapore puts in place its Climate Action Plan, it is time for its people to participate in a renewal process towards sustainable urban solutions. We are working with government agencies to develop Virtual Singapore, a platform that allows city officials, business leaders, and citizens to better collaborate to tackle new planning challenges and meet new requirements in housing, mobility, security and resilience of the city. With digital 3D technology, we are also continuing to address sustainability challenges in the virtual world to improve the real world – enhancing sustainability in many of the world's products, including airplanes, automobiles and buildings.

John Keung

Chief Executive Officer

Building and Construction Authority

AS the agency overseeing the reduction of the carbon footprint of the buildings sector, the Building and Construction Authority (BCA) is an integral part of the government's Climate Action Plan. Since the launch of the BCA Green Mark scheme in 2005, we have been building up industry expertise in green buildings and will continue to enhance the eco-system, together with the Singapore Green Building Council and other stakeholders, to ensure Singapore meets its 2030 target of greening 80 per cent of our buildings. Following the success of the Zero Energy Building @ BCA Academy, we will be intensifying R&D efforts to push the energy efficiency boundary, with an aspirational goal to achieve low-rise, net positive buildings and mid-rise, zero energy buildings. As we shape Singapore's future built environment and change the way we build, BCA will continue to push ahead our efforts to mitigate the effects of climate change.

Chia Ngiang Hong

President

Singapore Green Building Council



FILE PHOTO

ing owners will see reduced electricity bills for their buildings. SCBC has made it easy for building owners to identify companies with the expertise to undertake energy retrofits and guarantee performance by accrediting Energy Performance Contracting (EPC) firms.

Building owners who do not have the capital to undertake retrofit works can look to the Zero Capital Partnership scheme. Under the scheme, EPC firms will assist building owners with financing and applications for government incentives.

Uantchem LohCEO, Asia Pacific
Black Sun Pte Ltd

Environmental, Social and Governance are the three pillars of sustainability reporting. ESG is about a long term vision that integrates the profit needs of businesses and the aspirations of society. The Climate Action Plan is Singapore's contribution towards strengthening the E pillar. At Black Sun, we help organisations on their sustainability reporting journey by integrating their business plans with the Climate Action Plan. E is for Environment. E is also for Everlasting.

Wong Heang FineGroup CEO
Surbana Jurong

TACKLING climate change from an urbanisation perspective requires a paradigm shift in anticipating issues, planning and implementing solutions as well as investing in R&D to find new and cost-effective ways to deal with problems like floods, droughts and other natural calamities. Our sustainability projects bring about greater energy efficiency in buildings.

In the BCA SkyLab, for example, we realised our client BCA's vision in designing a rotating test laboratory for new building technologies in the tropics using active facades and high-efficiency cooling systems which reduce the carbon footprint of buildings.

In the Guangzhou Knowledge City, we worked with Sino-Singapore Guangzhou Knowledge City to implement a robust set of environmental performance requirements for the master plan which guides developments in the city to become less resource-intensive and more energy-efficient.

Boon Liang SengDirector, Southeast Asia
Lutron Electronics

LUTRON advocates sustainability and regards the over-consumption of electricity as the biggest threat to the environment. As lighting can contribute up to 21 per cent of electricity usage in a commercial building, we have installed a light and energy management system in our Singapore office to monitor and maximise energy usage.

In order to fulfil the Climate Pledge as a nation, we encourage corporations and consumers to reduce power consumption through technological means. Lighting control devices and methods such as daylight harvesting, lighting dimmers and occupancy-based sensors can save up to 60 per cent lighting energy and 15 per cent HVAC (heating, ventilating, and air conditioning) energy in commercial spaces per year.

Paul Henaghan

President – Southeast Asia

EMC

EMC has had a long-standing commitment to reduce the impacts our business has on the environment. Our focus is on reducing emission from our own operations, within our supply chain, and providing innovative technology that enables our customers to be more efficient. Our 2020 goals underscore this commitment. In 2015, EMC's Singapore facility received the Building and Construction Authority (BCA) Green Mark Gold Certification, recognising our facility for its energy efficient design and operation.

Teh Ban SengSenior Vice-President, Global Sales
Seagate Technology

AS a global technology company, Seagate is committed to environmental sustainability in all the communities we serve.

We continually look for ways to enhance energy efficiencies and reduce the amount of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from electricity across our manufacturing facilities, including our Woodlands plant. Singapore's Climate Action Plan to introduce initiatives

Dipal PatelGeneral Manager Pharmaceuticals
GlaxoSmithKline Singapore

GSK is committed to mitigating the environmental impacts of our manufacturing processes and our goals are aligned with Singapore's Climate Action Plan. Our global value chain aims to be carbon neutral by 2050 and our manufacturing sites in Singapore play a pivotal role as they are pioneering our newest and most innovative green technologies.

For example, our new Continuous Manufacturing facility in Jurong uses 75 per cent less solvent and 95 per cent less water than before. It also converts heat from exhaust gases to provide 100 per cent of the site's steam requirements and cuts diesel consumption by 80 per cent.

Additionally, our Enzymatic Amoxicillin antibiotic manufacturing process at our Quality Road facility will reduce carbon emissions by 25 per cent, making it a sustainable, environmentally friendly process that produces the highest quality pharmaceutical ingredients for our patients.

Rick Scurfield

President

NetApp APAC

DATA will play an endemic role in helping the Lion City fulfil its vision for climate sustainability. The climate indicators that are the foundation to the Climate Action Plan are just the surface of the level of depth and breadth of data that are and will be needed in order to make informed, impactful solutions for the future.

As a company whose primary connections are in the valuable currency of data, NetApp believes that Singapore's efforts are intimately aligned with our business. As part of its Smart Nation vision, Singapore is already wired to use data smartly to achieve the goals it has set to combat climate change.

Sean TanSingapore General Manager and Chief Business
Development Officer

iProperty Group

SUSTAINABILITY is especially important for the real estate industry amid rapid urbanisation across Asia. In early 2016 we launched the iCities Conference, a regional initiative focused on sustainability, including climate change. The annual event brings property developers, architects, government agencies and industry professionals together to create and exchange ideas, in line with the Singapore Climate Action Plan's objectives. One of the main challenges discussed at this year's event was how a city can be sustainable and liveable. Building design, traffic congestion, energy consumption and environmental impact are key concerns.

Stakeholders must work together to ensure that these issues are managed effectively, by implementing policies and incorporating green practices into building construction and city infrastructures.

Dan Marjanovic

Singapore Office Country Head

Simmons & Simmons

THE legal profession is a significant part of the broader business community and, as lawyers, we spend a substantial part of our waking hours in the office. It is therefore important to recognise that our behaviours at work and our business activities have an impact on the environment.

As part of our wider Corporate Responsibility commitment, we are continually looking to improve our environmental performance through proactive management of our environmental management system. Key to that is our environmental policy, which I am pleased to say has strategic objectives consistent with those of the Singapore government's Climate Action Plan as its key platform, including the focus on reducing carbon emissions and encouraging collective action, whether it be from our people or our contractors and suppliers. The unveiling of the Climate Action Plan serves as a timely reminder of the importance of such initiatives and reinforces our resolve in trying to make a difference, from doing simple things such as avoiding wasting water and paper, to larger and more complex initiatives such as the procurement of green energy alternatives and the installation of energy efficient lighting systems and auto sensors.

Lim Soon Hock

Businesses can also play a vital role in conserving water, conserving our biodiversity and greenery, in flood protection, waste management and recycling, as well as improving structural safety of buildings.

To ensure that it will not be "no action and talk only", perhaps as part of this ambitious plan, the government can consider offering tax incentives or credits to businesses to defray some of the costs of implementing the measures needed. As many CEOs may not live long enough to see the ill effects of little or no action in reining in climate change, there will be a natural tendency to be short-sighted and to continue to focus on profits as a top priority.

Toby Koh

Group Managing Director

Ademco Security Group

ADEMCO is already doing our part in using technology to strive for a carbon-efficient Singapore. Two examples: Firstly, our client, one of the largest local banks in Singapore, deployed our fully integrated security solution with remote monitoring and video analytics to virtually eliminate attendance to false alarms. Verification of alarms is done within minutes and cuts the need for the traditional guard response by vehicle and unnecessary carbon emissions.

Secondly, our intelligent access control platform and video analytics can dynamically provide data to the building's climate controls so that air-conditioning can be regulated according to the number of people present in any work area and therefore eliminating unnecessary and excessive cooling and energy wastage.

The technology is here and available. Carbon efficiency can easily be enhanced today by tweaking our processes.

Patrick Sim

Senior Vice-President

Orange Business Services Asia Pacific

AS a leading global ICT solutions provider, Orange recognises that climate change is an unavoidable global challenge. We have been working closely with our clients to utilise digital solutions to not just improve productivity but also to enhance substantiality.

For example, in smart buildings, our Internet of Things (IoT) solutions can help enhance many aspects of energy efficiency including adjusting room temperatures and humidity, or dynamic power consumption and the matching of occupancy patterns to energy use. In the transport sector, our IoT-enabled fleet management solutions save time, as well as insurance and fuel costs, by route optimisation, driver behaviour monitoring and vehicle maintenance cycle management.

As Singapore transitions into an increasingly digital environment, organisations can do their part in reducing their carbon footprint by leveraging technological solutions to boost environmental substantiality.

David Leong

Managing Director

PeopleWorldwide Consulting Pte Ltd

SINGAPORE'S Climate Action Plan opens doors to new businesses in green technologies and smart city development that will be carbon-lite. Reducing energy consumption and carbon footprints will be the key plank for these businesses. It is likely that this wave of innovations, implementation and technology roll-outs demand high numbers of engineers and technicians to make the plan works.

For our recruitment business, it is highly likely that we have to start sourcing for these talents with strong engineering and technical skill-sets to support the needs for these businesses. It is hoped that these new industries – like the water industry – will create goods and services that can contribute to our GDP.

In short, the Action Plan can help industries to commercialise innovations in carbon-lite projects, coastline recovery and enlargement, structural augmentation to prevent flooding and smart eco-city development. The new Jurong CBD's masterplan is one such eco-friendly project with car-lite initiatives that can be rolled out with real implementation. Singapore can then develop a talent pool and export these multi-disciplinary skills.

Annie Yap

Group MD & Chief Strategy Officer

AYP Group

THE Climate Action Plan is projected to transform the economic landscape of Singapore. It will create numerous opportunities in industries such as clean technology, waste and water technology, green ICT.

The economy will have to beef up human capital in these emerging industries. There will also be growing demands for sustainability management positions within organisations. And that will be a chance, and also a challenge, for HR consultancy and recruitment firms like us. We will have to ensure that we will be able to provide these talents to the labour market.

And with sustainability becoming a major concern in society, internally we will have to emphasise more on energy saving during our daily operations, and be a socially and environmentally responsible enterprise, to the benefit of our company branding and business.

Zaheer Merchant

Regional Director (Singapore & Europe)

QI Group of Companies

THE QI Group has begun looking into efficient energy use by upgrading our infrastructure as a medium to long-term energy conservation measure. In product packaging, we are looking into drastically reducing the amount of plastic and other non-biodegradable materials used, along with resource-efficient sourcing, reduction in paper usage and so on. Our CSR arm invests in vulnerable communities – many of these climate change challenges disproportionately affect the disenfranchised in society in issues such as water scarcity, high food prices and basic sanitation.

All these efforts are driven by the need to inculcate a sustainability approach in corporate strategy to align our organisation's interests with climate change mitiga-

SAF Day

Fine-tuning fitness training for soldiers

New centre to review programmes and equipment to better suit specific vocations

Calvin Yang

Fitness training for soldiers will in future be more targeted, and tailored to suit the specific army vocation they are in.

Also known as vocation fitness training, it is based on the rationale that soldiers in different vocations perform different tasks, which require the use of certain muscle groups.

So the fitness training regime for an infantry soldier, for example, may focus on building, among other areas, strength and agility based on the tasks the infantry needs to be proficient in.

This is among several developments that the army is looking to establish, as it navigates challenges

such as manpower constraints, said army chief Melvyn Ong on Wednesday.

It comes as the army looks into improving injury prevention among its soldiers, as well as the rehabilitation of injured servicemen, said Major-General Ong in a media interview ahead of SAF Day yesterday.

To redesign the fitness training curriculum, the army will set up a Centre of Excellence for Soldier Performance.

Its tasks include reviewing fitness programmes and the design of training equipment to suit a soldier in a particular vocation.

A trial of the vocation fitness training, done with the 4th Battalion, Singapore Infantry Regiment, has found that it resulted in very high injury prevention among the

soldiers, said Maj-Gen Ong, 41, who took over as army chief last year.

"There is some success to date on this and we want to continue doing this," he said.

"We want to make sure that everybody counts, and our commanders all understand that every soldier is a valuable resource."

To make up for the shrinking manpower pool due to falling birth rates, the army is tapping new technology to do more with fewer people. In future, there may even be unmanned ground vehicles assisting with camp patrols.

However, Maj-Gen Ong cautioned that technology is a double-edged sword. "It is necessary for the things that we need to do, and to overcome some of the manpower limitations."

"But... it is also a limiter because, sometimes, you want to move faster, but technology does not allow you to move as fast."

The army will also be more motor-



Troops from the Army Deployment Force, the SAF's new anti-terrorist unit, responding to a mock attack during a demonstration on Wednesday. ST PHOTO: DESMOND FOOT

ised and networked, said Maj-Gen Ong, allowing it to fight at a higher tempo.

"You get information, you move. This is a very good way of fighting, because you are always faster than the enemy."

Training areas in the western part of Singapore will be optimised to improve training realism.

Currently, plots of training land there may be used for various purposes.

In future, these will be connected as a battle circuit, allowing mo-

torised forces to train on a larger scale.

Besides the local training areas, the army also uses simulation and overseas spaces.

Maj-Gen Ong also highlighted the growing threat of terrorism, and spoke on some things that are being done to tackle this, among them, the setting up of a new unit, the Army Deployment Force.

In addition, an Island Defence Training Institute will be set up to prepare full-time national servicemen and operationally ready na-

tional servicemen to take on a wider range of security tasks. These tasks include joint patrols with the police during heightened threat conditions.

But even as more is being done to strengthen the army's training system, Maj-Gen Ong stressed the importance of every soldier.

"Every soldier counts," he said. "So when they come in, we need to give them a meaningful experience."

calyang@sph.com.sg



Minister for Culture, Community and Youth Grace Fu reciting the pledge at the SAF Day combined rededication ceremony at the Singapore Institute of Technology, together with its president, Professor Tan Thiam Soon (third from left) and Chief of Navy Rear-Admiral Lai Chung Han (second from right). ST PHOTO: LAU FOOK KONG

NSmen reaffirm commitment to defend S'pore

Wang Tianjie

Representatives from more than 300 companies gathered for the SAF Day combined rededication ceremonies held around the island yesterday.

The ceremonies, which were attended by more than 680 NSmen and their employers, were held to reaffirm the commitment of both employers and employees to the defence of Singapore.

They were held at the Singapore Chinese Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCCI), Safra Punggol, Singapore Institute of Tech-

nology and Biopolis.

Minister for Defence Ng Eng Hen, who was at the SCCCI ceremony, urged Singaporeans to support national service.

"On this SAF day, the men and women of the SAF reaffirm their individual pledge to perform their duty to the best of their ability and to faithfully and diligently protect Singapore with their lives," he said.

"What we inherited from our founding generation - our home, our Singapore - is precious and our way of life is worth defending together."

Local training and consultancy

firm eLC was one of the companies represented at the Singapore Institute of Technology.

Its human resources executive, Ms Ivy Ang, said as part of eLC's efforts to support NSmen, it rewards those who do well in their Individual Physical Proficiency Test.

"Once they get their awards from the Ministry of Defence, we will match the dollar-for-dollar value," said Ms Ang. "If they need to take time off for extra training, we will give them time off."

Dr Lim Boon Huat, managing director of Rohde & Schwarz, a German electronics company, said it was important for employers to un-

derstand and accommodate the needs of employees.

"Although we are a German company, we are still Singapore-based, we still have to respect the culture and society here," said Dr Lim.

"As corporate citizens of Singapore, it's important for us to contribute back to this country that has given us a lot of support."

Besides the rededication ceremonies, the SAF Day Parade was held at Safti Military Institute, where the winners of this year's Best Unit Competition were given awards.

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Operational demands still take priority over vocational preferences

Linette Lai and Jeremy Koh

The move to match interests with national service vocations is a good step forward, but the young men heading for enlistment will also have to manage their expectations, defence experts said.

This is because operational requirements are still paramount, meaning enlistees may be posted where soldiers are required.

For example, said associate professor Bernard Loo, a defence analyst at the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS), there is always great demand for infantry.

"If you look at the army alone, the reality is that the single greatest human resource requirement is in infantry," he said. "I don't think you're going to escape from that reality anytime soon."

In his annual interview leading up to SAF Day yesterday, Defence Minister Ng Eng Hen announced that, for the first time, new enlistees will get to indicate which vocations they would want to serve in. The change will kick in from the end of next year.

Their preferences will be taken into account after they are posted to the Singapore Armed Forces (SAF), police or civil defence.

But he said operational needs remain the main consideration when postings are being made.

Mr David Leong, who is managing director of PeopleWorldwide Consulting, said that a recent discussion he had with polytechnic students showed that their interests geared towards the "sexier" parts of the SAF - like the air force.

"(The move) shows that the Government is listening, but now with that expectation you will also have

some disappointment," he said.

Mr Vikram Nair, chairman of the Government Parliamentary Committee for Defence and Foreign Affairs agreed that not everyone might get what they expressed interest in.

He said: "In my own time, I think at some time in Officer Cadet School, we were asked to pick which of the vocations we wanted, but the reality was that the largest manpower needs were infantry regardless of what we picked."

Defence analyst Ho Shu Huang, an associate research fellow at RSIS, said the new system is an improvement upon the current one, which "only factors in aptitude and not interest".

"That said, this initiative will unfortunately be a black box - it is hard to see to what extent indicating a preference will have on an enlistee's eventual posting as that will still largely be determined by manpower requirements," he said.

He stressed that it is important for the authorities to build public trust in the efforts they take to accommodate every individual's preference. "If such trust isn't built, the whole process could be dismissed as mere lip service," Mr Ho said.

While a number stressed the need to manage expectations, teens heading for the army liked the idea of having a choice.

Sixteen-year-old Tan Aik Wen, who is likely to be among the first few affected by the changes, said: "I think it'll have a positive impact on the kind of output the SAF will see as well in terms of productivity and morale."

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Additional reporting by Rei Kurohi

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THIS WEEK'S TOPIC:

What's your take on the inclusion of Singlish terms in the Oxford English Dictionary?

A patois paradox

Joshua Yim

CEO

Achieve Group

THE inclusion of 19 words from Singapore presents a paradox: the OED continues its tradition of cataloguing all the uses of all the words in the English language. Yet these particular words will have little resonance outside of Singapore or South-east Asia.

The primary function of a language is always to allow efficient, clear and unambiguous communication between speakers.

Our economy and our society need to be fully integrated into the broader community of English speakers, however homely "chilli crab" may seem.

In other words, we may not want to risk leaving our foreign friends and business counterparts feeling *blur*.

Seah Kian Peng*

Chief Executive Officer (Singapore)

NTUC Fairprice Co-Operative Ltd

SINGLISH has a special pathos. Earlier this year, when speaking about the Singaporean identity in Parliament, there was a section of my speech which was peppered with Singlish.

It is something that could not have been done, say, in the first session of the Singapore Parliament, simply because Singlish is a language that has grown up alongside Singapore.

The danger however, is when Singlish becomes the water that fishes swim in – they do not really know what it is because they have never been without it. Singaporeans must master English well enough to engage at the highest levels.

Singlish is a language of our hearts, but if Singaporeans cannot speak anything but Singlish, then we *jia lat lor*.

*Mr Seah is a Member of Parliament for Marine Parade GRC (BT: *jia lat lor*: will be doomed)

Jean-Michel Dumont

Chairman

Ruder Finn Asia

Sacre bleu! (French) There is hubbub (Gaelic) and angst (German) among the linguistic intelligentsia (Russian), and the *bourgeoisie* (French) and *ang moh* (Singlish) are running *amok!* (Bahasa).

Language – whether it be English or any of the 6,500 languages in the world – is always developing over time as it adapts to changes in culture and the transition to new forms of communication.

English can be frustrating in its inconsistencies but has become the most versatile and adaptable language, the international language of business.

But it has drawn heavily, and profitably, from its old Empire and other global and ancient languages.

It is impossible to stop this evolution; in fact we should embrace it.

This is certainly the case in the communication industry.

These changes in language, and the growth in the number of words we can use to deliver a message, make for the best communication, whether on social media or in advertising.

**John Bittleston**

Founder & Chair

Terrific Mentors International Pte Ltd

LANGUAGE is a tool of communication. To be efficient it must be usable by the people who need it. As language is also a living entity, those same people will contribute to it, enrich it and develop it. There are many versions of English which is why it is one of the most widely-spoken languages in the world.

The Oxford English Dictionary is not intended to contain only "Oxford English". It should embrace all versions of English. As Goethe said: "The strength of language does not lie in rejecting what is foreign but in assimilating it."

Yap Boh Tiong

Chairman

Mileage Communications Pte Ltd

LANGUAGES constantly evolve, and English is no exception. That more and more Singlish terms are being accepted in the Oxford English Dictionary is a sign that lexicologists highly regard the complexities and nuances of Singaporean English.

Oftentimes, Singlish terms convey a meaning that simply cannot be expressed otherwise. While I applaud the evolution of the English language, it should not be replaced by Singlish.

At the right place and time, Singlish should be allowed – it's part of what makes us uniquely Singaporean.

As a public relations practitioner, communicating effectively with stakeholders locally and globally is paramount.

It means using language that can be easily and clearly understood, and not patois. So, when it comes to business and education, let's stick to standard English – otherwise the *ang mohs* will *blur, lor*.

Dileep Nair

Singapore High Commissioner to Ghana

COGNOSCENTI who support the promotion of Singlish tend to be those who are able to switch quite effortlessly between standard English and Singlish. When the situation demands it, whether for work or social intercourse, they can use proper English.

On the other hand, those whose mastery of English is little beyond broken English liberally sprinkled with Singlish terms, are usually shut out of many jobs where communication skills in English are required.

To remain and thrive as a global city plugged into the world, Singaporeans must have a command of English that is internationally understood. This should not be compromised by any widespread acceptance of Singlish, other than in casual parlance.

Tham Sai Choy

Managing Partner

KPMG

WE are a global city. That is, by definition, one that not only receives foreign influences but also leaves its own mark on the world. Our shared Singapore language and culture define us; at the same time, our openness and our mobility project our identity to the global community.

There have been lively conversations, indeed some concerns, around the effect of local patois on our mastery of global languages. It is just as likely that it is the quality of our local language education which determines how Singlish is used, rather than the other way round.

Ronald Lee

Managing Director

PrimeStaff

PERHAPS many Singaporeans have mixed feelings about the inclusion of Singlish terms in the Oxford English Dictionary.

On the one hand it signifies Singapore's growing prominence on the world stage, and that is a wonderful thing in and of itself.

That said, however, I find the inclusion of Singlish words in the OED rather unnecessary, as such terms

**Sidney Lim**

Managing Director, South-East Asia

Protiviti Pte Ltd

IT'S definitely one of the more innovative ways to increase the number of words in the Dictionary or to stay relevant to today's Internet generation!

Jokes aside, as the benchmark and authority for what is deemed "proper English", the Oxford English Dictionary (OED) should not include commonly-used terms of any country.

Including such words would mislead the youth into justifying usage of these terms in their speaking and writing, and make it harder for educators to instill an acceptable standard of the English language. The consequences for word-based board games like Scrabble would be unthinkable.

are specific to Singapore culture and used only in our country.

If, for example, foreigners living in Singapore want to understand our local patois in order to better integrate into society, there is already a specific Singlish dictionary out there that they can refer to.

There is also a feeling of wanting to keep our national lexicon ours, as it's what makes us uniquely Singaporean. So having parts of our cultural heritage appearing in the OED and maybe even adopted and used by people around the world may possibly dilute our unique culture.

Thomas Wai

Director, Asia-Pacific

Talent Plus, Inc

I'M happy to see the Singaporean identity getting another international recognition. It shows how important globalisation is and how readily society embraces it.

Efficient communication is not only about using standard English, but rather it is about flexibility in adapting to the situation and individuals involved. We should always be mindful of our audience, as many Singlish terms consist of words originating from Malay, Hokkien, Teochew and Cantonese.

In an open economy like Singapore, our ability to speak and write properly would remain a distinct advantage for us to conduct business and communicate with the world.

Robin C Lee

Group COO

Bok Seng Group

SHIOK to see this actually happening!

Understandably some may find this an aberration, but to me it signifies that there is usefulness and good worth in Singlish; its recognition by the Oxford English Dictionary is a stamp of approval.

So chill, it's ok *lah*. Most of these latest entries are indeed uniquely Singaporean and they express our culture and way of life.

Their inclusion in the OED will definitely help others to appreciate the meaning and sentiment behind these words.

But I have a slight discomfort with choice entries such as "Chinese helicopter" – a derogatory term for a Singaporean schooled in the Chinese language, with limited knowledge of English. We intend to educate, not to emasculate.

Rosalynn Tay

CEO, Dentsu Aegis Network Singapore,

and Dentsu Singapore

WAH! I am so thrilled that our uniquely Singapore language is recognised by the Oxford English Dictionary!

Being in the business of strategic and creative communications, this helps put us on the world map. Nothing is more representative of Singapore than Singlish – you can pick out a fellow countryman instantly in London, New York or Dubai when Singlish is uttered.

I applaud the Dictionary editors for embracing cultural and linguistic diversity. Singaporeans should feel really *shioh* about this inclusion!

Lim Soon Hock

Managing Director

PLAN-B ICAG Pte Ltd

THE increase in the number of Singlish terms in the Oxford English Dictionary is an extraordinary achievement by the people of Singapore! We should all be proud of it!

The OED must have recognised the value of the added richness and our cultural idiosyncracies that these terms bring to the English language.

I would not be pedantic about their use. The concern that this will adulterate the purity of the English language is misplaced. Language, as spoken and written, reflects the culture and social ethos of a country.

The use of Singlish in daily life – so long as it is grammatically correct – creates opportunities for the world to embrace and understand our culture.

Annie Yap

Group Managing Director

AYP Group

IN my opinion, the inclusion of Singlish terms in the Oxford English Dictionary causes some confusion.

While some argue that this increases global awareness of our unique culture and that Singlish brings us together as Singaporeans, it is important to consider the message that the inclusion sends to the younger generation.

While Singaporeans identify with Singlish, such colloquialism contorts the meaning of the English language.

Moreover, as businesses work hand in hand with the government to promote the Speak Good English movement, the inclusion of additional Singlish terms only serves to hamper the good work already invested to inculcate a good command of the English language in our young.

T Chandroo

Chairman/CEO

Modern Montessori International (MMI) Group

SINGAPORE is a business hub that sees people of different nationalities, ethnicities and cultures. Singlish is often applied in a colloquial manner in the local context.

Therefore, to be understood by fellow Singaporeans and other nationals, it is best to speak and write English in a manner that would benefit everyone.

The government's efforts to raise the standard of English among Singaporeans should be supported. Though Singlish is a piece of who we are as Singaporeans, parents and teachers should shape a balance, limiting the use of Singlish to where and when appropriate.

Derrick Chang

Chief Operating Officer

PSB Academy

IT IS encouraging to see the OED's endorsement of phrases and words that resonate so closely with Singaporeans.

This sense of homegrown culture, now more relevant and recognised in the larger global community because of this validation, is truly a force to be reckoned with.

And particularly so as more Singaporeans demonstrate how fluently they can switch between colloquialism and professional business speak.

Yet beyond the lingua franca, the significance of Singlish serves to reflect how local, yet versatile and cosmopolitan, we truly are.

Our PSB Academy campus, with over 11,000 students from around the world, is a microcosm of this cosmopolitan hub.

We believe that only by embracing the spirit of a global world view will graduates emerge truly industry-ready, even if it starts with a simple dose of Singlish, exchanged over a fragrant cup of *teh-tarik*.

David Leong

Managing Director

PeopleWorldwide Consulting Pte Ltd

THE *blur ang moh* will not be so *sotong* anymore with the inclusion of our Singlish words in the Oxford English Dictionary.

It is not about coming to Singapore to eat our *char siu* and chilli crab in our hawker centres; it is about getting to know Singapore better on our terms – now deemed proper with OED accepting these Singlish words.

More *lahs* in sentences connote a certain casualness (of course *lah*) or humbleness (no *lah*). The inclusion of Singlish in the OED is one way the world is embracing our uniquely Singaporean style of speaking with emotional connotations.

It is quite *shioh* to know that the world takes notice of Singlish and if such sentence structures can appear in our national papers, it can therefore be said that some Singlish can be deemed proper.

So Singaporeans' *kiasu* ways have made it to the world stage. *Wah!*

■ Editor's note: While there's a time and place for Singlish, even in print, in certain contexts, as a business paper read not just by Singaporeans but also by international investors, The Business Times will continue to report in Standard Singapore English.

The full list of views from CEOs is available at <http://businesstimes.com.sg>

Low-wage workers may get pay rise

Govt considering National Wages Council proposal, but there is concern about higher wage costs amid downturn

Toh Yong Chuan
Manpower Correspondent

MARKET REALITIES

It will be harder to get employers' buy-in when the economy is down and workers are being retrenched.



MR DAVID LEONG, managing director of human resource firm People Worldwide Consulting, warning that minimum wage hikes cannot become "an annual routine".

Low-wage workers could be set for another round of pay hikes this year.

The National Wages Council (NWC) is expected to announce next week a recommendation to give low-wage workers a minimum pay rise. Its recommendation is currently being considered by the Government and, if accepted, will kick in on July 1.

This continues a push started by the National Trades Union Congress (NTUC) in 2012 to lift the salaries of low-wage workers.

That year, the NTUC lobbied for a \$50 pay hike for workers earning a basic monthly salary of up to

\$1,000. The NWC backed the move, which the Government subsequently accepted. It was the first time in nearly 30 years that the council specified a minimum dollar amount to increase workers' salaries.

The council continued in the same vein for three more years, raising the minimum built-in pay increase to \$60 in 2013. It proposed \$60 increases for low-wage workers in 2014 and last year as well. Last year, it also raised the salary bar to \$1,100.

When the latest round of wage talks started in March this year, unionists continued to push for a minimum "quantitative" pay hike for low-wage workers similar to the levels in previous years, a source said.

Labour chief Chan Chun Sing yesterday declined to comment on NTUC's position in the wage talks.

"I will give my comment when the recommendations are announced," said the NTUC secretary-general. "The NWC (announc-

ment) is coming out next week."

The 18-member NWC is made up of a chairman, six NTUC unionists, six representatives from employer groups, and five public-sector officials. It meets every year between March and May to set wage guidelines for companies.

It has not been revealed how big the latest hike might be. But even if the Government accepts its recommendation, it is not binding.

Only about six in 10 private-sector employers gave low-wage workers earning up to \$1,000 the minimum pay hike of \$60 in 2014, Manpower Minister Lim Swee Say told Parliament in January.

He added that the proportion of Singaporeans and permanent residents earning a basic monthly salary of up to \$1,000 from full-time work shrunk from 9.8 per cent in 2012 to 6.8 per cent in 2014.

A source said there is concern whether the council will back a fifth round of pay hikes for low-wage

workers this year because employers are worried about wage costs at a time when the economic outlook is bleak.

Council chairman Peter Seah hinted last year that the annual wage hikes could end, saying the NWC will carry out annual reviews on whether to continue recommending a fixed quantum.

Mr David Leong, managing director of human resource firm People Worldwide Consulting, said the four rounds of minimum wage hikes recommended by the council have improved the lives of low-wage workers. "It was through the sheer force of the NTUC that it happened," he said.

But he warned that the hikes cannot become "an annual routine".

"It will be harder to get employers' buy-in when the economy is down and workers are being retrenched," he said.

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More elder-friendly products on the way

Janice Tai

Elderly wheelchair-users often rely on family members for grocery shopping, especially if it involves heavy loads.

But now, senior citizens using wheelchairs can push trolleys – customised ones that can be attached to the wheelchairs – to pick up and pay for items in supermarkets if they want to.

Such customised trolleys are among several features that elder- and disabled-friendly NTUC Fair-Price supermarkets will have when the chain opens four more of such stores in the west and central parts of Singapore this year.

Two such supermarkets were set up in Bukit Merah Central and Lengkok Bahru last year.

Besides the wheelchair-friendly trolleys, there are call buttons at the supermarket entrance and along the rows of shelves, should



Visa may reduce use of one-time passwords

Jeremy Koh
and **Jalelah Abu Baker**

Credit card giant Visa is looking to make online transactions easier by cutting down the use of one-time passwords (OTPs) – the codes sent to customers' mobile phones when they enter their card details.

Visa's country manager for Singapore and Brunei, Ms Ooi Huey Tyng, said there are "growing issues" with the authentication method, such as the OTPs arriving late, phones being disabled while travelling, and the system being

essarily trying to take a hundred thousand dollars off you. They are trying to take a couple of dollars off you, so you won't really notice it," said Mr Gyde, who is group executive of security.

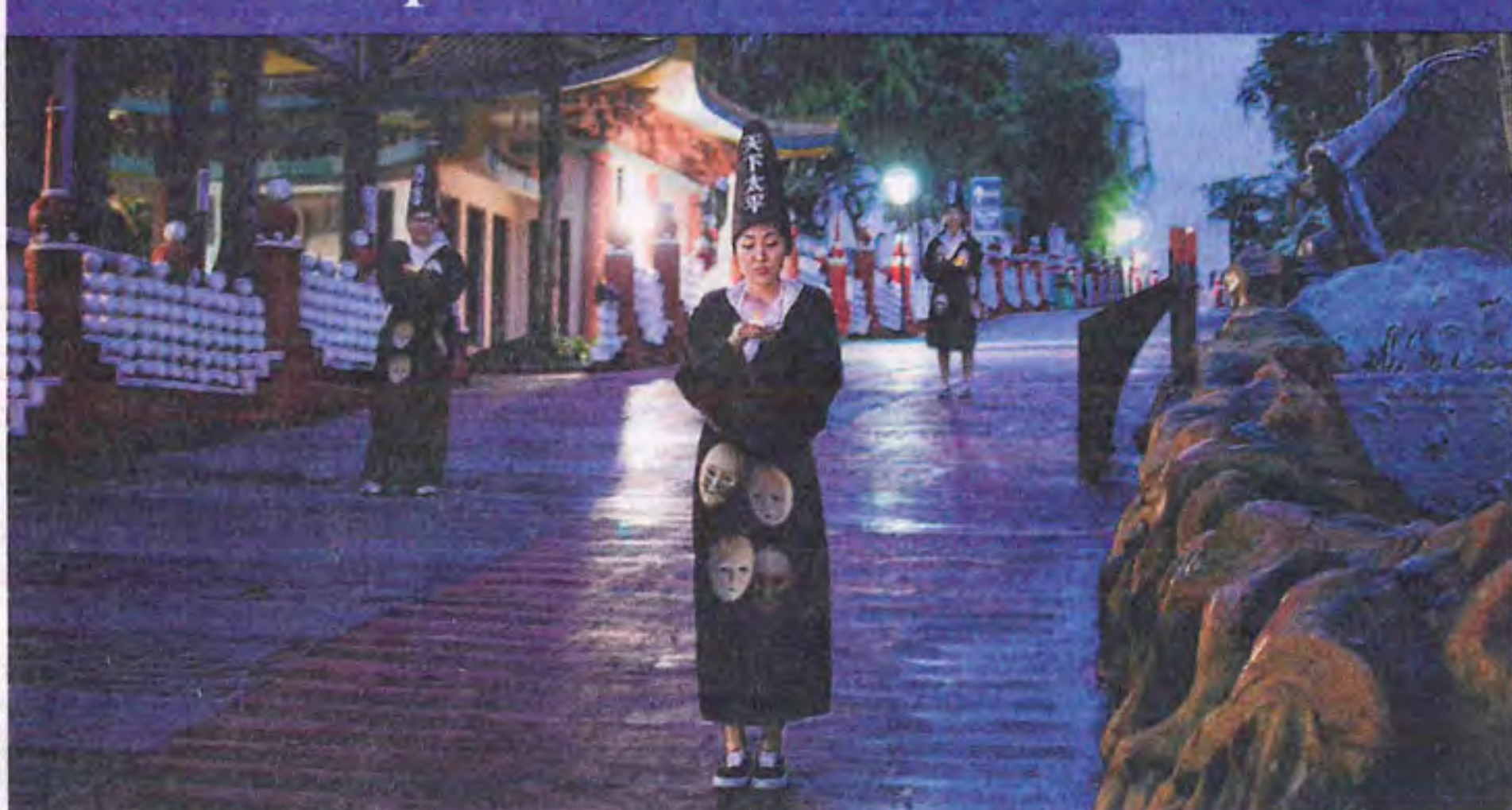
He added that the biggest drawback of the risk-based authentication approach is that the company managing the online transaction "has to be super diligent about updating their user profile(s)".

However, he also said risk-based authentication "is getting better by the day".

Their comments come after Ms

THE STRAITS TIMES

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EPL final-day drama: Man U match abandoned after bomb scare

The drama on the final day of the English Premier League (EPL) began even before kick-off. Manchester United's match against Bournemouth was abandoned after Old Trafford (right) was evacuated following the discovery of a suspicious package in the stands. United were pipped to fourth spot – and the final coveted Champions League place after cross-town rivals Manchester City drew 1-1 with Swansea, thanks to a strike from Kelechi Iheanacho (far right, with Aguero). But there was heartbreak for Tottenham, who surrendered second spot to bitter North London rivals Arsenal after being thrashed 5-1 by relegated Newcastle. The Gunners beat relegated Aston Villa 4-0. PHOTOS: REUTERS

SEE SPORT C13&14



Indonesia reviewing collaborations with Singapore over haze

Arlina Arshad
Indonesia Correspondent
In Jakarta

Indonesia is reviewing existing and proposed bilateral collaborations with Singapore on haze and environment issues, a senior Indonesian official has said.

The confirmation came after Environment and Forestry Minister Siti Nurbaya Bakar told an independent environmental news portal, foresthins.news, that some current collaborations would be terminated while upcoming ones would undergo a "substantial review process".

"This is a substantial step that needs to be taken. We have a set of clear and measured criteria in this review process," she was quoted as saying in last Saturday's report.

Her ministry's director-general of law enforcement Rasio Ridho Sani told The Straits Times yesterday that an assessment by the ministry's senior officials is under way. "Yes, we are reviewing our bilateral cooperation with Singapore related to many issues, not only forests and forest fires but also other environmental aspects," he said.

Ms Siti said the review is her ministry's initiative and "not a joint process with Singapore".

"We are going to only inform Singapore, at a later stage, of the existing bilateral collaborations that are to be terminated as well as those planned collaborations which will not go ahead," she said.

Singapore's Ministry of the Environment and Water Resources "has not received any official information from Indonesia" and, therefore, "did not wish to comment", a ministry spokesman said yesterday, adding that Singapore will continue to play its role in accordance with its laws, the Asean Agreement on Transboundary Haze Pollution and the principles of international law.

Ms Siti's comments came after Singapore's National Environment Agency (NEA) said last Wednesday that it had obtained a court warrant against an Indonesian company director who failed to turn up for an interview with the authorities in Singapore despite being served a legal notice to do so.

The director, whose name and company were not disclosed, was expected to explain his firm's measures to tackle fires on its land and prevent a repeat of last year's haze.

Last Thursday, an Indonesian Foreign Ministry spokesman said a "strong protest" had been lodged with Singapore over "some cases where Indonesian businessmen were interrogated". But Singapore's Foreign Ministry said it had not received any representations and added that it found the spokesman's remarks "puzzling".

Errant pulp and paper companies have been blamed for wild-fires in Indonesia that led to choking haze in the region last year. In line with the Transboundary Haze Pollution Act 2014, the NEA issued notices to six Indonesia-based firms. Two responded.

spite being served a legal notice to do so.

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REVIEW NOT A JOINT PROCESS

We are going to only inform Singapore, at a later stage, of the existing bilateral collaborations that are to be terminated as well as those planned collaborations which will not go ahead.



INDONESIAN ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTRY MINISTER SITI NURBAYA BAKAR, on her ministry's review of collaborations with Singapore.

Schemes to let people work while studying for degree

Govt working with universities, companies to launch pilot programmes for apprenticeship

Sandra Davie
Senior Education Correspondent

The much-vaunted German and Swiss system of apprenticeship – where students take on jobs and study for degrees concurrently – will be tried out at universities here.

Acting Minister for Education Ong Ye Kung, who is in charge of higher education and skills, said the Government is working with universities and selected companies to launch a few pilot programmes combining work and degree studies.

The details are being worked out and will be released later, but Mr Ong said that it will be a "different kind of university programme suited to this century, where businesses do not just offer internships, but step into the university

to shape the curriculum".

Under the Swiss and German schemes and some cooperative education programmes in the United States and Canada, school leavers take on jobs, but participate in a training programme where they alternate between work and studies.

The theory they learn in class is reinforced by practice at work. Companies, in fields as diverse as advanced manufacturing, IT, banking and hospitality, work with universities in drawing up the curriculum and assigning mentors to guide the students in their training.

Trainees are paid for their time, including in class. And both employer and employee generally hope that the apprenticeship will lead to a career with the company.

Mr Ong, who revealed the plan in an interview with The Straits Times, said that there is an increas-

ing convergence between work and study.

Whereas in the past, apprentices learnt from their masters over several years, companies now offer structured programmes and some have even set up their own corporate universities, he said.

Companies, too, are conducting research and making new discoveries. Knowledge creation is no more the monopoly of universities.

Mr Ong noted that work has also crept into universities. He said: "Universities now have an incubator space where students are teaming up with faculty, working on start-ups, setting up enterprises. So I expect tertiary programmes will increasingly be delivered by both institutions as well as industries."

Job experts welcomed the apprenticeship schemes at the university level. Human resource expert David Leong, who runs PeopleWorldwide Consulting, said combining work and degree studies will turn out highly productive graduates who can hit the ground running.

"The employee will not only have up-to-date knowledge on his field, he would have also developed all the necessary work skills and absorbed the company culture," he said.

Mr Leong, who served on the Applied Study in Polytechnics and ITE Review committee two years ago, said such schemes will help workers avoid the problem of "skills mismatch", or the gap between one's skills and the job market's demands.

For such a scheme to work, however, there must be attractive job placements with big companies.

Said polytechnic graduate Sebastian Tan, 20, who hopes to enrol in a cyber security degree programme at a local university next year: "I do see the value of working while studying, especially if you can tailor your degree studies to the knowledge and skills required in the job."

sandra@sph.com.sg

SEE EDUCATION B14

ANZ SIGNATURE
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YOUR LEGACY IS AS UNIQUE
AS YOUR SIGNATURE

Growing and preserving your wealth is key to your legacy planning.
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Kai Y Chan
 President, Asia-Pacific
 Carlson Wagonlit Travel

CURRENTLY, Singapore passport-holders travelling to Australia for business are eligible for a one-year visa with multiple visits. We are interested to see if the multi-year visas proposed under the Singapore-Australia CSP will apply to business travellers. Given the large number of Singaporeans making business trips to Australia, such a move would certainly be welcome as it would reduce the effort and cost of having to re-apply for a visa each year.

Chong Kee Sen
 President
 The Institution of Engineers, Singapore (IES)

THE pact includes greater mutual recognition of professional qualifications in both countries with priority for engineers, opening up more opportunities for the engineering sector.

Currently, IES's full signatory status in the Washington Accord (WA) already allows graduates of WA-accredited programmes in Singapore and Australia to practise engineering in each other's country. The Mutual Recognition Agreement signed between IES and Engineers Australia in July 2015 has also enabled an IES member to be accorded an equivalent level of membership in Engineers Australia.

This move will enhance our efforts in advancing the mobility of engineering practitioners between both countries and elevate the quality of engineering practices.

Katherine Cole
 Regional Director
 Hotels.com, Singapore, Australia and New Zealand

AUSTRALIA is already a prominent travel destination for Singaporeans. Based on our findings at Hotels.com, Singapore-based searches for Australian destinations went up 49 per cent last year from 2014. This is probably due to the strong Singapore dollar against the Australian dollar.

The Singapore-Australia CSP package is a big win for both markets; it is likely to increase travel between the two countries, and improve the tourism numbers. Especially with the multi-year visas for Singaporeans to Australia, we foresee that it will definitely be another strong driving factor to motivate locals to visit Down Under even more than they already do.

Thomas Wai
 Director, Asia-Pacific
 Talent Plus, Inc

THE new CSP between Singapore and Australia will have a

Philip Jeyaretnam
 Global Vice-Chair and Regional CEO
 Dentons Rodyk

"COMPREHENSIVE" and "strategic" are the right words for this partnership – significant enhancement for investment but also big steps in the equally critical areas of defence, arts and culture, science and education. Our firm – now part of a global law firm that includes a major Australian law firm as a member – has seen burgeoning investment by Singapore clients in Australia, and this will only grow over the next few years.

significant impact on business strategies. Businesses in Singapore and Australia have always been good trading partners. The CSP will encourage further communication and take cross-border exchanges to a new level, with freer movement for manpower and talents, mutual recognition of more professional qualifications, and greater collaboration on innovation. As our company does a lot of research and implementation work in the executive leadership and HR space, the CSP would give us access to new talents, and create new customers and revenue channels.

Annie Yap
 Group Managing Director
 AYP Group

AS a talent management firm, we value very highly the freedom of movement in human resources. The closer partnership would mean endless opportunities to cater to increased manpower needs in both Australia and Singapore. Attracting Australian talents would also be an opportunity for us to look into.

In addition, with growing demand for healthcare workers in Singapore, the healthcare industry is constantly short of professionals. Hence, the recognition of more allied health qualifications from Australia will mean in-

creased chances of cross-border hiring.

Derrick Chang
 COO
 PSB Academy

MORE than 6,000 students in Singapore have graduated from some of Australia's best universities via PSB Academy.

Prospects arising from the Singapore-Australia CSP are bright, as both countries unlock even more synergies in research and industry, which in turn will benefit Singapore students graduating from Australian degree programmes taught here. In partnership with universities that receive funding from Australia's billion-dollar National Innovation and Science Agenda, PSB Academy would be able to groom industry-ready talents to help drive Singapore's S\$16 billion commitment to innovation-led enterprise activities, as the country creates a future economy, and becomes the world's first Smart Nation.

David Leong
 Managing Director
 PeopleWorldwide Consulting Pte Ltd
 IF the CSP between Singapore and Australia is elevated to a



level like that between Australia and New Zealand, the relationship will take on a different trajectory. Not only would Singaporeans be able to freely access Australia's large hinterland and consumer markets, they would also enjoy cultural diversity, educational opportunities, innovation exchanges and freer formation of enterprises between the two countries. A lifting of visa restrictions will ease labour flows for both countries, creating new opportunities for businesses on both sides.

Patrick Liew
 Managing Partner
 Greenpro Capital

AS innovation is a key to the new economy, the possibilities for developing transnational research and development will help both countries move up the learning and value chains and open new opportunities for growth.

Our similarities with Australia will make it easier to co-create solutions. On the other hand, the differences will help us leverage complementary resources to achieve stronger results.

The challenge is to create the systems and conditions to resolve potential conflicts and build on the differences to encourage respect, cooperation, and achievement.

To do so, we need to continue to review and improve the partnership and deepen our relationship to meet the fast-changing demands of the new economy.

T Chandroo
 Chairman and CEO
 Modern Montessori International Group

FROM the standpoint of the early childhood education business, the boosting of people-to-people links will mean we can learn from Australian expertise, just as they can from us. This increased knowledge exchange will shed light on different perspectives and may even improve the way we do business.

The agreements in trade and defence will help create a more cohesive global exchange of talents, resources and intelligence. As a business person who is always looking towards expansion and the next big thing, the Singapore-Australia CSP package is a welcome nod in the right direction.

The full list of views from CEOs
 is available at
<http://businesstimes.com.sg>

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 AND IN THE MATTER OF
 MIDAS TOUCH INVESTMENT PTE. LTD.
 ACRA No. 201219594G
 (IN MEMBERS' VOLUNTARY LIQUIDATION)
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NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that pursuant to Section 308 of the Companies Act, Cap. 50, the Final Meeting of the abovenamed Company will be held at 781 North Bridge Road #02-00 Singapore 198749, on 15 June 2016 at 10.00 a.m. for the purposes of having an account laid before the meeting showing the manner in which the winding up has been conducted and the assets of the

DNB Bank ASA

INCOME STATEMENT

DNB Bank ASA		Amounts in NOK million	DNB Bank Group	
2014	2015		2015	2014
41 906	38 287	Total interest income	57 793	61 682

BALANCE SHEET

DNB Bank ASA		Amounts in NOK million	DNB Bank Group	
31 Dec 2014	31 Dec 2015		31 Dec 2015	31 Dec 2014
		Assets		

B POLICE FORCE NEW CAREER TRACKS B2
JUDICIAL COLLEGE KEEN INTEREST ABROAD B7

HOME



DESMOND TAN
MULTINATIONAL DRILL
TIMELY, SAYS BG B4

Yale-NUS adopts Latin honours system

Some students upset that college limits to 35% the number who can be awarded Latin honours

Amelia Teng

The Yale-NUS College has become the second institution here to adopt the Latin honours system, a degree classification used by American universities such as Harvard and Yale.

The system, which indicates the level of distinction a graduate has earned, uses nomenclature such as *summa cum laude* and *magna cum laude*. The Singapore Management University (SMU) also uses the terms.

But, unlike SMU which does not limit the number of students who can earn Latin honours, Yale-NUS has imposed a 35 per cent cap.

The policy, which was made known to students through an official e-mail in March, has drawn mixed reactions from them.

Some students said it would be hard to know for sure how they are faring each semester as their final honours level would be made known to them only at the end of four years. This is because they are not marked on a bell curve throughout the four years, unlike their peers at the National University of Singapore (NUS).

The Latin honours is on top of the bachelor's honours degree in arts or science that all students receive after completing the four-year undergraduate honours programme.

The top 5 per cent are awarded *summa cum laude*, while the *magna cum laude* goes to not more than the next 10 per cent, and *cum laude* to not more than the next 20 per cent.

There is also a cap within each major – no more than 60 per cent or six of the students (whichever is larger) will receive honours at the *cum laude* level or above.

Similarly, no more than 40 per cent or four of the students (whichever is larger) will receive honours at the



The Yale-NUS College awards Latin honours on top of the bachelor's honours degree in arts or science that all its students receive after they complete the four-year undergraduate honours programme. The college offers 14 majors. ST FILE PHOTO

HONOURS LEVELS MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Graduate recruiters are familiar with degree classifications, whether British or American. What they won't know are the specifics of the honours levels – that is left to the universities – but it does make a difference which level of honours you get, especially in the government sector and in multinational corporations.

MR PAUL HENG, managing director of the NeXT Career Consulting Group.

SCHOOL NAME MATTERS MORE

Most employers are more concerned if an applicant is a local graduate, overseas graduate, or if the student did distance-learning. The name of the school matters more than the kind of degree.

Yale-NUS College graduates could have an advantage in the job market. Their brand will stand out quite strongly because it's a prestigious alliance between NUS and Yale.

MR DAVID LEONG, managing director of recruitment firm PeopleWorldwide Consulting.



WELL-KNOWN continued on B2

Latin honours well-known

FROM B1

magna cum laude level or above. There are 14 majors at Yale-NUS. Class sizes for the majors in the inaugural batch range from three to 16, with philosophy and physical sciences being the smallest, and politics, philosophy and economics drawing the most students.

In response to queries, Professor Tan Tai Yong, executive vice-president (academic affairs) at Yale-NUS College, said Latin honours may not be commonly used here. But it is well-known globally, and the classifications are similar to those used by liberal arts and sciences colleges and universities in the United States and other countries. The college uses a different method of determining the level of honours due to its unique curriculum, smaller cohort and grading practices, he said, adding that using Latin honours also allows it to distinguish its system of honours from that of NUS.

Prof Tan noted that the Latin honours may not "directly equate to the various classes of degree honours conferred by institutions that follow other systems, such as the British system". Furthermore, the criteria for the levels of honours could differ across two institutions using the same honours terminology.

Other universities here, such as the Nanyang Technological University and SIM University, use the British honours system of first class, second-class upper, second-class lower and third class. Last year, NUS renamed its first-class honours as honours with highest distinction, second-class upper honours as honours with distinction, second-class lower honours as honours with merit and third-class honours as honours.

Prof Tan said the limits imposed on majors are meant to "recognise academic achievement within the major, in addition to the overall cumulative average point (CAP)". It is also to "help control for potential differences in grading across majors, and shifts in the average CAP from one graduating class to another".

About 170 Yale-NUS students signed a petition in March calling for the college to reconsider the honours system. One concern they had was that placing a cap within each major would lead to unhealthy competition, especially in courses with fewer than 10 students.

Some were also unhappy that the honours system was revealed only this year. Yale-NUS student Sheryllyn Goh, 22, who belongs to its first batch which graduates next year, said: "Many of us had assumed that we would follow NUS' fixed CAP system."

The arts and humanities major also said having a bell curve system throughout the four years is better.

"It's important that students know how we are doing academically so that we can take steps to improve our work or plan our modules more strategically."

Global affairs major Dennis Chiang, 25, said some students think it might be unfair if they have the same CAP as an NUS student but do not make the 35 per cent cut for Latin honours. But he said that work experience would count more in his choice of career, either in policy work or journalism.

Prof Tan said Yale-NUS will recognise students' academic and non-academic achievements through other ways such as prizes and awards. He said that the college is "very confident" that students who do well in their studies and co-curricular activities, and those who prepare for work through internships or engaging professional networks will be "strong contenders in the job market or for graduate programmes".

Mr David Leong, managing director of recruitment firm PeopleWorldwide Consulting, said employers are increasingly looking at graduates' work experience.

"They also look at the role and responsibility of the job position, and the salary package is based more on that than the qualification of the applicant," he said. "Even master's degrees have marginal difference in salary offers, compared to someone with relevant work experience."

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Grading student performance

Most local universities here do not have fixed quotas for honours classifications – awards are based on the student's cumulative average point (CAP).

But some universities moderate results using a bell curve for certain modules, while others mark students based on absolute performance.

The National University of Singapore (NUS), Nanyang Technological University (NTU) and Singapore Management University (SMU) do not have honours quotas. Neither do the newer public universities such as the Singapore Institute of Technology (SIT) and SIM University (UniSIM).

Mr Tan Lee Chuan, the director of the office of the registrar at SMU, said this means "standards are generally maintained over time and do not vary with the quality of students in that cohort".

Professor Kam Chan Hin, the senior associate provost for undergraduate education at NTU, said the bell curve is a "general guideline".

The final scores in each course depend on the performance of the students, he said. "For example, in some classes with many bright students, a higher proportion of students would get top grades."

At NUS, the bell curve is used to moderate grades and prevent grade inflation or deflation. Modules with larger enrolments are usually graded on a bell curve, "following the normal distribution of a typical class comprising students of various levels of ability".

July start for unified rank structure in police force

First batch of officers under expert-track scheme to be appointed around September

Seow Bei Yi



Junior officers like Staff Sgt Seow (top) can expect faster progression. DSP Lim (above) joined the force with O levels 26 years ago.

Staff Sergeant Patricia Seow, 29, joined the Singapore Police Force (SPF) six years ago to pursue her childhood dream of being a criminal investigation officer.

But, not long after the Republic Polytechnic graduate joined, she realised it could take up to 18 years before she became an inspector – the entry rank of a degree-holder.

This will soon change. From July, junior officers like her can look forward to faster career progression when a unified rank structure comes into effect. Staff Sgt Seow hopes to take on supervisory roles in the near future.

All officers will start on common ground, on the same career track, instead of non-graduates starting

as lower-ranking junior officers.

The new structure is part of a scheme unveiled at the annual Police Workplan Seminar last month.

There will also be new expert tracks allowing experienced officers to deepen their skills in the areas of investigations, intelligence or special operations.

The first expert-track officers will be appointed around September.

Such changes aim to attract more young people to join the force and to retain talented officers, as the SPF steps up recruitment this year to fill new posts, such as in its Emergency Response teams.

With the growth of terrorism, cyber and transnational crimes it has become harder to keep Singapore safe, said Senior Assistant Commis-

sioner Tan Hung Hooi, the SPF's director of manpower.

SAC Tan added: "Attracting suitable men and women to join the police force is not easy and this has become even more challenging with the shrinking resident workforce."

Deputy Superintendent of Police Roy Lim, 44, who joined the force with O levels 26 years ago, said: "(The unified structure) provides newer officers or future officers more opportunities and a level playing field for them."

He started as a constable and rose through the ranks over 13 years, before becoming a station inspector.

"At that point in time, with little education, the hope of becoming a senior officer was dim," he said.

"There were too many steps," he said, and there were also many officers coming in with better paper qualifications.

Now, he is deputy head of the special investigation section of the

Criminal Investigation Department, handling high-profile cases such as the shooting of a 34-year-old man by police outside the Shangri-La Hotel in May last year.

Moving forward, DSP Lim hopes to take on an expert track in investigations, allowing him to be promoted without having to transfer out of the special investigation section.

SAC Tan said expert tracks aim to groom specialists who can become leading practitioners within the police force and, eventually, across agencies.

Experienced officers such as DSP Lim will also be given the chance to share their expertise with younger officers by creating training courses for them.

"In time to come, expertise and knowledge will not be centred in a few individuals, but spread throughout a fraternity," he said.

byseow@sph.com.sg



PM Lee mingling with children at the street soccer court of the revamped Ci Yuan Sports Park yesterday. Accompanied by Ang Mo Kio GRC MP Darryl David (right), he joined more than a thousand residents in doing workouts, watching street football, and trying out a dragon boat simulator at a sports carnival. ST PHOTO: LIM YAOHUI

More family-friendly facilities at upgraded park

Ang Mo Kio-Hougang residents can enjoy more family-friendly fitness facilities following a revamp of their neighbourhood park.

The Ci Yuan Sports Park in Hougang Avenue 8 was unveiled yesterday by Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong, who is grassroots adviser and MP for Ang Mo Kio GRC.

Along with fellow Ang Mo Kio GRC MP Darryl David, he joined more than a thousand residents in

doing workouts, watching street football, and trying out a dragon boat simulator at a sports carnival.

The \$1.2 million renovation of the 12-year-old space, previously known as the Ci Yuan Green Park, started last year.

It has added new facilities such as a children's playground, beach volleyball court and fitness equipment that can be used by three generations of a family.

Its jogging track and street football pitch have been upgraded.

Hougang residents Patrick and Veronica Wong are glad that the space has been improved, as it allows their seven children aged five to 19 more opportunities to try sports.

Housewife Mrs Wong, 48, said: "I'm quite impressed by the space and infrastructure."

"It's a luxury to have this kind of space so near us, because every-

where is so built-up around here."

Madam Loh Fong Wah, 70, a Hougang resident of 20 years, said she welcomed the upgrading of the petanque court, where she and other seniors can play ball games in the evenings.

The retired church worker added: "It's good for us old folks to do some evening exercise."

Olivia Ho

Myanmar visitor numbers up, further rise expected

as one of the markets that the agency will focus its marketing efforts on for the next five years.

"To diversify our source markets, we will also explore and enter newer markets like Myanmar, which has started to open its economy," he had told industry players.

pects a growth in arrivals of about 10 per cent, but noted barriers such as the visa requirement.

Currently, a Myanmar visitor has to pay a US\$23 (S\$31.30) fee and wait four working days to get a visa to Singapore, said Mr Thant.

Among the documents that must

Pauline Goh
CEO, Singapore and South-east Asia
CBRE

IN an upcycle, developers would have been confident of a high take-up of space in shopping malls ahead of completion. An additional 1.6 million square feet of retail space coming onstream this year, and another 1.5 million square feet scheduled for completion next year, would have been manageable.

However, labour constraints and weak retail performance have impacted retail space demand. The market is restructuring, and retailers are adapting to a slowdown in population growth with the cut in foreigners, rising rents, and a sustained manpower crunch owing to regulations around foreign labour restrictions.

Added to the mix is the emergence of e-commerce, the strengthening Singapore dollar which has prompted Singaporeans to shop outside the country, either physically or electronically, as well as a general malaise in spending on physical goods in pursuit of experiences instead.

Still, the fundamentals remain strong. Singapore maintains its top retail destination ranking for many global brands, according to our latest research.

Robin C Lee
Group COO
Bok Seng Group

A LACKLUSTRE economy, unsustainable rental return expectations, the meteoric rise in popularity of online shopping and the hasty overbuilding of ubiquitous malls have all led to the oversupply of retail space in Singapore today. There is little distinction from mall to mall; many share the same common food and beverage (F&B) and retail chains.

With economies of scale, these bigger tenants are able to leverage better rental deals while the smaller unique retailers struggle to fight for space and affordability.

This disparity is further widened by competitors in the cloud, the difficulties of hiring good sales staff and a need to operate long hours to remain remotely competitive. There is really very little motivation to be toiling in retail.

Perhaps the Orchard Road vacancy rate of 8.8 per cent is still bearable for some landlords and they'd rather keep it empty than compromise on rates. But a mall with floors of closed shops is a very sorry sight and a turn-off to shoppers.

Yuko Saito
Managing Director
Criteo South-east Asia, Hong Kong, India and Taiwan

RETAIL spending has shifted online because of lower prices, greater convenience and a broader selection. But a physical store presence will remain relevant as consumers still desire to touch or sample a product before buying.

As consumers increasingly expect retailers to deliver a seamless shopping experience that includes personalised search and payments, offline and online shopping will no longer be separate business models but an integrated experience.

Ronald Lee
Managing Director
PrimeStaff

THE oversupply and high vacancy of retail space is a result, first and foremost, of declining economic conditions and consumer confidence.

Against this backdrop, the situation is compounded by high rentals, keen competition from the proliferation of online stores, a fall in tourist arrivals, and more and bigger shopping malls popping up in suburban areas.

Additionally, retail is one of the sectors most affected by the manpower crunch arising from the clampdown on the hiring of foreigners. Therefore, many retail businesses are finding it difficult to hire retail staff in spite of the higher wage costs to attract them, and are choosing to close shop in view of the challenging economic and business climate.



FILE PHOTO

Mobile technology will be the enabler of these experiences. Shoppers will soon peruse items in-store and order them on smartphones for home delivery. Retailers will invest in mobile apps and demand smaller store spaces as fulfilment gets facilitated from warehouses. Malls must, therefore, adjust to this new wave of change.

Thomas Wai
Director, Asia-Pacific
Talent Plus, Inc

TODAY'S retail oversupply situation is largely driven by the significant and quick drop in demand for space. Some of the reasons are our small home market, listless growth in tourism arrivals, rising rentals, labour crunch and changes in consumers' buying habits.



Consumers today not only shop at retail stores, but also shop online, aggregate purchases and buy in bulk overseas. These factors cut into the margins of retailers. Unfortunately, retailers respond to these challenges by downsizing their space demand, rather than strategising on how to create better experiences to engage their consumers. We need more growth strategies, rather than cost-saving tactics.

David Leong
Managing Director
PeopleWorldwide Consulting Pte Ltd

THE emergence of online stores with virtually all kinds of merchandise at much-discounted prices, and the growing popularity of online purchases, have contributed to the woes of brick-and-mortar retail stores. Hence, vacant shops in downtown malls have become a painful reality.

Retail stores must morph into self-collection centres for online purchases or a place for consumers to feel and touch the actual merchandise, or they are unlikely to survive as a purely physical retail store.

The oversupply of retail space will be a short-term phenomenon as stores become online retail extensions but I am certain that retail property prices will slip. Shopping habits and experiences have changed, and retail space use must evolve to better serve consumers.

David Emery
Founder and Chairman
Reciprocus International Pte Ltd

IN the first quarter this year, there were 4.7 million square feet of vacant retail space – equivalent to five VivoCity shopping malls. Many retail outlets in these spanking and upgraded malls try to create a conducive shopping experience to lure the customers in.

However, high rental prices and increased labour costs are causing prices of food, products and services to escalate. In addition, e-commerce is booming in Singapore, further threatening brick-and-mortar shops. Not least, the challenging economic environment and weak consumer sentiment is also taking its toll. The result is dwindling customer numbers and empty shops.

Landlords and retailers need to work together and innovate towards a new direction to give shopping malls and retail outlets a fresh vibe. Only then will customers walk in, consume services and F&B products, and walk out with shopping bags.

Annie Yap
Group Managing Director
AYP Group

SINGAPORE'S economic downturn has impacted the property market. Retailers cannot sustain their business and are closing their shops. This may be due to several reasons.

Firstly, a decrease in visitors patronising the stores. The Singapore Tourism Board reported a 3.1 per cent fall in visitor arrivals to 15.1 million last year. Retail stores also face challenges such as rising rents and labour shortages. Another reason for decreased retail sales could be that, with low-cost travel, many Singaporeans now shop overseas. Lastly, the shift to online shopping has also affected brick-and-mortar stores.

Rohith Murthy
Managing Director
SingSaver.com.sg

MARKET conditions here are in a bit of a slump so companies are cutting back on hiring, and even downsizing their expat staff. Consumer sentiment is weak and Singaporeans, Singapore residents and tourists alike are cutting back on non-essential spending, especially shopping. People are also making purchases online.

As a result, we literally have fewer people even window-shopping in the malls. Many retailers who opened brick-and-mortar stores after the 2008 financial crisis are now racing narrow times. However, like in any market cycle, rebounds can start happening from next year, and retail sentiment could start turning positive again.

Kevin Wo
Senior Vice-President and General Manager, Asean
Avanade

IN today's increasingly connected world, retailers are embracing digital technologies to enhance the experience of their customers and respond to their demands for instant, tailored information. For example, we are seeing clients harness innovations such as self-service kiosks and hand-held mobile devices to improve in-store interactions, and using sensors to detect customer traffic and analyse consumer behaviours.

The future for these retailers is bright, but they will necessarily prefer store spaces with the right infrastructure to support digitisation and a delightful customer experience. Retail spaces that don't enable a digitally connected customer experience will inevitably become moribund.

Melanie Lim
Managing Director
Builders Hub Pte Ltd

ONE key reason is there are too many malls, especially in the suburban heartland too. The oversupply may also be due to poor market sentiment; everyone has to tighten their belts. Retail rentals are also high.

The full list of views from CEOs is available at <http://businesstimes.com.sg>

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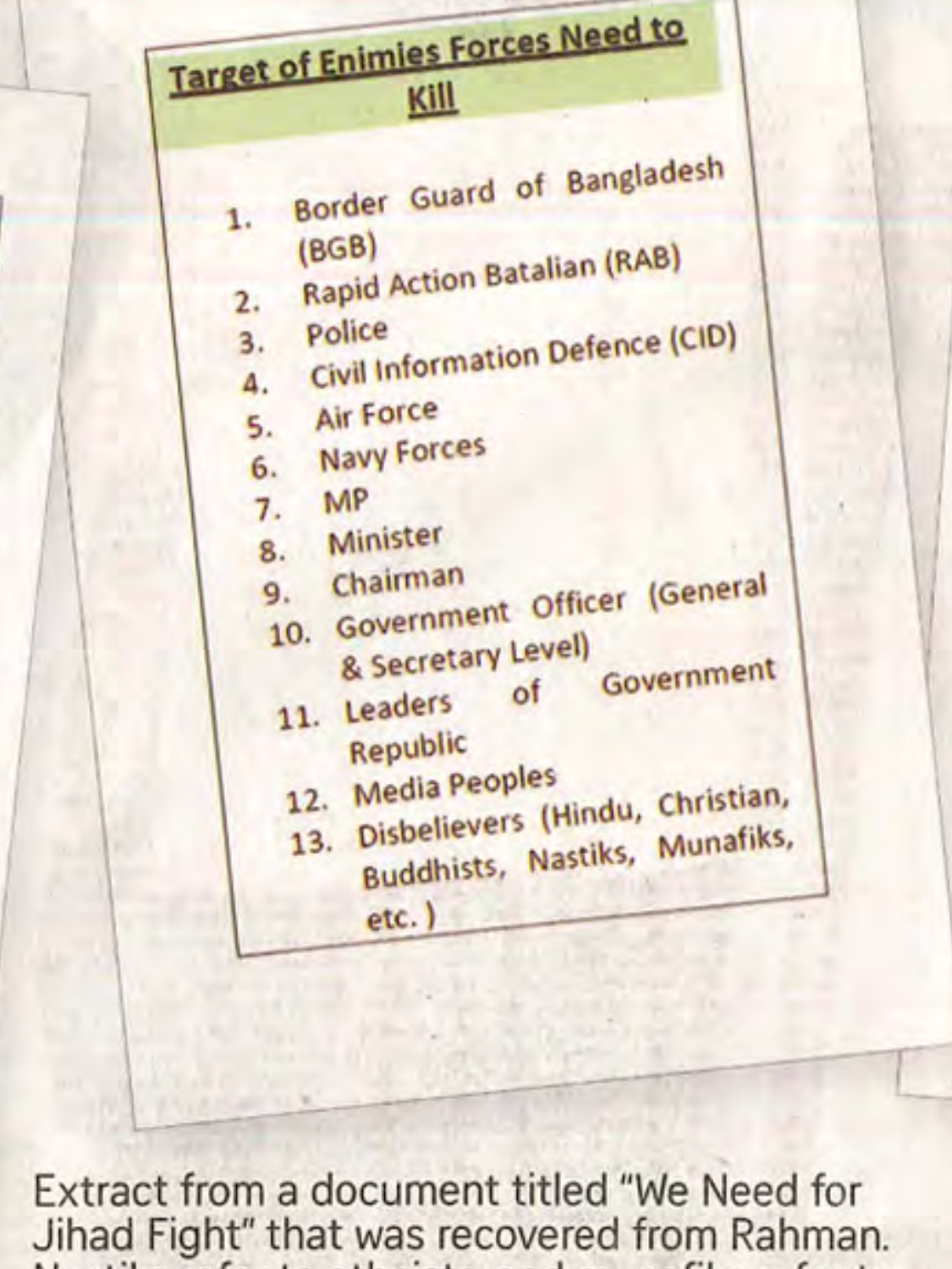
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ISA detentions

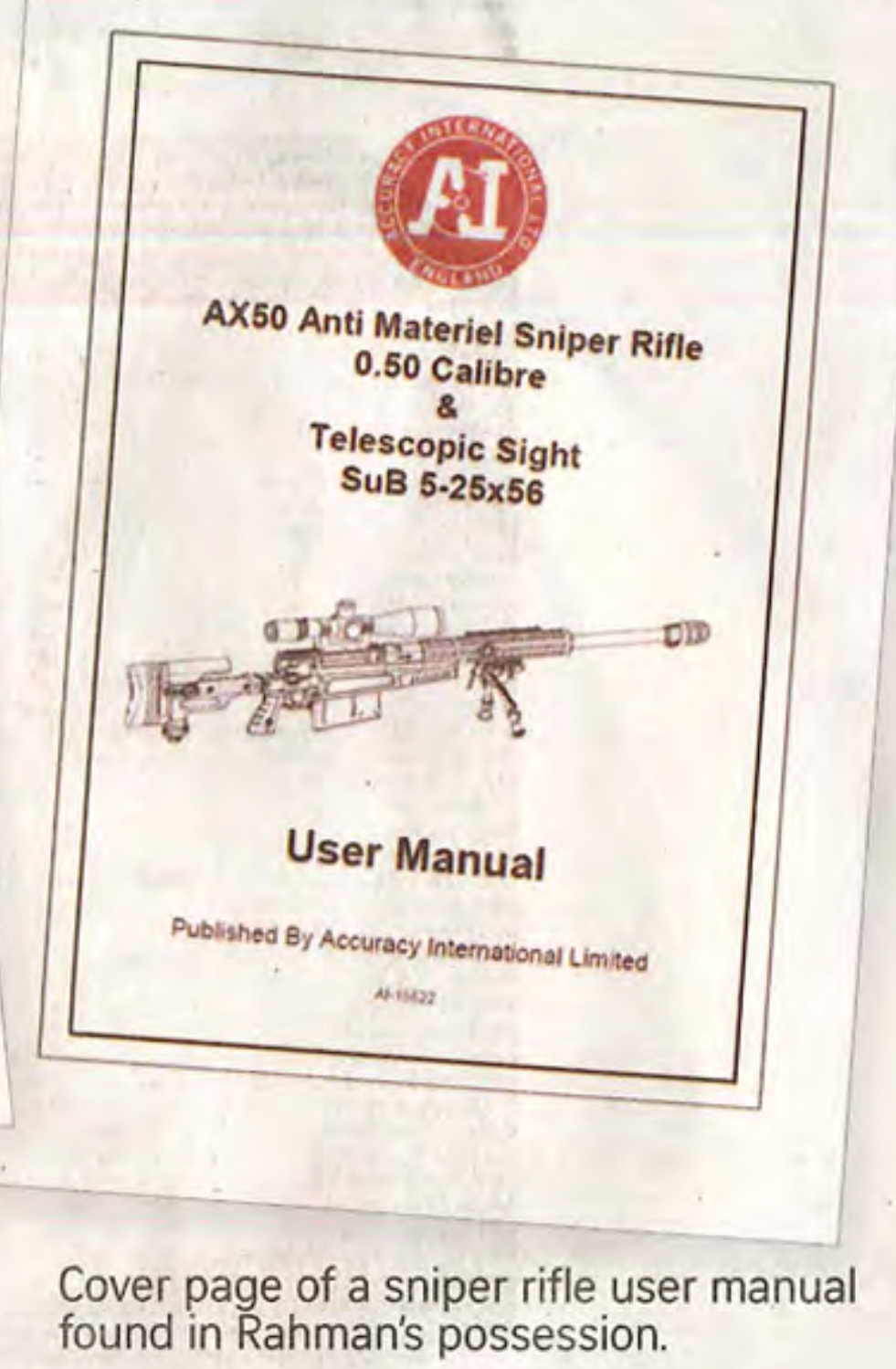
Found: Target list, bomb and rifle manuals

Singapore's Internal Security Department found documents on bomb-making and weapons, as well as a list of Bangladeshi targets for attack, when they arrested Rahman Mizanur, who set up the Islamic State in Bangladesh group.

Cover page of the bomb-making instruction manual found on Rahman. The Bengali text at the top right corner reads "How to make explosives through action and reaction?" The Bengali text in the middle reads "Ammunition-related Bengali research oriented book".



Extract from a document titled "We Need for Jihad Fight" that was recovered from Rahman. Nastiks refer to atheists, and munafiks refer to hypocrites — to the detainees, Muslims who do not agree with hardline views.



Cover page of a sniper rifle user manual found in Rahman's possession.

Source: MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS STRAITS TIMES GRAPHICS

Terror cell 'unfazed' by earlier arrests

Bangladeshi began recruiting countrymen even as other radicals were held and deported

Lim Yan Liang

Around the time that Singapore announced in January the arrest and deportation of 27 radicalised Bangladeshis under the Internal Security Act (ISA), S-Pass holder Rahman Mizanur, 31, came up with plans for an extremist group and began recruiting his countrymen.

By the time he was arrested some three months later, Rahman, who worked in construction, had reached out to at least 14 others.

Yesterday, the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) announced that eight Bangladeshis, including Rahman, had been detained under the ISA, while at least two more members of the group are in Bangladesh.

Another five have been deported. That Rahman started the Islamic State in Bangladesh at a time when he would have been aware of strong security action shows how deeply radicalised and hardened he and those he roped in are, said senior analyst Jasmin Singh of the International Centre for Political Violence

and Terrorism Research.

"You would think that they would not undertake such an initiative after the earlier arrests, but it goes to show how driven and determined they are," said Mr Singh.

"The security of Singapore comes into question: What if they receive instructions to launch an attack on the Bangladeshi High Commission here?" he said.

The MHA said that while there were no specific indications that Singapore was a target of the group, Rahman had said he would carry out an attack "anywhere" if so instructed by the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS).

Mr Singh added that, unlike the previous 27 men held and deported, this newer group appears to have been more organised and active.

The ministry said materials found in Rahman's possession included a document titled "We Need for Jihad Fight" that listed MPs, ministers, and media and military workers in Bangladesh as enemy targets.

That this "kill list" includes "disbelievers" and cites Hindus, Christians, Buddhists and atheists points to the influence of ISIS ideology, said S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies associate research fellow Iftekharul Bashar.

Mr Bashar, who is Bangladeshi, said local extremist and terror groups in Bangladesh have been "re-

invigorated" by the rise of ISIS, and a growing number have bought into its idea of a global Islamic caliphate in recent years.

The country has also become more polarised and anti-secular in recent years. And while the Bangladeshi government denies that ISIS has a presence in the country, the latest issue of ISIS magazine Dabiq has a profile of a Bangladeshi fighter who died in Syria, and an interview with Abu Ibrahim al-Hanif, the "amir" or leader of ISIS in Bangladesh.

"That there is an amir means there is a leader and organisational structure," said Mr Singh. "They are in contact with ISIS central command, which importantly means funding, but also that cells have to follow their orders."

Observers note that affordable smartphones and Internet access have helped Bangladeshis abroad keep up with goings-on at home, but technology has also exposed a segment of the diaspora to extremist teachings and terror manuals.

"Online extremist material in Bengali has created an open and conducive space for the rapid indoctrination of the diaspora and formation of overseas cells," said Mr Bashar.

The Singapore authorities should consider blocking access to radical Bengali websites, he added.

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ISIS TERRORIST IDEOLOGY STILL A SERIOUS THREAT

The recent arrests of another group of Bangladeshi workers show that ISIS and its terrorist ideology continue to pose a serious threat.

Our experience with Bangladeshi workers has been positive. Many volunteer their time and effort at our mosques together with other local volunteers. Mosques will continue to welcome Muslims of all backgrounds and nationalities to programmes and classes conducted by recognised religious teachers. Official Eid sermons prepared by Muis are translated into languages such as English, Tamil and Bengali, to help congregants appreciate a progressive and contextual understanding of Islam in Singapore.

Muis is partnering with the Singapore Bangladesh Society to explore further initiatives to support Bangladeshi workers in their socio-religious life and to integrate them into our local community.

Finally, Muis reiterates its call for the Singapore Muslim community to remain vigilant and not let any teachings that promote violence and extremism take root in our society.



THE ISLAMIC RELIGIOUS COUNCIL OF SINGAPORE (MUIS), in a statement issued yesterday.

Employment agents required to give more info

Employers hoping to hire workers from Bangladesh have had to wait a bit longer for their work permits to be approved.

Several employment agents told The Straits Times some additional particulars, such as names of parents and hometown details, have also been required in applications since late last year.

"We've been asked for more information about family background," said KF Employment Consultants owner Kent Ng.

In November and December last year, the Internal Security Department arrested 27 radicalised Bangladeshi workers.

After the detention of eight other Bangladeshis was announced yesterday, a Manpower Ministry spokesman said Bangladesh remains an approved source country, and it "assesses and approves work pass applications in consultation with relevant agencies".

Bangladesh is one of two main sources for workers in the construction, marine and process industries, and most agents doubt there will be a big drop in demand for its nationals as they sometimes command slightly lower salaries than workers from India.

Mr Ng said most Bangladeshi workers are seen as "very hard-working and good people".

But Mr David Leong of People Worldwide Consulting has seen a large drop in the number of applications for Bangladeshi workers in the past 12 months.

Some agents said they would be open to additional screening measures to detect potentially radicalised workers, but are unsure what form these could take. Mr John Leow, an agent for 23 years, said educational messages could be shown at training centres in the source countries.

Some, like Mr G.H. Fong, are stepping up education, saying: "We do our best, but we can't do much to control the people they mix around with."

KSP Employment Agency founder Jacky Lee tells workers about dos and don'ts over Skype before they come here. He has also implemented a "psychological test" after doing online research.

He asks questions about pictures to flag those who might be easily influenced by others, and is still trying to refine the test.

"If a radicalised worker comes here, it's bad for everyone... It may make people look at Bangladesh in a negative way, which is unfair to the other workers," he said.

Joanna Seow

Bangladeshis must have zero tolerance for terror, says envoy here

Aw Cheng Wei and Seah Kwang Peng

The High Commissioner of Bangladesh to Singapore has urged his compatriots here to report their peers if they suspect them to be extremists. "Bangladeshis have a responsibility and obligation to report radical



HERE TO MAKE MONEY

Most workers here just want to earn more money so their families can have a better life back home. It is expensive for them to come here to work, so they appreciate the opportunity.

Yuko Saito

**Managing Director
Criteo South-east Asia, Hong Kong,
India and Taiwan**

CONSUMERS are now purchasing products on multiple browsers and devices. They also consider personalised experiences a prerequisite for them to connect with brands. It is virtually impossible for e-commerce businesses to manually personalise for millions of online consumers in Singapore, South-east Asia and beyond.

Machine learning technology automates the entire process. It ascertains consumers' online navigation patterns, geographical locations and seasonality, before delivering personalised ads in real time to effectively engage them and increase sales at scale.

Engineers and data scientists who specialise in developing advanced advertising technology make up 40 per cent of Criteo's workforce. Skilled talent that can create and update proprietary technology should therefore be the focus for the future.

Lee Fook Chiew

**Chief Executive Officer
Institute of Singapore Chartered
Accountants (ISCA)**

DIGITISATION and the astronomical growth in processing power have significantly increased the efficiency of capturing, sharing, searching and analysing accounting information.

This is further facilitated by the development of accounting information systems such as the financial module of Enterprise Resource Planning and cloud-based accounting software, and in the future, perhaps even robotic process automation.

Such automation will reduce time spent on mundane and transactional accounting work. This will help free up time for accountants to perform higher value work in domains such as analytics, decision support, strategy formulation, risk management and governance. This also means that the profession needs to be prepared for the future, and acquire new knowledge and skills.

Paul Chong

**President and CEO
Certis CISCO Security**

IN security applications, the harnessing of technology must enable our workforce to focus on the higher value-added tasks where human touch or interaction is critical. Some examples include onsite emergency assistance in a shopping mall in the event of an accident, say, on an escalator. The value of quick decision making and human-to-human assurance differentiates man from machine.

Combining deep learning technologies and advanced analytics, drones and robots are effective enablers for us to deploy sensors and obtain aerial video surveillance for autonomous surveillance patrolling, alarm response and data collection for decision making.

The workforce will of course have to keep progressing to optimise future technology.

Jean-Michel Dumont

**Chairman
Ruder Finn Asia**

IT is estimated that robots will take over most jobs within 30 years. In reality, they have already begun reshaping the communication industry. Google Alerts was the first step, ensuring that media alerts reach our desks immediately.

The next generation included algorithms that sieve through data, analyse trends and discussions, and allow communicators to respond to issues before they snowball.

The first generations of media aggregators are being replaced by Bots that create content. Translation software is helping break through language and cultural barriers, ensuring broader circulation of information. However, humans are the end users, and the human brain is still needed to make sense of this information. Our industry and its people still have a lot to contribute!



David Leong

**Managing Director
PeopleWorldwide Consulting**

ROBOTS, drones and Jiajia, the human-like robot from China, will be fixtures in our everyday lives sooner than we think.

With ageing, even shrinking, workforces everywhere, robots can be deployed to perform repetitious, dull, dirty or dangerous roles. These robots are built with a cognitive technology that enables them to do what humans do.

Jobs such as the cleaning of public spaces, inspection of drains for mosquitos or cleaning of tight spaces in tunnels or pipes in oil and gas infrastructures, simple housekeeping in hotels and basic counter customer service, are some examples where robots can replace human workers in rote roles.

We will probably see many of them in our midst in jobs that Singaporeans decline to do.

The need to bring in foreigners to do work that no Singaporean wants to do will likely be substantially reduced too. The future of human labour use will be changed dramatically.

Damien Wong

**Vice-President and General Manager
Red Hat Asean**

The Internet of Things (IoT) and automation have the potential to fundamentally change the way enterprises do business. Speed is a new business currency, and central to the IoT value proposition.

Today, the increasingly ubiquitous nature of connectivity, Big Data and analysis, and customer expectations are helping to expand the reach of IoT.

A significant amount of the early work on IoT has occurred in the open source community, where collaborative innovation is not only helping to advance technology but to also create standards. Open source software has been a great enabler for IoT solutions because of the interoperability, flexibility, reliability, and increased security it can offer. At Red Hat, we are working with customers and partners to help them unlock the potential of IoT through open source – from the data centre and gateways to devices.

Lim Soon Hock

**Managing Director
PLAN-B ICAG**

DISRUPTING a business is no longer disruptive. It is now normal.

Automation can free companies from legacy cultures, set ways of doing business and searching for profits.

When properly deployed, it allows a company to improve productivity, achieve higher quality at a lower cost and deliver better customer satisfaction.

Consider the manufacturing of a part through programming. What a company needs now would be a programmer to supervise the operation and intervene when necessary, compared to several operators each taking charge of one stage of the process.

The higher skills of the programmer, compared to those of the operators, has allowed the company to "uberise" its business.

Manish Goenka

**Vice-President & Head Asean, Enterprise
Tech Mahindra**

WE see a rapid increase in adoption of automation as companies address changing customer demands, focus on improving productivity and adhere to compliance regulations.

Artificial Intelligence is also maturing rapidly and becoming an important human collaboration tool.

In our industry, cognitive technologies such as Natural Language Processing, Machine and Deep-learning combined with Robotic Process Automation are helping our clients optimise their business processes.

While the drones provide a new channel of engagement with consumers and impact customers' supply chain processes, it's the automation within the business that's transforming organisations to be leaner and more efficient.

Tan Mui Huat

**President and CEO, Asia
International SOS**

MOBILE and technology-based solutions are fundamental to our ability to provide a truly global service.

The rise of global mobility has seen

organisations increasingly relying on our online traveller tracking and risk mitigation solution, TravelTracker, to locate and communicate with their employees during and in the aftermath of crises.

Our Assistance App provides up-to-date medical and security alerts, while employees based in remote locations can access personal health records via MedTrack Mobile.

Our TeleHealth solutions also allow them to connect directly with our medical professionals via phone, instant messaging and video where feasible.

In ensuring that our clients have immediate access to global quality healthcare and security advice anywhere, anytime, we will continue to strike the perfect balance between technology and the human touch.

Toby Koh

**Group Managing Director
Ademco Security Group**

TECHNOLOGY is absolutely the future of the security sector. Ademco currently protects and monitors thousands of sites across Singapore and beyond to China, Korea and Japan.

Ademco is committed to increasing the automation and robotics element in a Total Security Solution.

We are exploring drones to carry out security patrol, armed with live video analytics streaming back into our central monitoring centre, which would cut down on the number of security guards required on site.

This spells cost savings for our clients. In labour-tight Singapore, robots in security is not a question of if but when.

Patrick Sim

**Senior Vice-President
Orange Business Services Asia-Pacific**

WE live in the age of the Internet of Things (IoT), a technology with great potential to transform the traditional labour landscape and allow the workforce to take on more meaningful work.

Technological advancements and automation present businesses with immense opportunities to develop new solutions for business and daily needs. Orange Business Services has machine-to-machine solutions which help clients optimise workforce utilisation, as well as improve service levels to their customers.

Orange is also helping to make buildings, sites, cities, and industries such as manufacturing, agriculture and mining around the world to become "smarter" and "more connected".

IoT and automation are beginning to revolutionise the way we work, and rather than fear them, the workforce needs to learn to harness the benefits of technology and raise our overall quality of life.

The full list of views from CEOs
is available at
<http://business-times.com.sg>

Marcus Loh
Founder and Principal Advisor
M A C H

FOR many car owners, the attachment to badge value is an emotional one that Kishore Mahbubani, dean and professor at the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy at the National University of Singapore, has described as "irrational worship".

On the other hand, there is the curse of missing cabbies during busy hours. Apps such as Uber might just be what we need to break this curse and help evolve the meaning of status symbols from that of badge value to shared value.

Aside from the improved convenience that these apps yield, car-sharing could potentially drive down our car population from 900,000 to 300,000, with multifold benefits. Car owners might finally be freed from the obsession with their set of wheels, while the broader public stands to gain from freed-up land that's currently devoted to roads.

Rick Scurfield
President
NetApp APAC

SINGAPORE'S road network currently makes up 12 per cent of its land area – this is a significant portion for a burgeoning population in a small country.

While creating a "car-free" society may be a utopian quest, a car-lite future is certainly a possibility worth exploring actively.

The prevalence of drone technology creates another axis of business opportunity and transportation efficiencies that complements the growing options available – from driverless pods to car-sharing services – to reduce our reliance on cars.

Urban planners in Singapore are already leveraging traffic analytics to optimise the country's road infrastructure, but there remains a strong opportunity to harness the power of smart data management in generating more valuable insights and developing innovative approaches to creating a car-lite nation.

Laletha Nithiyanandan
Managing Director
Behavioural Consulting Group
and Head of APSCo Asia

SINGAPORE is focused on growing its population rapidly so as to sustain future growth. This is stressing our infrastructure considerably, especially transportation. The ability to commute easily in a city like ours is critical for our future in terms of life quality and to remain attractive as a business hub.

A car-lite future may be a necessity, especially in the business district and in high-density areas, and this may

happen sooner than in 20-25 years. I believe that the people in leadership at that time will also be concerned with the ecological footprint of commuting.

Manish Goenka
Vice-President & Head Asean, Enterprise
Tech Mahindra

A CAR-LITE Singapore is a possibility, and Singapore is taking the right steps to address the growing number of vehicles in the country. Digital transformation of the existing infrastructure will be the key to handle the increased commuter traffic in the coming years. Solutions can include the installation of intelligent systems in the train lines as well as smart buses and trains.

Being car-lite does not just mean having fewer cars on the road. Having a smart traffic management in place can alleviate road congestions and improve traffic flow. These solutions come together to form a seamless transport network needed to support the nation's vision

Lim Kell Jay
Head
Grab Singapore

SINGAPORE is uniquely positioned to become a car-lite society with its world-class public transit network and infrastructure. What is needed is a reliable, affordable and safe transport option for door-to-door commuting.

By providing taxis, private hire cars and even carpooling services through a mobile application, Grab can help Singapore realise its goal of reducing car ownership and transforming into a car-lite society.

Toby Koh
Group Managing Director
Ademco Security Group

ABSOLUTELY! In 20 years' time, Singapore will benefit from the relentless investment by our government in transport infrastructure. Most people will use the MRT, buses, taxis, private hire vehicles (Uber, Grab) or vehicle sharing (electric vehicles, personal mobility devices, bicycles, etc). Convenience will be paramount in adoption, especially for the "last mile" of the journey.

When we reach that stage with greater cost-effective transport costs and convenience, "car-lite" will be a natural reality. Besides, being car-free would also mean more disposable income.

David Leong
Managing Director
PeopleWorldwide Consulting Pte Ltd

GOING car-lite in Singapore is not an option. It is about building a sustainable transport infrastructure. We are way too small to have a high density road system – too many roads would mean less space for residential, social and green spaces.

Singapore needs a boldness to imagine a transport grid that connects the vital residential, commercial, recreational, social and industrial points. Instead of public buses and taxis, there could be an extensive transit system with light rail or Maglev sky pods, which would not be subject

Victor Mills
Chief Executive
Singapore International Chamber of Commerce

PEOPLE buy cars because of the freedom of movement that they offer. You control when you move from A to B. You don't depend on anyone else. Another reason why people buy cars is because we have allowed them to become a proxy for personal status and success.

To achieve a car-lite Singapore, we need alternative options which are cost-effective, available and reliable. We will also need to stop seeing our car as a mobile status symbol. That's a big thing to ask, especially of the socio-economic elite. Political leaders will need to walk the talk to encourage mindset change.



to traffic jams, car population control, COE quotas, ERP or satellite usage monitoring and taxing. Such an integrated highly-dense network of rail, pods and trains will surely make Singapore "car-lite".

Chua I-Pin
Managing Director, South East Asia
Polycom Asia Pacific

YES, a car-lite Singapore is a realistic prospect. Firstly, the context of "work" is changing. Commuting to work is a major contribution to more cars on the road. A strong connected infrastructure and the accessibility of new technologies are allowing us to work from anywhere. With government support, businesses are also slowly adopting flexible working options.

Secondly, futuristic developments such as driverless pods, coupled with a robust transportation system, will outweigh the need to own a car.

The drive for productivity will also be a contributing factor – focusing on tasks that matter would be more important than keeping our eyes peeled on the road.

Robin C Lee
Group COO
Bok Seng Group

GOING car-lite is of absolute necessity as Singapore's population needs to continue growing to sustain its economic

viability. At the pace that the government is developing our public transport infrastructure, it is a matter of time before we have a world class system to meet commuting needs from all corners of Singapore.

However, until we get there, COE and ERP will have to continue to play their roles; and our mindsets about driving and owning a car must change. Cars, like other modes of transport, should be seen as mere means of getting from place to place, and not as a status symbol.

Foo Siang-Tse
Managing Director
Quann

THE automobile industry and its underlying technology has fundamentally not changed for the last five decades. However, the disruptive innovations in the transport sector of the last five years – driverless vehicles, machine-guided navigation, etc – mark a quantum leap for the industry. These have been driven by accessible and affordable bandwidth, Big Data optimisation and all the technologies associated with the Internet of Things.

The future is finally within reach. The industry will be able to provide accessible, affordable and optimised transport on a much larger scale than before.

However, underpinning this is an urgent need to ensure that these technologies are secure from cyberthreats, especially as we become more reliant on machine-delivered transportation.

The full list of views from CEOs is available at
<http://businesstimes.com.sg>

Nirvik Singh
Chairman & CEO
Grey Group Asia-Pacific
GLOBAL warming, even with the slightest change in temperature, can lead to extreme weather events and natural disasters.

In Singapore, the annual mean temperature has gone up from 26.6 deg C in 1972 to 27.7 deg C in 2014. This has impacted our ecosystem, posing a serious threat to our flora and fauna as well as a deterioration in soil formation and nutrient storage.

A big concern is an increase in vector-borne diseases such as dengue, peaking during the warmer months.

Addressing environmental issues on Earth Day will raise much-needed awareness and will also encourage people to find solutions to these issues.

Kenneth Worsdale
CEO
Extra Space Asia

WITH Singapore's push towards an environmentally sustainable future, it is important that businesses recognise the availability of options to help reduce carbon footprint and take proactive action to pursue green strategies.

As the first self-storage provider in Singapore to install solar panels to produce some of our energy needs, we are leading the way in this regard with two of our facilities already outfitted last year with rooftop solar panels, and another facility in progress.

We hope to see more businesses, including self-storage firms, come together and explore ways to be more environmentally responsible.

John Keung
Chief Executive Officer
Building and Construction Authority

GLOBALLY, buildings contribute to as much as a third of total greenhouse gas emissions. Buildings also consume more than a third of our nation's electricity.

Singapore, though small, is playing its part as a global citizen in ensuring environmental sustainability.

The BCA works closely with the Singapore Green Building Council to champion the green building movement focusing on improving energy efficiency, reducing energy consumption and increasing renewable energy adoption in buildings through the Green Mark scheme.

We also share our green building experience with countries in the region so that together we can ensure environmental sustainability for future generations to come.

David Leong
Managing Director
PeopleWorldwide Consulting Pte Ltd
CLEAN air and clean water are paramount to Singapore. We almost did not have enough water, let alone clean water. We found ways to recycle water to build our water sustainability.

In fact, we have created in our water treatment experiments a whole new exportable industry. With Newater, we now have options but water remains a very scarce resource for us.

Lack of clean air is a seasonal man-made issue for Singapore. The haze is an avoidable outcome of forest burning by companies in Indonesia. Year after year, Singaporeans and neighbours of Indonesia have to contend with bad air.

These problems can be alleviated with determined political enforcement in Indonesia. The efforts to stop forest burning should be a joint monitoring effort by the affected countries; they should identify the culprits and landowners to stop those acts.

Not just in Singapore but across Asean, clean water and clean air are the most pressing issues.

Kai Y Chan
President, Asia-Pacific
Carlson Wagonlit Travel

PLASTIC waste appears to be a key environmental concern in Singapore. It is estimated that some 3 billion plastic bags were used in Singapore in 2011. Scarce fossil fuels are used to produce these bags, and the incineration of disposed plastic bags also results in the emission of greenhouse gases.

While policies such as an outright ban or charging for plastic bags are ways to discourage their use, this is a problem we can all help tackle with just a little effort. Using cloth bags or recycling used plastic bags are simple measures we can take.

I'm proud of Carlson Wagonlit Travel's commitment to promote greater environmental responsibility. Our office is organising a beach clean-up activity on April 23 at East Coast Park, to help prevent plastic and other litter from making their way into the ocean.

Yu Tat Ming
CEO
PacificLight Power

WE believe that every individual and business needs to play a part in building a more energy-efficient world. This starts with a willingness to embrace change, explore ways to optimise the use of energy and integrating sustainability targets into an overall business strategy.

Significant improvements can be achieved through refining existing business processes and maximising the use of resources.

Such incremental changes made at a corporate level can have a significant and positive effect, influencing employees to adopt a "green" mindset.

At PacificLight, environmental sustainability forms part of our core values. In 2015 we formed the PacificLight Centre of Excellence to promote energy efficiency and encourage the uptake of new technologies in energy management among Singapore electricity users.

Wong Heng Chew
President
Fujitsu Singapore

FUJITSU recognises that due to our high dependence on technology today, there is a high level of energy consumption, especially so with the Internet of Things driving demands in data centres.

With a major portion of this energy demand currently met by non-renewable fossil fuels, energy efficiency needs to be one of the primary environmental concerns.

Jean-Michel Dumont
Chairman
Ruder Finn Asia

THE upcoming celebration of Earth Day is a timely reminder of the fragility of our planet and the importance of tackling environmental issues head-on – climate change, overfishing and the widespread pollution of air, water and soil.

This is a challenge for us all: changes are needed in our behaviour as consumers if we are to respond promptly and effectively to this issue.

Governments need to legislate the right regulations to align with community expectations.

With their financial capacity, corporations have a critical role to play. Putting in place practical CSR strategies will achieve sustainability goals, as well as provide companies with an edge for business growth.

Internally, we have a lighting mapping manager to ensure that lights are switched on only when needed.

Chong Kee Sen
President

The Institution of Engineers, Singapore
ONE of the gravest environmental issues is that caused by consumption of energy, especially fossil fuels, as it leads to problems such as air and water pollution, public health damage, wildlife and habitat loss and global warming.

Rapid urbanisation has compounded this issue, as cities are responsible for about 75 per cent of global energy consumption.

This calls for innovative low-carbon and high-efficiency urban energy systems, clean energy deployment and sustainable practices, underscoring the urgency for Singapore to enhance its manpower expertise and competence in this field.

IES is dedicating the World Engineers Summit 2017 to urban energy solutions and the annual Energy Innovation Challenge to instilling passion among students to seek renewable energy.

Boon Liang Seng
Director, South-east Asia
Lutron Electronic

AS a leader in lighting control technology, we regard the overconsumption of electricity and its negative side effects as the biggest threat to the environment.

The use of lighting in a commercial building can contribute to up to 21 per cent of electricity usage. In addition, research has shown that conserving electricity with lighting dimmers is much cheaper than installing new power-generating equipment.

In the light of the upcoming Earth Day, corporations and consumers are encouraged to utilise lighting dimmers, which will help them reduce energy usage without sacrificing comfort and convenience.

Paul Lim
Chief Executive Officer
Secura Group Limited

THE challenges posed by climate change will increasingly exacerbate resource scarcity and lead to mass population dislocations.

We have seen how global warming has shifted climate patterns and the impact on food and water security.

These effects will be particularly acute in developing countries where infrastructure is lacking and agricultural economies are most sensitive to environmental stress.

The World Economic Forum lists water scarcity as one of three global systemic risks of highest concern. This is not surprising given traditional territorial disputes, growing populations, water and energy needs, and pursuit of economic development.

The challenge for us is to strike a strategic balance between sustainable economic growth, social development and environmental security.

We will need to constantly think of ways to innovate and operate in an eco-friendly way to get the most out of scarce resources and still remain profitable.

JY Pook
Senior Vice-President, Asia-Pacific
Tableau Software

THE most pressing environmental concern today is how we have been outpaced by all the disruption that is happening in the world.

Throughout history, industrial revolutions have changed the way we live, work and play, which has in turn impacted the environment – oftentimes for the worse.

This year's World Economic Forum discussed how we have entered a fourth industrial revolution, which will only quicken this pace of disruption. Yet we are projected to face a shortage of more than 200,000 data workers globally in the next five years. Singapore shares a similar concern with a 30,000-person gap in ICT workers next year.

As more data gets embedded in the world we live



Melanie Lim
Managing Director
Builders Hub Pte Ltd

I WOULD think that the most pressing environmental issue is "let's start tomorrow" or "my efforts alone are of no significant help to the environmental issue".

Every little effort plays a part. Our company always practises "reduce, reuse and recycle".

We recycle our unwanted documents, printer cartridges and other waste products to a charity organisation every month.

We even sort out our trash into plastic, glass, paper and other waste.

These are little efforts to save our environment. We have only one earth. If we will not save it, who will?

Lim Soon Hock
Managing Director
PLAN-B ICAG Pte Ltd

THE continuous and unchecked destruction of the human environment is a major cause of concern. Unchecked human activity can only lead to ecological disasters with tragic consequences.

The most pressing environmental issue is not so

much the issues themselves, which are well known, but the lack of collective action to tackle them. So far, it has been mainly rhetoric and little action.

Nations put their own interests before the larger objective of protecting the earth. Businesses are not investing more in green practices, as they are more preoccupied with making profits.

Consumers will not be around to experience the adverse consequences, so are lackadaisical in taking action, despite much public education and calls to recycle, save energy and help reduce the carbon footprint.

Patrick Liew
Managing Partner
Greenpro Capital

AS long as there is demand for products made by companies that do not subscribe to environmentally-friendly practices, the destruction will continue.

As consumers, we should demand that vendors adhere to responsible and sustainable business practices.

In the bigger picture, the public, private, and political sectors and people across different countries should work together to put pressure throughout the value chain of these companies on a multi-targeted and multi-faceted basis.

These sectors should make it mandatory for businesses to protect the environment and provide sustainability accountability reports.

Such reports cannot be based on merely paying lip service.

They must be supported by credible and independent audit. There must be clear evidence of compliance that these businesses are not involved with any environmentally-degrading operation.

We should also explore the possibility of developing a "name and shame" database of recalcitrants so that stakeholders can put more pressure on them.

We should take these recalcitrants to task with the weight of all the local and international resources that are available to us.

Rohith Murthy
Managing Director
SingSaver.com.sg

THE most pressing environmental issue of the day is impact on costs of running businesses and an individual's personal finances. Singapore suffered its worst haze in 2015 and the bad air is expected to continue annually as farmers slash and burn to cultivate new land.

This is not viable, not only for the companies suffering low productivity levels, but also the man in the street whose quality of life is affected, and who has to pay more in medical expenses.

Companies that have fires on their concessions can choose to profit from this toxic method of creating fertile land, or they can collectively adopt environmentally friendly farming practices.

Perhaps a more collective approach by the Asean community is needed but this ranks low on the priorities of the governments.

The full list of views from CEOs
is available at
<http://business-times.com.sg>

THE BUSINESS TIMES NOTICES

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IN THE MATTER OF
THE COMPANIES ACT, CAP. 50
AND
IN THE MATTER OF
CHITRA PREM PTE. LIMITED
(The "Company")
(Company Registration No. 201024707D)

NOTICE OF MEETING OF CREDITORS

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that pursuant to Section 296 of the Companies Act, Cap. 50, a Meeting of Creditors will be held at the office of FTL Consulting (Singapore) Pte Ltd, 8 Shenton Way #12-02, AXA Tower, Singapore 068811 on 27 April 2016 at 10:30 a.m. for the purposes of:

1. Receiving a statement of the Company's affairs together with a list of creditors and the estimated amounts of their claims.
2. Confirming the appointment of the Joint and Several Liquidators appointed by the Shareholder of the Company.
3. Resolving that the Joint and Several Liquidators be at liberty to open, maintain and operate any bank account or an account for monies received by them as Liquidators of the Company, with such bank as the Liquidators deem fit.
4. Appointing a Committee of Inspection of not more than 5 members, if thought fit.
5. Should no Committee of Inspection be formed, fixing the remuneration of the Joint and Several Liquidators based on their hourly scale of fees.
6. Should no Committee of Inspection be formed, resolving that the books, accounts and records of the Company and of the Joint and Several Liquidators be destroyed one day after the dissolution of the Company pursuant to Section 320(3) of the Companies Act, Cap. 50.
7. Should a Committee of Inspection be formed, approval of the Joint and Several Liquidators' powers pursuant to Sections 272(1) (b), (c), (d) and (e) of the Companies Act, Cap. 50.
8. Any other business.

Dated this 18th day of April 2016.

By Order of the Board

Shalabh Mittal

Director

Note:
1. Creditors may vote either in person or by proxy.
2. For proxy forms to be valid, the proxy must be lodged with the Company c/o FTL Consulting (Singapore) Pte Ltd, #12-02, AXA Tower, 8 Shenton Way, Singapore 068811 by 25 April 2016.

IN THE MATTER OF
LIMITED LIABILITY PARTNERSHIP
ACT, CAP. 163A
AND
IN THE MATTER OF
RSM CHINA (SINGAPORE) LLP
(In Partners' Voluntary Liquidation)
Reg No. T10LL0298E

NOTICE OF FINAL MEETING

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that pursuant to Section 55 of Fifth Schedule of the Limited Liability Partnership Act, Cap. 163A, the Final Meeting of RSM China (Singapore) LLP ("the LLP") will be held at 8 Wilkie Road #03-08 Wilkie Edge Singapore 228095, on the 18th day of May 2016 at 10:30 a.m. for the purposes of having an account laid before the meeting showing the manner in which the winding-up has been conducted and the property of the LLP has been disposed of and hearing any explanation that may be given by the Liquidators.

Dated this 18th day of April 2016

Chee Yoh Chuang

Director

LOST SHARE CERTIFICATES

Notice is hereby given that the following share certificates have been reported lost, destroyed or mislaid:

UNITED OVERSEAS BANK LIMITED
Company Registration No. 193500026Z
(Incorporated in the Republic of Singapore)

Name	Certificate No.	No. of Shares
Lee Mui Sung	4381072-3	108

UOL GROUP LIMITED
Company Registration No. 196300438C
(Incorporated in the Republic of Singapore)

Name	Certificate No.	No. of Shares
New Court Nominees Pte Ltd	0003718-3	397

HWA HONG CORPORATION LIMITED
Company Registration No. 195200130C
(Incorporated in the Republic of Singapore)

Name	Certificate No.	No. of Shares
New Court Nominees Private Limited	000449	2,500

Notice is also hereby given that new share certificates will be issued and the above original share certificates will be deemed duly cancelled and void fourteen (14) days from the date hereof unless valid objection is lodged with the undersigned prior thereto.

BOARDROOM CORPORATE & ADVISORY SERVICES
PTE. LTD.
Share Registrars
50 Raffles Place #32-01
Singapore Land Tower
Singapore 048623

Dated: 18 April 2016

IN THE MATTER OF
THE COMPANIES ACT, CAP. 50
AND
IN THE MATTER OF
DUCHESS RESIDENTIAL PTE. LIMITED
(IN LIQUIDATION)
COMPANY REGISTRATION NO.: 200506597W
FINAL MEETING

NOTICE is hereby given pursuant to Section 308 of the Companies Act, Cap. 50 that a final meeting of the member of the abovenamed Company will be held at 10 Anson Road, #32-15 International Plaza, Singapore 079903 on 18 May 2016 at 2:30 p.m. for the purposes of:

1. having an account laid before the member showing how the winding-up has been conducted and the property of the Company has been disposed of; and
2. hearing any explanations that may be given by the Liquidators.

Shirley Lim
Lim Peng Huat
Liquidators
c/o Complete Corporate Services Pte Ltd
10 Anson Road #32-15 International
Plaza Singapore 079903
Dated this 18th day of April 2016

NOTE: A corporation which is a member of the Company may, by resolution of its directors, authorise any person to act as its representative at any meetings of the Company. Such representative shall be entitled to exercise the same powers on behalf of the corporation which he represents as if he had been an individual member of the Company.

CCS
Complete Corporate Services Pte Ltd
10 Anson Road #32-15 International Plaza
Singapore 079903
Tel: 6226 2555 Fax: 6221 9265
Email: email@complete-corp.com.sg

David Emery
Founder and Chairman
Reciprocus International

THE planned rollout of the business grants portal by Q4 2016 is encouraging. Cooperation with associations such as the Singapore International Chamber of Commerce, Association of Small and Medium Enterprises and Singapore Chinese Chamber of Commerce and Industry should be welcomed as we are optimistic their involvement would certainly enhance the portal's overall potential. We are also glad the programmes under "Supporting Scale-Ups" will be magnified as the respective incentives are very impactful. However, the identification of financing options for smaller companies remains challenging. The existing "Internationalisation Finance Scheme" is limited to credit facilities from 12 financial institutions and we recommend broadening this scheme to encompass a greater set of financing options and structures.

Annie Yap
Group Managing Director
AYP Group

SMEs would definitely benefit from the 2016 Budget. Much focus has been put on helping SMEs to get more rebates and funding. One major announcement is the ITP. Besides supporting individual firms, another target of ITP is to support innovation. This is highly important as innovation is critical – especially to SMEs – in order to improve productivity. Local SMEs are generally dependent on foreign workers. I would also like to see more assistance for SMEs on strategic talent acquisition and management, that will help them excel in the war for talent.

Ronald Lee
Managing Director
PrimeStaff Management Services

I'M glad to see that many measures to help companies sharpen their capabilities amid the continued restructuring have been included in the Budget, such as the new ITP, increase in the Corporate Income Tax Rebate to 50 per cent, and Special Employment Credit.

It is a good move to defer the levy increases for foreign workers in the marine and process sectors but this deferral should perhaps have been extended to all sectors in light of the economic headwinds we are facing.

For example, levy increases for the services and construction sectors will proceed despite the continued challenges they face due to the shortage of manpower, rising business costs and declining consumer spending.

Andrew Chua
Executive Chairman
EASB Institute of Management

SMEs play a key role in the economy, accounting for about half of GDP and 70 per cent of jobs in Singapore. The issues facing businesses – especially SMEs – in this time of a slowing economy are high business costs (rentals, wages) and manpower shortage. More concrete and specific actions to reduce pressure in these areas will be more helpful instead of tax rebates which are quite irrelevant where businesses are just trying to stay afloat.

What specific assistance might the government provide for companies trying to go overseas?

John Bittleston
Founder and Chair
Terrific Mentors International

THE Budget was excellent, balanced and visionary. The objective to develop Singapore SMEs into Singapore MNCs will meet with everyone's approval. This transformation will take more than just policy changes or new government schemes. For example, when I took over SME Brands Essence of Chicken and developed it into an MNC, Cerebos Pacific, my biggest asset was visionary shareholders. A British company and the Abu Dhabi Investment Authority held a majority of Cerebos Pacific's equity. They allowed me to take risks and make mistakes building Asia-wide hospitality, grocery, winery, soft drinks and other businesses. The result: a business that was 82 times their valuation. How can we change the culture of SME leaders to be less risk-averse?

Dora Hoan
Group CEO
Best World International

ON the whole, Budget 2016 seems to be aimed at improving the capabilities of Singapore businesses in the longer term, with the strong encouragement for automation and robotics. This is targeted very much at larger enterprises. The introduction of the SME working capital loan scheme can provide temporary assistance for SMEs facing cash-flow difficulties. We hope to see financial institutions participate in approving such loans to SMEs with the reduced risk exposure. The need for Singapore SMEs to plan to expand to other markets is crucial to survival. We hope to get more details during the upcoming Budget debate in Parliament.

Melanie Lim
Managing Director
Builders Hub

I THINK Singapore's 2016 Budget should open up the hiring of foreign workers for SMEs, especially in the construction sector. Few Singaporeans (if any at all) wish or want to be a construction worker. We have big labour constraints as a builder and developer. A deferral of foreign worker levy hikes has not much impact for SMEs.



Rohith Murthy
Managing Director and Co-Founder
SingSaver.com.sg

CONTRACT and freelance workers make up a growing part of the Singapore workforce, particularly with the advent of services such as Uber and AirBnB. Indeed they would be a common reality in a 21st century "sharing economy" workforce. At present, these workers have far limited protection than regular employees.

While the Budget does have upgrading schemes for workers facing difficulties in finding employment, we would have liked to see support programmes and measures to assist this growing segment of the workforce.

Patrick Liew
Managing Partner
Greenpro Capital

LOCAL enterprises, especially SMEs, are hit by the double whammy of an economic slowdown and rising business costs. They operate in a tight labour market and face headwinds competing with online businesses and other players in an open environment.

Perhaps we should revisit the idea of an Exim Bank or a similar initiative to help SMEs enhance their financial position, stability and growth.

It is typically more difficult for SMEs to tap the mainstream financial institutions or access alternative financing. They also have greater challenges in assuring lenders of their credit-worthiness.

Mainstream financial institutions would also not be as willing to partner SMEs on perceived higher-risk projects in new markets or new technology.

An Exim Bank or similar venture can cover these gaps and also be more focused in meeting the needs of the SMEs. It could also advise SMEs on how to merge their operations or hunt as a pack.

David Leong
Managing Director
PeopleWorldwide Consulting

THIS Budget is focused primarily on building future-readiness for businesses and people. I would have liked greater focus on how to productively deploy our human capital assets with lifelong learning put in place. The Budget provides enhanced support for the young and old, low wage earners and people with disabilities, for lifelong skills upgrading, but these skills must be usable to improve their employability. Not skills trained for no specific immediate use or as a hobby. My point is that lifelong learning and training should be pegged to one's employment prospects. An example will be a 63-year-old worker retrained for a new role like retail supervisor. There could be special employment credits to help offset overall manpower costs – as well as a "quota booster" for the hiring of foreigners to complement the employment of the older worker or people with disabilities.

The full list of views from CEOs
 is available at
<http://businesstimes.com.sg>

Move to certify HR professionals' skill levels

WDA awards \$890,000 contract to PwC; system expected to be piloted from July

Toh Yong Chuan
Manpower Correspondent

A national system to certify the skill levels of human resource (HR) professionals is expected to be piloted from July and launched a year later.

The Singapore Workforce Development Agency (WDA) has awarded an \$890,000 contract to consultant PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) to develop a five-tier certification model for HR professionals. PwC was picked over four rivals which put in bids of between \$781,000 and \$2.4 million, government public tender records show.

The award of the contract follows the Manpower Ministry's announcement last July that a task

force of government officials, HR professionals and union leaders would be formed to draw up a certification programme for Singapore's 30,000-odd HR professionals.

When asked, the WDA, which is providing secretariat support to the task force, would say only that it was formed in September.

"More details of the framework will be announced at the upcoming Committee of Supply Debate," said a WDA spokesman.

Parliament will debate the ministries' budgets from this week.

The Straits Times understands that professionals will be assessed in four areas: whether they abide by a code of conduct; their skills and knowledge; understanding of labour laws; and work experience.

They will then be certified at one of five levels – from an associate with no experience at the bottom to the highest level, for those "who engage in substantial organisation and resource management roles and who formulate strategic HR plans", said the WDA in a letter spelling out its requirements to PwC. "This (the highest) level will be conferred after interviews," added the WDA.

It is unclear who will conduct the interviews, but PwC is required to develop the framework by this month and draw up the assessment tools by June for a pilot run expected to start in July.

"As this is a national initiative, it is imperative for the project to adhere to the above timelines and for the full launch to not extend beyond July 2017," wrote the WDA.

WDA declined to comment on the contract cost, but said the consultant will work under the "strate-

gic level guidance and direction" of the task force.

Task force chief Aileen Tan, who is group director for human resources at Singtel, declined to be interviewed. An e-mail from WDA to ST said the Manpower Ministry has "advised" that it was "too premature" for her to speak to the media.

But in a post on a government blog last month, Ms Tan urged HR professionals to support the scheme. "It is important to get HR professionals certified on this framework as this will provide confidence to employers, which will benefit from greater consistency and higher standards," she said.

Mr David Leong, managing director of human resource firm People Worldwide Consulting, supports the scheme. "It will raise the entry bar and professional standards in the industry," he said.

He added that it has to be broad enough to be applied to the range of

How HR professionals will be certified



Source: SINGAPORE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT AGENCY
STRAITS TIMES GRAPHICS

professionals in the sector – from in-house staff to headhunters.

Independent human resource consultant Martin Gabriel, who has been running his firm HRMatters21 for 14 years, said the industry needs to be consulted before the certification standards are implemented.

"It cannot be decided by a committee or a consultant and imposed on us top-down," said the former Manpower Ministry officer.

He also worried that government grants will be tied to certification levels. "It wouldn't be fair to independent consultants because we may not do the full range of work required for certification," he said.

The WDA has held focus group discussions for 150 stakeholders so far, but would not say how it plans to consult more people.

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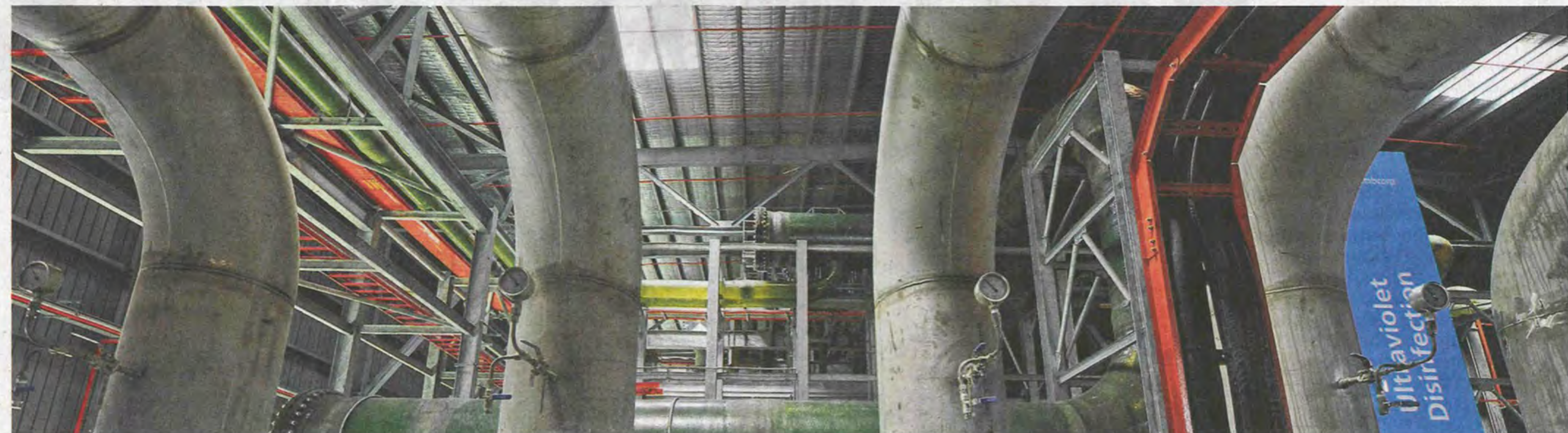
S'pore gearing up for increasing water stress in Asia

Lin Yangchen

In 2000, about 800 million people in mainland Asia faced severe water shortages. A study predicts that by 2050, about a billion more Asians will be in the same plight.

Singapore, however, has taken steps to insure itself against this scenario predicted by a Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) study published on March 30 in the academic journal, PLoS ONE.

"Our demand for water will increase as our economy and population grow," said a spokesman for Singapore's water agency, PUB. "We will continue to plan and invest ahead of demand."



Middle-aged execs caught in double bind: Survey

Group hardest hit by layoffs seen by firms as too costly to retain and too old to hire

Calvin Yang and Pang Xue Qiang

They are too costly for their previous companies to retain, and supposedly too old for prospective employers to hire.

Such is the double bind that higher-skilled employees and middle-aged workers have found themselves in. They were the hardest hit by layoffs last year, according to recent findings from the Manpower Ministry (MOM).

These groups were also less likely than other resident workers to be in employment within six months of being made redundant.

Older workers in their late 40s to 50s were worried about their incomes stagnating too, even as job opportunities waned, based on poll findings released by government feedback unit Reach on Sunday.

Several middle-aged professionals, managers and executives (PMEs) who were recently laid off told The Straits Times that employers are looking for young workers who are cheaper and have more drive, given sluggish economic conditions.

Ms Fan Suet Yeng, who has an electrical engineering degree, worked at a multinational corporation for nearly 25 years after graduating from the National University of Singapore. The 48-year-old, who rose to become a senior manager in charge of procurement and logistics earning about \$9,000 a month, lost her job a few months ago.

The mother of two school-going children aged 16 and 19 has sent out at least 50 applications for lower-pay jobs in the same field, but has not received a single offer.

"At this age, and with many years of experience, some firms may say that we are overqualified for the job," she said. "We are open to lower salaries, but are companies willing to give us a chance?"

Of the Singaporeans and permanent residents laid off last year, 71.1 per cent were professionals, managers, executives and technicians (PMEs), according to MOM figures released last Tuesday. Nearly two-thirds of resident workers made redundant last year were aged 40 and above.

Some PMEts aged 40 and above said they have heavier financial obli-



NO OFFER YET

Some firms may say that we are overqualified for the job. We are open to lower salaries, but are companies willing to give us a chance?



MS FAN SUET YENG, 48, who lost her job a few months ago.

gations such as housing mortgages, car loans, elderly parents to support and their children's school fees, and have had to make adjustments to their lifestyles.

Madam Annie Kheng, who is in her late 50s, was an administrative and finance manager in the oil and gas sector for three years. She was left without a job last year when her firm underwent restructuring.

The single mother then took up temporary work, such as an accounting job to cover those who were on maternity leave. She

earned under \$1,000 a month, while still having to put her two children through university.

"If I really cannot get a job that I want, maybe I should adjust my expectations," she said. "I attended upgrading courses - even in unrelated industries like food and beverage."

In March this year, she secured a managerial position at an IT firm, even though she admits the pay is half of what she used to earn.

Overall, more workers became unemployed last year. In total, 15,580 workers lost their jobs, the highest since the global financial crisis in 2009, which saw 23,430 workers laid off. Job security was the biggest worry among Singaporeans amid the slowing economy, Reach said on Sunday.

Labour experts noted that workers in the vulnerable PMET and older-worker groups may not be able to hold on to jobs as their skills may be outdated and, at the same time, they are more costly to employers.

Mr David Leong, managing director of PeopleWorldwide Consulting, said: "If workers do not upgrade and add more value to their jobs, they will likely work themselves out of their jobs. A younger person... can easily assimilate into his role and, importantly, he will cost less."

Businesses, however, noted that this is not the case in every instance.

Association of Small and Medium Enterprises president Kurt Wee said: "Age may not be a disadvantage. I have seen small and medium-sized enterprises that have hired managers in their 50s. The young may not have sufficient experience when it comes to these roles."

In the past year, there was a sharp rise in the number of PMEts who sought help for employment and employability matters from the labour movement. From last March to February this year, the National Trades Union Congress helped 518 PMEts who were retrenched or had their employment terminated, a more than 50 per cent jump from the previous year.

NTUC assistant secretary-general Patrick Tay foresees PME retrenchment - regardless of age - becoming more prevalent with the current economic situation.

"Increasingly, whether you are in your 20s or 30s, you will be affected if there are layoffs - whether you are young or not," he added.

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Additional reporting by Jeremy Koh

According to recent findings from the Manpower Ministry, higher-skilled employees and middle-aged workers were the hardest hit by layoffs last year.
ST PHOTO: RUDY WONG

More layoffs expected this year

Joanna Seow

More layoffs are likely to come this year, though many firms are preparing to weather the economic slowdown by redeploying workers and reducing costs.

Layoffs climbed 20 per cent to 15,580 last year, while job vacancies fell, according to statistics released by the Manpower Ministry last Tuesday.

More than half the jobs lost were from the service sector, especially professional services, wholesale trade and financial services.

A third were in manufacturing and about 10 per cent in construction.

Professionals, managers, executives and technicians also made up over 70 per cent of those made redundant.

Employers and business associations told The Straits Times that they expect the gloomy outlook to continue for the next year or two.

"For 2016, we expect redundancies to stay above 10,000, reflecting the more modest projected economic growth of 1 per cent to 3 per cent and continued restructuring," said Mr Koh Juan Kiat, executive director of the Singapore National Employers Federation.

He noted that jobs are still being created to absorb the excess manpower.

Singapore Retailers Association vice-president R. Dhinakaran said some retailers are closing less profitable outlets and may release some workers but, as far as possible, would redeploy them to other shops, as there is still a shortage of front-line staff.

Association of Small and Medium Enterprises president Kurt Wee said some businesses will face consolidation, but for the others it is crucial to press on with the productivity drive, so as to provide good jobs.

He added that he does not expect big retrenchments for now.

Singapore Chinese Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCCI) president Thomas Chua also urged small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to enhance their business models to draw more talent - including higher-skilled workers who have been retrenched - so as to become more competitive.

He added: "SCCCI hopes the Government will help SMEs in the transformation process, so that higher-skilled Singaporeans are attracted to join SMEs and be integrated into the workforce."

While keeping an eye on costs, some firms are also taking the opportunity to train their workers.

Rather than cutting staff, BN Logistics managing director Kenny Khor has tasked his 12 workers with learning one another's jobs when they have time.

Since January, for example, administrative staff have been shadowing purchasing staff, and warehouse workers now follow transport drivers out.

"When they understand other departments' problems, they can think about improving their own processes or helping each other solve problems. We can become more efficient," he said.

Meanwhile, some industries such as hospitality are still more worried about recruiting manpower than shedding it.

Mr Brenton Ong, human resource director for Concorde Hotel, said: "Hotels are already very lean because of the controls on foreign manpower."

"More hotels are still opening and they need people too."

joseow@sph.com.sg

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荒岛监狱风云、环球分尸杀手、越洋追杀证人、神棍杀童吸血、世纪最大骗局等，犯罪手法层出不穷，内情复杂曲折，警方步步追踪，抽丝剥茧，破案立功。

资深报人何盈在1970年初加入报馆，目睹许多情节曲折、轰动一时的奇案。现为晚报执笔，推出《拍案惊奇》第二系列，将过去半世纪的特大案件重现，带领读者重返现场。

问吊前夕狱中写情诗

辛纳杜莱法官用20分钟念完口头宣判后，约翰马丁整张脸上涨红，内心显然非常激动。他举目四望，满室是人，却举目无亲，连开审前几天旁听的母亲与姐姐也没来。

是她对他感到绝望？还是不忍见他判刑后的失魂落魄的神态？

约翰马丁紧抿着嘴，双眼看似空洞洞。

他在思考什么？是在后悔干了滔天大罪？还是不服所判？不甘心落入小小岛国的警察手中……

他最后押返拘留室，从地下道直接上囚车载走，让庭外等候多时的摄影记者与公众白等了大半天。

在审讯期间，此案爆出了另一个内幕，原来有个外国游客在罗威之前，曾经遇上约翰马丁。约翰马丁提出“同房”的要求，他一口拒绝，因此，间接逃出“鬼门关”。

他翻阅报章，获知分尸案的新闻后，拨电给刑侦局，本来答应出庭作证，过后却临阵退却，毫无消息。

约翰马丁上法庭的新闻当时轰动国际，法庭几乎天天爆满。每天开庭之前，大群新加坡、英国、南非、泰国以及各地驻本地的通讯记者已陆续抵达，加上一些好奇的公众，主控官、辩护律师、与法庭员工等穿插其间，将整个法庭挤得水泄不通，好多记者与公众不得不站立听审。庭外也围了各报与通讯社以及电视台的摄影记者，以及无法挤入庭内的公众。

约翰马丁最初不服所判，在定罪的三天后，提出了上诉。可是，在上诉庭订下日期开庭审讯时，他突然改变初衷，写信给监狱当局，表明不要上诉。

他放弃上诉的理由不详，但他曾想过要上吊畏罪自杀。



不过，据驻新加坡英国最高专员公署透露，公署每周都有派代表与神父前往探监，约翰马丁曾经要求早点“以命偿命”，希望此案“速战速决”。

他的监狱生活过得平静，平日阅读与看电视打发时间，不喜欢有太多人前去探望他。

约翰马丁最后也放弃向王鼎昌总统要求宽赦的机会，并且转交信件给辩护律师表明他的意愿。

在新加坡的法律下，判处死刑的被告自动享有上诉的权利，要是不要上诉，必须通知法庭。

在等待吊前夕的24小时，约翰马丁埋头在狱中写情诗，情诗是献给他前妻玛利亚的。

愿来生再结缘

诗里表示这个世界没有人真正爱他关怀他，只有他的日夜思念的玛利亚，他愿意来生再跟她结缘。

玛利亚后来在接受西方媒体访问时幽幽的说：“1988年离婚后，我们还保持联系，我知道他迟早会出事，可没想到事情会搞到这么糟。”“我记得不久前他传了个简信给我，承诺来世再也不会抛弃我……”

在上绞台前12个小时，约翰马丁的母亲与姐姐前来跟他道别。他的人生最后一餐要求的是一片比萨以及一杯热巧克力。

苏格拉底的干探也赶来探望他，抱着最后一丝希望，要查明英国男子麦唐威尔“神秘失踪”与死亡的真相。但约翰马丁仍然是“死都不说”，这个秘密亦随他成了永远解不开的谜！苏格拉底专家在分析过去一些“连环杀手”的“习性”与惯用手法中显示，以约翰马丁在新加坡，以及普吉岛杀人分尸的手法，一次比一次熟练，那肯定是“经验的累积”。

余街餐馆突断水电

美女老板失联 员工8800元泡汤

梁淑晶 报道
lscjoyce@sph.com.sg
饶进礼 摄影

只留一句“餐馆撑不下去了”，27岁餐馆美女老板人间蒸发，还拖欠两名员工8800元的工资。

来自马来西亚的吴先生（37岁）去年8月31日，到余街（Seah Street）一间日本餐馆担任餐馆主厨。

该餐馆规模很小，员工就只有厨师吴先生和女经理王小姐（22岁）。

今年1月11日，女老板突然告诉他们，餐馆

“撑不下去了”，会在1月15日结束营业，工资也会在当天“一起解决”。

吴先生说，餐馆关门的消息让人不知所措，他们还在半信半疑，店里的水电供应隔天就被切断，女老板跟着失联，电话、简讯和电邮，通通联系不上。

“我们好不容易挨到15日，她始终没出现，到今天还是没消息。”

吴先生说，他和王小姐被拖欠1个半月的工资，总额是8800元。两人无从追讨，只好到人力部求助，人力部发信给女老板，却迟迟没有

回音。

王小姐无奈地说，女老板如果经济有问题，可以用分期付款方式偿还拖欠的工资，至少也该交代一声。“这毕竟是我们的血汗钱。”

女老板男友 称她已返中国

两人受访时表示，他们曾经找过女老板的男友，可是她声称女老板已经返回中国。

本报记者也多次致电女老板，可是一打不通，电话号码似乎已成为空号。



美女老板被指失联，还拖欠员工8000余元工资。（网络照）

老板没缴劳工税 害员工准证过期

美女老板不仅拖欠工资，也没缴劳工税，导致员工的工作准证过期。

吴先生表示，他到人力部求助时，才被告知女老板12月已经停止替他支付约700元的劳工税。

他说：“我现在找到新工作了，本来可以拿两年的

工作准证的，可是因为女老板没缴劳工税，我的档案里有了污点，我现在只能拿6个月的特别准证。”

据吴先生了解，女老板来自中国，她是持工作准证到本地上班。她后来在本地友人的帮助下，开了这间餐馆。

老板却撑不下 生意越来越好

员工表示，营业额渐渐增加，供应商却常常上门讨钱，令他感到费解。

吴先生告诉记者，餐馆在去年4月开始营业，起初由另外两名员工打理。

他说：“那两个人在去年8月离职，老板才请我和王小姐来经营餐馆。”

“我们接手后，生意一直在增加，女老板却说生意撑不下去，让人费解。”

可是吴先生说，在餐馆关闭前，不少有供应商上门追债，但他和女经理都没有想到问题的严重性，更没料到餐馆说关就关。

吴先生指女老板没替他缴劳工税，害他的工作准证提早过期。



日本餐馆外观。



去年裕廊岛岸外发现 抹香鲸骨架 下月展出

经过七个多月的筹备，去年在裕廊岛岸外被发现死亡的抹香鲸，其完整的骨架将从3月15日起于李光前自然历史博物馆对外展出。

据《联合早报》报道，长10.6米的抹香鲸（sperm whale）遗骸，重约9公吨，将于自然历史博物馆的哺乳动物展区展出。展览将在

在裕廊岛的储油码头被发现，是首个在新加坡海域内发现的抹香鲸。

博物馆馆长黄耀麟教授受询时透露，此次筹备抹香鲸展的费用高达近50万元。为此，博物馆设立抹香鲸基金，原本以100万元资金为目标，至今却已筹得130万元。

自然历史博物馆昨于新加坡



长10.6米的抹香鲸骨架将于下个月15日展出。（李光前自然历史博物馆提供）

教育行业积极招聘

有经验幼教老师 月薪逾3000元

苏世鹏 报道

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本地就业市场放缓，但资讯科技、建筑工程以及教育等行业还在积极招聘，有经验的幼稚园老师，月薪可达3000元以上。

人力资源公司仁立国际执行董事梁昌国受访时说，教育行业的市场，对幼稚园老师的需求还是很高。

“约九年前，幼稚园老师的起薪在1200元到1400元，过去四五年快速增加，有经验的幼稚园老师月薪，一般在2000多元到3000元以上。”

人力部去年劳动市场预估报告最近公布时显示，与前一年相比，去年就业总人数增加3万1800个，或0.9%，是自2003年来的新低。



▲人力资源公司仁立国际执行董事梁昌国说，就业市场虽然放缓，但还没达到失业率偏高的阶段。（受访者）



▲亚鹰猎头（AYP）公司董事经理叶慧莲说，电子厂迁移到成本较低的国家，招聘需求受到影响。（档案照）

资讯科技和建筑工程 还是有人力需求

针对这个情形，梁昌国也指出，除了教育，资讯科技和建筑工程等行业，还是有人力需求。

“资讯科技行业方面的人力需求，包括技术人员与项目经理等；建筑工程则包括陆交局所需要的工程师等，可能还要考虑从日本和韩国招聘。”

亚鹰猎头（AYP）公司董事经理叶慧莲说，仍在招聘的行业，还包括医疗服务，一方面是人口老化，一方面是比较少国人加入的缘

故。

“由于互联网越来越普遍，科技行业除了软件开发，网站相关以及数码人员，还是有需求。”

至于受影响的行业，则是海事、岸外探油、银行与金融以及房地产。

梁昌国说，由于原油价格显著下跌，岸外探油行业受影响的程度明显。

“房地产行业仍受降温措施牵制，招聘需要不高。”

叶慧莲说，与原油借贷相关的银行部门，最近也受到冲击，再来就是电子生产，由于电子厂持续迁移到成本较低的国家，招聘需求也受到冲击。

就业市场放缓 员工应受训提升技能

就业市场放缓，员工应该接受培训与提升技能，雇主则应通过自动化与机械化来提高生产力。

人力部去年劳动市场预估报告也显示，我国的失业率仍低，从前年的2%微跌0.1个百分点至1.9%。

梁昌国说：“从去年至今，

行情改变，但还没有明显的萎缩。同样的，就业市场虽然放缓，但也没有达到失业率偏高的阶段。”

因此，他指出，员工应响应当局的呼吁，争取每一个培训的机会，提升技能；雇主应尽可能采用自动化与机械化，提高生产力。

雇用年长员工 工作时间应更灵活

我国人口正在老化，雇主应该在雇用年长员工的同时，尽量给予更具弹性的工作时间。

梁昌国说，人口老化，政府逐步提高退休年龄，一部分工作还是

可以由年长员工担任。

“不过，雇主应该给年长员工，包括重返职场的妇女，更加弹性的工作时间，包括兼职，或部分时间工作等。”

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DIGITAL

Commentary

Printed book still has place on shelf

It has trounced e-book sales to prevail as choice reading material



Irene Tham

Tech Editor

E-books have ushered in an era of self-publishing and sowed uncertainties over the survival of brick-and-mortar libraries and businesses.

I was raised on lead, ink and paper, so you can guess which side I stand on.

Digital publishing offers many advantages. For budding writers, self-publishing in the electronic format is now so much easier.

For readers, it has spelled many conveniences. Many titles, both print and electronic, can be searched and accessed more easily. E-tailers like Amazon.com have also been improving their book recommendations through data mining, great for people who follow only certain authors or genres.

But such operational excellence should not be confused with print becoming obsolete.

The Association of American Publishers, which collects data from nearly 1,200 publishers, revealed



that e-book sales had fallen for the first time – by 10 per cent in the first five months of last year.

After sales soared from 2008 to 2010, e-books consistently accounted for around 20 per cent of the overall market over the next four years. A whopping 80 per cent of book sales are still from print.

If this is not an indication that there is room for both print and e-books, then digest this: Last week, Amazon.com, which has its own line of e-readers for its digital inventory, announced plans to open as many as 400 walk-in bookstores in the United States.

I am convinced that even children born in the digital age can grow up appreciating the smell and feel of paper.

I have taken the extreme measure not to expose my six-year-old daughter Ollie to e-books – simply because I find it too strenuous to read from a screen. I am also

Even children born in the digital age can grow up appreciating the smell and feel of paper. I have taken the extreme measure not to expose my six-year-old daughter Ollie to e-books – simply because I find it too strenuous to read from a screen. I am also

convinced by medical reports that the blue light emitted by electronic devices can wreck her sleep.

The terrific job done by our public libraries has also helped my cause. Whenever we visit the library, Ollie always has a wide variety of new books with crispy pages to leaf through.

We can spend hours in the library if not for the crowd, which can get unruly when children strew books all over or treat the library as a playground.

I do a lot of sourcing myself and fill Ollie's little reading corner in her room with colourful, illustrated books.

We also buy paperbacks, but only when there are drawings from the likes of British illustrators Tony Ross and Quentin Blake.

Well-illustrated children's books are not easily available in Singapore. You can imagine the long shopping list my husband gets when he goes

to Britain or the United States for a business trip. His haul is limited only by the space in his luggage.

From fishing the books out of the luggage to wrapping and browsing them, the whole experience is an adventure for Ollie. After unloading the haul, she can be left alone for hours as she scans all the pages for interesting drawings or titles.

We teach her to respect books at a young age. Even books borrowed from the library must be treated with care. Books give us knowledge, I always tell her.

And the day is not done until we have devoured a few chapters. When the lights are out, we make sure her books are back neatly on her bookshelf.

Hopefully, these memories will bring a sense of nostalgia for paper even when she swipes and pinches on a screen for a good read in future.

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A young boy browsing a book at the Toa Payoh library's children's section. Public libraries have done a terrific job of making sure there are new books for young readers. ST PHOTO: MARK CHEONG

Technology posts among hardest to fill last year: MOM

Technology positions such as those for software, Web and multimedia developers and systems analysts were among the hardest to fill last year, according to the latest Ministry of Manpower (MOM) report.

About two-thirds of the openings for software, Web and multimedia developers could not be filled by Singaporeans or permanent residents. Consequently, more than 20 per cent of the vacancies could not be filled for six months or more. Such jobs were among the top 10 professional, managerial, executive and technical (PMET) positions left vacant for so long.

There were also no Singaporeans or permanent residents to fill more than 40 per cent of the systems analyst posts.

There were 640 vacancies for software, Web and multimedia developers, and 510 vacancies for systems analysts as of last September. This was down from 690 and 530 vacancies, respectively, the previous year as economic conditions softened, MOM said recently.

All in all, companies reported 60,000 vacancies in September last year, down 11 per cent from 67,400 in 2014.

In PMET jobs, nine out of 10 posts for assistant nurses went unfilled for six months or more.

MOM said the biggest hurdle to filling vacancies for software, Web and multimedia developers and sys-

temWorldwideConsulting, said that the gap is created when qualified developers do not take up development jobs.

"Singaporeans think it is a low-level job, much preferring project management positions," he said.

This sort of thinking has not changed in the past few years, he said, adding that applications for software, Web and multimedia developer jobs come mostly from India, the Philippines and Myanmar.

A combination of long hours and a constant need to upgrade one's skills in the fast-paced tech industry has made tech jobs less appealing than those in other sectors, said Mr Lee Chew Chiat, consulting firm Deloitte South-east Asia's public

MONEY TALKS

Unfortunately, some industries such as banking and finance appear to have faster and higher earning power. (Hence), the tech industry is unable to attract people, unless one is truly passionate.

sector industry leader.

"Unfortunately, some industries such as banking and finance appear to have faster and higher-earning power. (Hence), the tech industry is unable to attract people, unless one is truly passionate," Mr Lee added.

But change seems to be afoot, with a tech start-up community emerging in Singapore and government efforts to promote lifelong learning.

MOM has pledged to step up efforts to help job seekers gain the skills and experience required for PMET jobs. Such efforts will come through the national SkillsFuture programme. It has some 10,000 courses to ensure that employees have the skills employers want.

The Infocomm Development Authority (IDA) has partnered Web development trainer General Assembly to provide individuals planning to make a mid-career switch to the tech sector with the necessary training. IDA also runs other programmes in partnership with tech companies to fast-track fresh graduates into technical specialist roles.

"There will be a lag in supply of talent, but now the blocks are being put in place," said Mr Mark Jansen, technology, infocomm and entertainment leader at PricewaterhouseCoopers Singapore.

Ernst & Young partner Dilys Boney, who is Asean leader for people advisory services, said that IDA's



Top 10 PMET occupations left vacant for at least six months

Occupation	Number of vacant positions	Incidence (%)
Assistant nurse (excluding registered nurse)	420	92.3
Commercial and marketing sales executive	240	21.9
Registered nurse and other nursing professional	210	57
Chef	160	66.2
Restaurant manager	150	59.6
Software, Web and multimedia developer	140	22.2
Management executive	130	10.2

MOM said the biggest hurdle to filling vacancies for software, Web and multimedia developers and systems analysts was the lack of necessary work experience and specialised skills. The ministry has pledged to step up efforts to help job seekers gain the skills and experience required for PMET jobs. ST FILE PHOTO



A Citgo oil refinery in the US state of Texas. OCBC Bank economist Barnabas Gan said the risk of oversupply continuing into the year "is very real, on the back of fresh United States crude oil exports and Opec's reluctance to taper production". The Brent benchmark fell below US\$29 and the West Texas Intermediate crude ended below US\$30 last week, hitting 12-year lows. PHOTO: BLOOMBERG

Oil prices likely to remain depressed, say analysts

With Opec not cutting output, forecasts have been lowered, given dire market conditions

Jacqueline Woo

The unremitting slide in crude oil prices will likely continue for some time to come, say analysts.

The Brent benchmark fell below US\$29 and the West Texas Intermediate crude ended below US\$30 last week, hitting 12-year lows and extending a rout that has been under way since June 2014.

Oil prices have tumbled some 35 per cent in the past year, on the

Banks such as Barclays and Morgan Stanley recently lowered their forecasts for oil prices, given the dire market conditions.

Barclays expects Brent to average US\$37 a barrel this year, down substantially from its previous forecast of US\$60, citing the "complete breakdown of Opec cohesion" after the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries last month declined to cut output, while Morgan Stanley says crude will average US\$47.50 a barrel for the year.

"In the extreme case, the only definition of a floor would come when the entire market felt that prices had undershot too far."

Still, Mr Anthony Starkey, manager of the oil analytics team at Platts' analytics and forecasting unit Bentek Energy, believes the oversupply will be corrected in time, "as very little fresh capital will be invested in drilling for oil at US\$30".

The protracted weakness in oil prices has been keenly felt across the energy sector worldwide as oil majors and national oil companies slash capital spending.

Offshore and marine firms in Singapore have taken a hit as well. In

economist Alvin Liew.

A spokesman for the Ministry of Trade and Industry (MTI) told The Straits Times that while the marine and offshore sector here is being weighed down by the weakness in oil prices, businesses in general have benefited from lower utilities and fuel-related costs.

Households in Singapore also stand to gain in a low oil price environment, which will help dampen the domestic prices of oil-related items, including private road transport and utility costs.

"Nonetheless, as there remains considerable uncertainty over the outlook for global oil prices, MTI will continue to closely monitor de-

Struggling energy firms slash jobs and salaries

The relentless decline in crude oil prices to 12-year lows spells trouble for job seekers in energy-related fields here, say recruitment specialists.

The number of jobs is dwindling while those already employed in the industry face pay cuts as firms move to rein in costs.

Mr Brett Marsh, managing director of South and Central Asia at EarthStream Global, told The Straits Times yesterday that the number of job vacancies across the oil and gas and offshore sectors has fallen by more than half over the past 12 months.

"Many of those jobs affected are high-cost related functions, such as specialist engineers," noted Mr Marsh. "Companies are not signing off these budgets because projects have been put on hold and new vessels are not being chartered to the extent they were previously."

"It's a knock-on effect from the low oil prices, because these organisations are stimulated by projects. Without a continuous pipeline of projects, it's just not economical to hire."

Energy and offshore firms here have been hit hard since anaemic global demand coupled with a still-growing supply glut started sending oil prices falling sharply in June 2014.

Oil majors such as Shell and Chevron have announced plans to axe jobs by the thousand across their global operations, while smaller players here, including Vard Holdings, Ezra Holdings and Otto Marine, have taken steps to reduce their headcount.

The downturn in the industry shows little sign of abating, especially with Brent crude sliding below US\$30 a barrel for the first time since 2004 last week.

Mr David Leong, managing director of human resource firm People Worldwide Consulting, said the oil and gas industry is witnessing a "severe contraction" in hiring as many companies are bracing themselves for a protracted dry spell.

Besides reducing staff, pay cuts are also on the table, noted Mr Leong, with some companies slashing salaries by 20 per cent while lowering wages for incoming staff by 10 to 15 per cent.

A typical general manager could see his monthly salary of \$15,000 cut to \$12,000.

"Generally, the market is freezing up and salaries will likely head even lower or, at best, stay at the same level," he said.

Mr Leong also noted that companies are increasingly opting for contractors instead of making perma-

nent hires under their own payrolls, which translates to lower costs.

"The demand for contractors has grown somewhat as the main yards and owners are outsourcing production parts and assembly to contractors," he said.

"The outlook is bleak, particularly for the major players in the field. Many owners and large contractors in the key markets are going under and filing for bankruptcy and this will have a severe impact for downstream players in Singapore."

Mr Marsh said: "It's a challenging year ahead, particularly as oil prices are expected to continue to go downwards."

"Even if you do see an uplift in oil prices, it will have to be sustained over a period of time before there is any effect on the (labour) marketplace."

Recruitment firm Hays noted in a recent report on the oil and gas sector that job security has been a big issue for many over the past 12 months and "promises to be so for the coming year also".

Jacqueline Woo

PROJECTS ON HOLD

Many of those jobs affected are high-cost related functions, such as specialist engineers. Companies are not signing off these budgets because projects have been put on hold and new vessels are not being chartered to the extent they were previously.

”

MR BRETT MARSH, managing director of South and Central Asia at EarthStream Global, on the sharp drop in job vacancies in the energy sector.

Why are oil prices plunging?

Oil prices are threatening to hit historic new lows in the days ahead amid a global supply glut and tepid economic growth around the world. Chia Yan Min looks at some of the factors keeping crude prices down.

Supply glut



Poly grads' starting pay rises after flat two years

Survey shows employment rate remains high, with salaries up by about 5%

Sandra Davie
Senior Education
Correspondent

After a flat two years, the starting salaries of polytechnic graduates have climbed by around 5 per cent.

The graduating class of 2015 who landed full-time jobs were hired on a median monthly salary of \$2,100, compared with \$2,000 in 2013 and 2014.

The monthly pay of graduates who had completed national service (NS) after finishing school in 2012 also moved up by \$100 to \$2,500.

These were the results of the latest employment survey by Singapore's five polytechnics, which were released yesterday. It found that the employment rate for the newest polytechnic graduates remained high at 88.9 per cent, and 91.5 per cent for post-NS ones.

Still, more are either finding it tougher to land full-time employment or prefer to work part-time as they consider their options.

Those with full-time jobs fell from 59.4 per cent for the class of 2014 to 57.9 per cent for those graduating last year.

Meanwhile, those taking up part-time or temporary employment went from 29.8 per cent in 2014 to 31 per cent last year.

But this is no cause for worry, said the polytechnics. The majority of graduates doing part-time or temporary work said they were pursuing further studies or preparing to do so.

With the further expansion of public university places last year, one in five polytechnic graduates



The five polytechnics – Nanyang (above), Ngee Ann, Singapore, Republic and Temasek – said that while there was an increase in those taking up part-time or temporary employment, the majority of graduates doing such work said they were pursuing further studies or preparing to do so. ST PHOTO: ALICIA CHAN

won a place in a degree course this year. Four years ago, the figure was 15 per cent – less than one in seven.

Most new university places were created from the expansion of the

Singapore Institute of Technology, which was set up to offer degree pathways for polytechnic graduates, and SIM University.

Recruitment experts said free-

Salaries of polytechnic graduates across courses

Course category	Gross monthly salary (\$)	
	Fresh graduates	Post-NS graduates
Applied Sciences	2,000	2,338
Built Environment, Engineering & Maritime	2,200	2,500
Business, Management, Design & others	2,000	2,500
Health Sciences	2,350	2,610
Hybrid courses	2,000	2,300
Information & Digital Technologies	2,000	2,478
All courses	2,100	2,500

Source: JOINT POLYTECHNIC GRADUATE EMPLOYMENT SURVEY 2015 ST GRAPHICS

ing, said: "This is the age of Uber, so many of them in the IT and creative industries want to work as independent contractors so they can be flexible with their time."

The ride-hailing app Uber does not employ taxi drivers, but uses independent contractors.

Nanyang Polytechnic IT graduate Kalista Chan, who chose to work on the Earn and Learn scheme despite her high grade point average, said she wanted to chalk up some work experience before deciding on her degree education.

Under the Earn and Learn scheme, Institute of Technical Education and polytechnic graduates can further their qualifications while working.

Ms Chan, 20, who works as a functional analyst at Accenture while studying for a specialist diploma, said: "Business analytics is a wide field. I felt that I needed to first understand the industry and the opportunities available in the field. University studies can wait."

The survey, which involved 10,513 graduates from last year and 4,876 post-NS graduates who completed their diploma course in 2012, also compared the pay levels of polytechnic graduates across different courses. Those with diplomas in built environment, engineering and maritime, and health sciences were the best paid.

Fresh graduates from the health sciences courses, which include physiotherapy and occupational therapy, had median monthly salaries of \$2,350, while post-NS graduates from the courses got \$2,610.

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Move to gauge worth of private degrees

Graduates from 9 private schools being surveyed on jobs and wages

Pearl Lee

Students who graduated from nine private schools in 2014 are being surveyed to find out what jobs they went into and what their wages are.

The Council for Private Education (CPE), which regulates the private education sector, is leading the initiative, supported by the Ministry of Manpower and Ministry of Education (MOE).

The CPE told The Straits Times that the information collected will "help to guide future policy formulation for matters related to private education, manpower and graduate employment outcomes".

The nine schools are: Curtin Education Centre; ITC School of Laws; James Cook Australia Institute of Higher Learning; Kaplan Higher Education Institute; Management Development Institute of Singapore; Ngee Ann-Adelaide Education Centre; Singapore Institute of Management; SMF Institute of Higher Learning and Trent Global College of Technology and Management.

These schools were chosen as

they had the largest student enrolment, the CPE said.

The MOE's higher education policy division awarded a tender worth \$109,000 to research firm Forbes Research in October last year, to carry out an 18-week-long study on the 13,000 students who graduated from these schools in 2014.

A sample of the survey questionnaire was appended to the tender documents. It asked respondents for their employment status in the year before they started their private studies and six months after completing their last exams at the private school.

They were also asked for their basic and gross monthly salaries before and after getting their degrees.

One question asked the graduates if they wished they had not furthered their studies at a private institute. If they answered yes, they would be asked to select the reason from a list of options, such as their qualification being not as well recognised by employers when compared to those of public institutions, or that the career prospects and wages associated with the degree were below expectations.

There are more than 300 private schools in Singapore, with many offering diploma and degree programmes. These are attended by an

RELOOKING ECOSYSTEM OF LEARNING

There are many who quit their jobs to focus full-time on getting their first degree, but they realise after graduating that they are marked against fresh grads.

”

MR DAVID LEONG, human resource expert

estimated 77,000 Singaporeans and 29,000 foreigners. Students who do not make the cut at public universities often take a degree at these private institutes.

As part of the national SkillsFuture movement, the Government has been encouraging people not to focus on chasing a degree, but on acquiring specialised skills.

The polytechnics and autonomous universities are mandated by MOE to conduct a graduate employment survey each year.

Among those being surveyed is Mr Daniel Ng, 30, who got his first degree in logistics management from Kaplan here in 2014.

The former logistics specialist will soon take on a managerial role in another supply chain firm. The job, which requires candidates to possess at least a degree, comes with a salary increase of about 50 per cent.

The former Temasek Polytechnic student, who started working seven years ago, said getting a degree has created "more opportunities".

He paid about \$20,000 in all for his part-time degree and completed it in 18 months. "Having a degree makes a difference, especially when you are working in a multinational company. Degree holders start at a higher pay grade."

But Mr Ng knows he is luckier than his peers. "I have friends who also went for a degree, but it made no difference to their work. It's quite common and is partly why I didn't pursue a degree earlier."

Human resource expert David Leong, who runs PeopleWorldwide Consulting, said the survey is part of a long-term move to "align the different education pathways".

"There are many who quit their jobs to focus full-time on getting their first degree, but they realise after graduating that they are marked against fresh grads who are just 22 or 23 years old," he said, adding that in most cases, a private degree would translate to just a 5 to 10 per cent increase in pay for mid-career types.

"The Government is hoping to relook the ecosystem of higher learning. Private education institutes are a parallel track to the public universities for people to meet their aspirations, but upgraders must be given due recognition."

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Private schools hold own surveys

Private schools, such as the Singapore Institute of Management (SIM), James Cook Australia Institute of Higher Learning (JCU) and the Management Development Institute of Singapore (MDIS), already conduct similar graduate employment surveys internally to track the development of their graduates.

These surveys also focus on whether the private schools' graduates found jobs within six months, and their salaries.

SIM has been conducting its own surveys since 2010 and the results are used for "internal monitoring and quality improvements".

Its survey for the Class of 2014 noted that 73 per cent of its graduates had found full-time jobs within six months. It also reported an average gross monthly salary of \$2,766 for graduates in full-time jobs.

MDIS did not provide the salary details of its graduates, but said that in 2014, about eight in 10 of its students had found full-time or part-time jobs six months after graduating.

At JCU, its survey of students who graduated at the end of 2013 and in 2014 found that more than seven in 10 were settled in jobs within six months. About half had salaries of between \$2,001 and \$3,000, and about 30 per cent made less than \$2,000 a month.

These figures are lower than those of the autonomous universities, which conduct and publish their graduate employment surveys annually.

The National University of Singapore, Nanyang Technological University and Singapore Management University reported a consolidated gross mean salary of \$3,333 a month for the Class of 2014.

More than eight in 10 of their 10,126 graduates surveyed found full-time jobs within six months of their last exam.

The Singapore Institute of Technology reported a gross mean monthly salary of \$3,010. Almost 92 per cent of its graduates were employed within six months. Data for the Singapore University of Technology and Design is not available as its first batch of students graduated only last August.

Pearl Lee

Shaping up for a jubilant Year of the Monkey

