

Working for Singapore



THE WORKERS' PARTY MANIFESTO 2025



WORKING FOR SINGAPORE



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Secretary-General's Message

My Fellow Singaporeans,

Singapore turns 60 this year.

On the occasion of SG60, it is worthwhile to recall why the founding generation of Singapore leaders understood the best system for governing Singapore to be that of a Westminster-styled parliamentary democracy. Even at the height of one-party rule, the political operating system did not and was not changed.

Our political system ensures that politics remains contestable. It allows Singaporeans of all stripes to organise and, separately, participate in politics.

Critically, **Singapore's political system is designed to host an opposition presence in Parliament – a loyal opposition** – that works in the interests of the country. To reiterate: this is by design.

A loyal opposition exists to remind us that any Singaporean can legitimately host a different view to the PAP. And there is nothing wrong or disloyal about that.

What is important is that those alternative views and different ideas seek better outcomes for Singapore and Singaporeans.

This is the driving force behind the Workers' Party's General Election 2025 slogan – Working for Singapore.

As an opposition party with a fledgling presence in Parliament, we seek a better Singapore for all Singaporeans. We work for them.

There remains much work to be done: in some cases, at the margins of existing policy **to catch Singaporeans who risk falling between the cracks**, and in other cases, to imagine and advance new and innovative policy ideas **to accommodate the aspirations of a more diverse Singapore than at any other time in our history**. This publication is a modest contribution towards that endeavour.

I welcome all Singaporeans and friends of Singapore to read our Manifesto, and to start with the first chapter which covers a selection of our proposals and ideas that have been taken up in part or implemented by the government of the day. We also focus on proposals to mitigate the cost-of-living and address affordability concerns, before exploring ideas and proposals to advance jobs and opportunities for Singaporean workers and businesses. We round the document up with our proposals for political reforms and on views on security and geopolitics.

The Workers' Party welcomes your feedback and invites you to join us in *Working for Singapore*.

Pritam Singh
Secretary-General
The Workers' Party

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The five sections of the Workers' Party Manifesto 2025 outline our policy proposals to improve the lives of Singaporeans.

First, measures to target **affordability and cost of living concerns**, including operating costs for businesses. This includes alternatives to the goods and services tax (GST) to generate tax revenue, and also proposals to improve affordability of utilities, housing and care. We also call for additional support for workers facing job insecurity, including mandating retrenchment benefits and a redundancy insurance scheme.

The second section covers **economic growth and opportunities**. Singaporean workers should form the core of our economy even as we welcome suitably qualified foreigners to work alongside us. We need clear measurement metrics to promote reemployment and reskilling of local workers, and to keep these affordable. Our proposals also look to enhance competitiveness for future industries, and also our small and medium enterprises (SMEs). Citizens' retirement adequacy should also be further strengthened by reforming the Central Provident Fund (CPF) system.

Third, we address **inclusion and equality** within our society to give everyone the best chance to flourish. Ideas include ensuring social outcomes are properly measured, alleviating poverty, enhancing support for parents and caregivers, addressing the needs of an ageing population, and improving access to housing and our built environment.

Section four contains our calls for greater levels of **accountability and democracy** in Singapore. Accountability can be enhanced by having institutional safeguards that are empowered to check and balance those in power with full independence. To further our democratic institutions, electoral reform has to happen by way of lowering the voting age to 18 and reverting to only single member constituencies.

Security and geopolitics is the focus of our final section with proposals for strengthening external and internal resilience. In addition to defence policies such as greater countermeasures against grey zone tactics, increasing full-time national serviceman's pay and better integration of our digital defences, we also need to enhance our internal supply chain resilience through building domestic manufacturing capacity and food supply.

OUR IMPACT ON PUBLIC POLICY

As a rational and responsible political party with elected representatives in Parliament, the Workers' Party advances policy proposals to benefit our citizens. While we are not in government – and therefore not in a position to implement policy – we believe that many of our proposals do end up being adopted in some form, which ultimately benefits Singaporeans.

The following section contains details of some of the policy changes in recent years.

Supporting the Involuntarily Unemployed

WP called for unemployment insurance in our 2006, 2011 and 2020 manifestos. We had also first pushed for this in Parliament since 2006 and published a 2016 policy paper outlining details of our proposed scheme.

During the 2023 National Day Rally, then-Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong finally announced a temporary financial support scheme for retrenched workers. In his 2024 May Day message, Aljunied GRC MP Pritam Singh repeated the call for **an insurance scheme to better protect retrenched workers**. This was followed by announcements during Budget 2025 of the SkillsFuture Jobseeker Support Scheme which offers financial support to involuntarily unemployed workers who actively seek new employment.

Anti-Discrimination Legislation

WP's 2020 manifesto identified key areas where anti-discrimination legislation was needed. This included prohibiting employment discrimination on the basis of race, gender, age and against Singapore citizens, and discrimination faced by persons with disabilities. In September 2020, the Minister for Manpower said that anti-discrimination legislation was a blunt tool and could be prescriptive.

During the debate in the Parliamentary Motion filed on “Empowering Women” in August 2021, Sengkang GRC MP He Ting Ru repeated WP's call to legislate against discriminatory practices in the workplace, to send a strong signal to employers that Singapore will not accept such practices against any of our workers. Later that month, during the 2021 National Day Rally, then-Prime Minister Lee announced that the government would introduce anti-discrimination legislation.

More than three years later, the Workplace Fairness Act was finally passed by Parliament. WP MPs spoke during the debate in support of the legislation, raising **concerns about exclusions for certain groups of workers, a lack of protections against indirect discrimination**, and also the hope that our laws would not be seen as tokenistic but instead address real-world discrimination.

Flexible Work Arrangements

In 2015, WP's manifesto proposed that companies with more than 20 employees should be obliged to consider requests for flexible work arrangements (FWA). Any such requests have to be considered and could only be refused by employers on reasonable business grounds. Employers would have to discuss with employees about available options, with the discussion duly documented, with a right of employees to appeal against any decision made by the employer.

On 4 October 2023, Sengkang GRC MP Louis Chua raised an adjournment motion in Parliament for “Flexible Work Arrangements for All”. In it, he repeated the call to legislate the right to FWAs for all workers, instead of relying on guidelines, advisories and moral suasion.

On 15 April 2024, the Ministry of Manpower announced FWA guidelines will be implemented by December 2024. Under the guidelines, all employers must have a process in place for workers to formally request for FWAs, and any rejection of such requests have to be on reasonable business grounds.

Shared Parental Leave

The WP 2020 Manifesto called for a shared parental leave scheme for 24 weeks of government-paid leave, to be shared between both parents as they may decide. There should be a minimum of 12 weeks taken by the mother and four weeks to the father.

Referencing then government policy allowing fathers to share only up to four weeks of leave granted to a mother, Sengkang GRC MP He Ting Ru said in her speech in October 2020, that this policy reinforced the outdated notion that childcare was primarily the mother's responsibility, rather than promoting equal parenting roles. Sengkang GRC MPs Louis Chua and Jamus Lim repeated the call in April 2022 for better equalisation of parental leave during the parliamentary debate on the White Paper on Singapore Women's Development.

During the 2024 National Day Rally, Prime Minister Lawrence Wong announced that by 1 April 2026, all parents of newborn children would be entitled to 10 additional weeks of shared parental leave on top of their current leave entitlements.

Work Pass Credential Assessments

WP's 2020 manifesto called for all Employment Pass (EP) and S Pass job applicants to have their educational credentials assessed by government-appointed consultants, with costs to be borne by the applicant and the report sent to the government, prospective employer and applicant.

On 1 March 2023, the Ministry of Manpower announced that companies in Singapore must verify educational qualifications of Employment Pass applicants from 1 September 2023. Employers would have to submit third-party verification proof for applicants with diploma-level qualifications and above.

Expanded the Public Rental Scheme

On 2 November 2021, Sengkang GRC MP Louis Chua in Parliament called on the government to create a viable and expanded public rental scheme to significantly increase its stock of rental flats across all flat sizes to cater to the changing aspirations of Singaporeans. Senior Minister of State for National Development Sim Ann responded that mainstream rental represents a significant departure from Singapore's public housing policy and principles, and could reshape social norms and weaken communities.

In 2023, Minister for National Development Desmond Lee, acknowledged the greater diversity in housing preferences of Singaporeans – including renting – and said that the government was studying more equitable access to housing for singles. A new class of serviced apartments for longer-term stay was also announced.

Vouchers for Renting HDB Flats in the Open Market

On 10 January 2023, Sengkang GRC MP Louis Chua asked if the government would provide a time-limited rental subsidy for rental flat applicants who qualified for the Parenthood Provisional Housing (PPHS) and Public Rental Schemes, if they were unable to find alternative temporary housing arrangements and have been unsuccessful in obtaining a flat from HDB after a pre-defined time period.

Minister for National Development Desmond Lee replied that “providing subsidies or grants for renting flats in the open market is likely to induce demand and drive up market rents, which would compound rather than help solve matters” and the government had “no plans to provide such rental subsidies”.

A year later, then-Deputy Prime Minister Lawrence Wong, in his Budget 2024 budget speech announced a PPHS voucher for a year to support eligible families who rent a HDB flat in the open market. Eligible families would receive \$300 per month.

Shorter BTO Wait Times

On 7 February 2023, Aljunied MP Pritam Singh said that accessible housing includes securing a flat in a timely fashion. He contrasted the average of two and a half years from booking to delivery of new HDB flats in 1989 to wait times of four to five years today, and called on the government to bring back wait times to 1989 levels.

On 16 June 2024, housing minister Desmond Lee said that “over time”, HDB would “recalibrate its building programme” for a larger proportion of new flats to have wait times of less than three years to better support home ownership, and marriage and parenthood aspirations of Singaporeans.

Family GPs

The 2015 manifesto proposed a Family Doctor Pairing Scheme to facilitate better care for families. The scheme called for resident families to be paired with a GP who would be more familiar with patient background and medical history.

In October 2022, the government announced the Healthier SG programme which aims to have one family physician for each resident. Under the plan, each resident develops health plans with their chosen family physician or clinic, with progress monitored going forward.

Protecting Scam Victims

In 2023, WP Chair and Aljunied MP Sylvia Lim in an adjournment motion proposed that banks should bear greater responsibility to prevent scams and in compensating victims.

The Financial Industry Disputes Resolution Centre in 2024 raised its adjudicating award limit to \$150,000, a step towards fairer treatment of scam victims.

Widening Access to Justice

In November 2020, WP Chair and Aljunied GRC MP Sylvia Lim tabled a Parliamentary Motion on “Justice for All”, which aimed to strengthen our justice system and ensure that it put everyone on equal footing. In her speech, Ms Lim reiterated the need to ensure fair access to justice for all, regardless of means or social status. Likewise, MP for Sengkang GRC He Ting Ru noted that a large number of accused persons still appeared before the courts unrepresented, and asked for steps to be taken to ensure that everyone in Singapore has equal access to the justice system rather than rely on legal representation being granted to them on a voluntary basis by the profession.

The Minister for Home Affairs announced on the same day that the government was looking into setting up a Public Defender’s Office. This was set up in December 2022.

Adjusting National Servicemen's Pay

On 22 February 2023, MP for Aljunied GRC Gerald Giam asked that allowances for full-time national servicemen (NSFs) be reviewed to account for inflationary pressures. The Senior Minister of State for Defence Heng Chee How said that this was not necessary as items such as lodging, food, clothing and medical care were paid for by the Singapore Armed Forces (SAF) and the Home Team.

Three months later on 29 May 2023, the Ministry of Defence (MINDEF) and Ministry of Home Affairs announced a \$200 increase in NS allowance from 1 July 2023. A further increase has been announced from 1 July 2025.

Tudungs at the Workplace

On 4 April 2017, Aljunied GRC MP Muhamad Faisal bin Abdul Manap spoke against the ban of wearing tudung in the nursing and uniformed services. Minister for Muslim Affairs Masagos Zulkifli cautioned against raising such issues in Parliament, saying it could disrupt racial and religious harmony.

Mr Faisal repeated the call during the 2021 Budget Debate, saying again that some Muslim women had to give up their nursing aspirations because of the tudung ban. Minister Masagos replied on 8 March 2021, saying that public pressure was not the way forward, and that the government preferred “careful, closed-door discussions”. Mr Faisal offered to participate in these discussions alongside other elected Malay MPs.

Later that month on 23 March 2021, Minister for Home Affairs K Shanmugam said that he had discussed the tudung ban for nurses with Muslim religious leaders in August 2020, and that a change would be likely. On 1 November 2021, Muslim nurses were finally allowed to wear the tudung to work.

Waiving ERP Administrative Fees

On 9 January 2017, MP for Aljunied GRC Muhammad Faisal Bin Abdul Manap asked the Minister for Transport to allow motorists to make payments for failed ERP deductions without incurring the administrative fee or with a less punitive fee. This was declined.

On 30 August 2024, the LTA announced that from 1 October 2024, the \$10 admin fee for missing ERP charge would be waived for motorists who paid within 5 days.

National Hydrogen Strategy

On 12 January 2022, Aljunied GRC MP Gerald Giam called for Singapore to include fuel cell electric vehicles (FCEVs). He also noted that about 30 other countries had already rolled out hydrogen roadmaps, and Singapore should do the same. He repeated his call in Parliament on 1 March 2022 for Singapore to launch a national hydrogen strategy and roadmap to spur the creation of a hydrogen economy.

On 25 October 2022, then-Deputy Prime Minister Lawrence Wong announced the launch of Singapore's National Hydrogen Strategy, a roadmap of how hydrogen can support Singapore's decarbonisation efforts. It was announced that hydrogen would power half of Singapore's needs by 2050. On 4 June 2024, the Energy Market Authority called for proposals for two new power plants by 2029 and 2030, stipulating the plants be hydrogen-compatible.

SECTION I

Affordability and Cost of Living

Cost of Living

Standing Parliamentary Committee on the Cost of Living

Parliament should establish a Standing Parliamentary Committee on the Cost of Living to ensure greater transparency and accountability in addressing cost of living challenges. The committee will track groups and businesses most affected by rising costs, identify structural challenges, and recommend long-term solutions.

The parliamentary committee will make its deliberations, findings and reports part of the public record and will hold public hearings for individuals, businesses and experts to provide testimony, ensuring diverse perspectives are considered. This contrasts with existing fora such as REACH and the Committee Against Profiteering, which lack full public transparency. By ensuring open deliberations, **the committee will make cost-of-living concerns a permanent, scrutinised and data-driven priority, avoiding temporary, piecemeal responses to economic pressures.**

Alternative Revenue Channels to the GST

WP MPs voted against the increase in GST to 9 per cent. We remain concerned that **increased GST adds to Singaporeans' cost of living burdens. The party proposes several less regressive revenue options which, in combination, will be sufficient to close the gap in anticipated increases in health and aged care costs.** A combination of the levers below can also be used to close the gap.

- Allow the revenue from the first nine years of land sales to be booked as current revenue in the government's budget. This is consistent with the government's own treatment of leases of less than 10 years, while continuing to direct additional land sales revenue *beyond* the ninth year into government reserves;

- Increase the Net Investment Returns Contribution (NIRC) from the current 50 per cent to 60 per cent. This will not diminish the principal reserves;
- Increase corrective taxes on goods such as alcohol, carbon or tobacco;
- Impose a net wealth tax of between 0.5 and 2 per cent on the assets of the top 1 per cent of wealth holders in the country; and
- Implement a minimum corporate tax rate of 15 per cent, consistent with our commitments under the Base Erosion Profit Shifting (BEPS) framework of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). This increases the effective rate for MNCs, but maintains an effective 3 per cent tax rate for SMEs.

Exempt Essential Items from GST

The WP proposes to exempt more essential goods from GST, including basic food items. This would ease the effects of inflation for low-income groups and offer relief to middle-income groups who receive less support from GST vouchers.

GST adds to the cost of goods and services and increases the cost of living and business costs directly. GST vouchers partially offset the burden of this tax for the lowest income groups. However, they are less effective when you take into account rising prices, as inflation increases the effects of the GST.

Concerns about the increased compliance costs and administrative burden to increase exemptions are unjustified, given the current patchwork of credits, vouchers, rebates and subsidies already in place. Singapore also already a long list of GST exempt or zero-rated supplies, including most public healthcare services, public education, public transportation, the sale and rental of residential properties and many financial services.

Additional Support for Workers Facing Job Insecurity

The Singapore economy is small and open. Retrenchment is a regular feature of our labour market. For the last ten years, MOM figures show that on average, 13,898 residents were retrenched each year, peaking in 2020 at 26,110 due to the Covid-19 pandemic. We should **strengthen safety nets for our workers without further delay** as the next global economic crisis may soon be upon us.

Implement a Redundancy Insurance Scheme

The Workers' Party proposes redundancy insurance for all local workers, where employers and employees contribute to a pool that pays out benefits to workers if retrenchment happens. Such a scheme is an important safety net, and studies have found little evidence of adverse consequences for employment outcomes.

Under WP's scheme, an involuntarily retrenched worker will receive 40 per cent of their last drawn salary, capped at 40 per cent of Singapore's prevailing median income, for up to six months. Payouts will come from an Employment Security Fund, mainly funded by equal monthly premium contributions from employers and employees that total 0.1 per cent of each worker's monthly salary.

After the first payout, workers must demonstrate that they are actively seeking employment in order to continue receiving the rest of the payouts. Starting such a scheme earlier rather than later will build up healthy reserves, reducing the need for government top-ups down the road.

Mandate Retrenchment Benefits

Retrenchment benefits are amounts paid out by employers to employees in the event of retrenchment. They form part of a worker's severance package, and are an important way for employers to attract and retain workers. Such benefits are currently not legally required, and instead subject to company policies and employment contracts.

Legislation should be introduced to mandate retrenchment benefits, starting with private sector establishments with at least 25 employees. This policy would ensure that these employees, regardless of years of service, receive compulsory benefits upon retrenchment, aligning Singapore with common human resource practices in East Asia.

Implement a National Minimum Wage

There should be a statutory and universal National Minimum Wage of \$1,600 for full-time work and pro-rated for part-time work. This will ensure that all Singaporeans will benefit from being paid a living wage.

International studies show that a modest minimum wage leads to little to no impact on employment. Instead, a well-calibrated minimum wage has the potential to elevate wages and improve the welfare and productivity of workers at all wage levels.

The National Wages Council (NWC) should deliberate and recommend updates to the National Minimum Wage. For its review of the National Minimum Wage, the NWC should include representatives from industry, academia, civil society and those who work closely with low-income families.

Lower Utility Bills for Smaller Consumers

High utilities prices form a significant part of costs borne by Singaporeans households and businesses, and we believe that apart from utilities providers using more cost-effective and efficient power generation and water production to lower costs of generation, **tiered pricing for households should also be implemented to lower their utilities bills.**

Tiered Pricing for Electricity Usage

The Open Energy Market has failed to provide more stable electricity pricing. The problem has become more acute, with climate change bringing higher and more variable energy prices.

The government should shift from the current single unit rate for energy to a tiered pricing model that ultimately leads to lower bills for households, particularly those with lower energy consumption. It has been found that tiered pricing encourages lower household energy consumption and lower utilities costs.

More Pricing Tiers for Household Water

The current two-tier pricing for domestic water usage places a heavy cost burden on HDB households. In 2020, HDB households consumed an average of 16.2 cubic metres per month, far below the lower water tariff rate of 40 cubic metres per month.

Water pricing tiers should be broken down into five tiers to better reflect consumption patterns, with tiers set at 0–10, 10–20, 20–30, 30–40, and 40+ cubic metres, with lower prices for lower usage levels.

This should be coupled with a graduated Water Conservation Tax, starting at 30 per cent for those consuming between 0-10 cubic metres of water, to 60 per cent for households that consume between 30-40 cubic metres of water per month.

Reduce Healthcare Costs for Vulnerable Groups

Singapore's MediShield Life, MediFund and MediSave health financing framework, together with subsidies, finance only a fraction of total national healthcare expenditure. Outpatients also incur significantly more out-of-pocket spending over the long-term compared with inpatient care.

Even as Healthier SG's focus on preventive health promises to lower healthcare costs, out-of-pocket expenditures remain significant, with increases to healthcare costs outstripping inflation.

Lift the Cap on MediSave Use for Over-60s

Many Singaporeans suffer from chronic conditions requiring extended care. Currently patients can use their MediSave balances to pay for 23 chronic conditions under the Chronic Disease Management Programme (CDMP), leaving those with conditions that fall outside of the list with out-of-pocket expenses.

The WP proposes **Singaporeans over 60 years old should be allowed to use their MediSave to pay for all medical expenses not already covered by MediShield Life, MediFund or other assistance schemes. Annual spending limits should also be removed for chronic diseases.** Such usage should only be permitted at government polyclinics, public specialist outpatient clinics and CHAS clinics.

Silver Living Development Scheme

By 2030, a quarter of Singaporeans will be over 65, with an estimated third requiring care. To address diverse needs and preferences for non-institutional living, assisted living options should be expanded.

We propose a **Silver Living Development Scheme to increase the provision of affordable, assisted living facilities for seniors who cannot live independently but are not too ill to be cared for in nursing homes.** This will supplement existing Community Care Apartments, and offer substantial land grants to nonprofit organisations that meet rigorous care, operational and financial standards.

More Healthcare Support for Persons with Disabilities

The Community Health Assist Scheme (CHAS) currently provides additional subsidies to Singaporeans from the Pioneer, Merdeka and Majulah Generation, and Public Assistance cardholders. **Persons with disabilities should also be included as a dedicated group eligible for special CHAS subsidies, regardless of income.**

Singaporeans with disabilities should also receive **additional MediSave top-ups and subsidies for intermediate and long-term care to support their higher medical expenses.**

The government should also **regulate insurers to ensure that they do not discriminate unfairly against people with disabilities, special needs, or mental or neurological illnesses.**

Improve Access to Complex Cancer Treatments

The recent restrictions on insurance coverage and MediSave usage for cancer drug treatments in Singapore have caused concern amongst cancer patients and their families, particularly those suffering from complex conditions or rare cancers.

To address the gaps in current cancer treatment policies, a National Cancer Care Appeals Board should be set up.

The board should comprise doctors to review complex cancer cases where standard therapies are ineffective or unavailable, based on real-world evidence and other clinical data; to make timely decisions on allowing insurance coverage, additional government subsidies or MediSave usage for off-label cancer drugs not included in the Cancer Drug List (CDL). This will provide a safety net for patients needing unconventional treatment options, ensuring they have access to life-saving drugs and therapies. The board should also function transparently and operate with a sense of urgency to avoid unnecessary delays in treatment.

Revise Hospital Means Testing Criteria for Households with No Income

Hospital subsidies are currently tied to the annual value of properties (AV) where household members do not earn any income. Retirees living off their savings but living in homes with AVs above \$21,000 end up being entitled to less subsidies for medical bills. This does not take into account situations where it may not be feasible for them to sell their homes, such as when they or other household members suffer from serious illnesses which makes relocation highly disruptive and impractical.

The AV of properties should be removed as a means testing criteria for households with no income.

Towards Affordable Homes, Away from Asset Appreciation

Decades of liberal public housing policies have led to a general expectation that HDB prices will keep rising. This has resulted in ever-rising HDB prices for succeeding generations of young Singaporeans, who find getting on the housing ladder increasingly difficult. There is an irreconcilable conflict between asset appreciation and housing affordability.

Make HDB Flats Affordable for First-Time Applicants

The government's approach to make housing more affordable with grants and subsidies raises concerns about long-term sustainability, as the State does not have unlimited capacity to keep subsidising purchases of ever-pricier homes. There must be a reframing of mindsets to start thinking of HDB flats as affordable homes to live in, not wealth accumulation vehicles.

A clear metric of affordability must be adopted to set BTO prices. For first-time applicants, the house price-to-income (HPI) ratio should be based on the median income levels of new homeowners, rather than national household median income. The HPI, after grants, should be closer to 3.0 for standard BTOs.

Offer 70-year BTO Flat Leases at Lower Prices

Apart from the standard 99 year leasehold option, **HDB should also offer 70 year lease BTO flats at a lower price, with an option to top up the lease by another 29 years.** This will allow BTO flats to be sold at a lower price and may better suit the life plans of many leaseholders.

The lease amount for the additional 29 year period should be fixed upon purchase, but with payment made only upon the exercise of the option. The option should expire after Year 65 of the 70 year lease, giving HDB a five year planning window to decide how to deal with the unit.

Tackle HDB Flat Lease Decay

To decouple HDB house prices from the current asset appreciation model, we should make **an orderly transition to a more rational pricing model**. This will prevent a sudden collapse in house prices, which will compromise the retirement adequacy of many Singaporeans, particularly those planning to fund their retirement by selling their flats. An orderly transition will also address concerns over lease decay, avoiding a precipitous drop in HDB resale prices for units with a short remaining lease duration.

A universal buy-back scheme should be introduced for all ageing HDB flats. This will stabilise resale prices, as the government will be the buyer of last resort. The buy-back formula should be equitable for both the leaseholder and the government.

Re-purchased flats can be rented to Singaporeans at rates between commercial and HDB public rentals, offering larger homes and flexible options for those not ready for long-term leases. This will also allow younger singles and those with young families to have a roof over their heads, and give them a chance to build their savings to purchase a longer-term lease. BTO flat buyers waiting for their flats to be completed should also be able to rent these units.

Clarify HDB Land Valuation by Publishing the Chief Valuer's Terms of Reference

An overwhelming amount of residential land in Singapore is leasehold which must be returned to the State at the end of its 99-year lease. This land is then regenerated and developed for public housing or redesignated for other purposes. There is limited public understanding of how land for HDB flats is valued, including the principles and data used by the Chief Valuer. It is established that HDB resale transactions contribute to the price of land for BTO flats. Over the last five years, the prices of such transactions have increased by over 50%.

The latest BTO classification system amplifies the public interest in the Chief Valuer's work. For the first time in the history of Singapore's public housing story, the government has implemented a subsidy recovery mechanism that applies upon the sale of a household's first HDB flat purchased under the new Plus and Prime models. Prior to this, a resale levy was imposed only when a Singaporean household purchased a second subsidised HDB flat.

While land valuation for public housing land is priced at "fair market value", concerns remain about the opacity of the process particularly over how high resale flat prices will influence future land valuations. There is significant public interest in understanding the formula that explains specifically how the fair market value for land sold for public housing is derived. This interest arises from a deep concern about the affordability of new BTO flats and sustainability of housing subsidies financed from the public purse.

Given how much land is ultimately owned by the State, the government should lift the veil on the Terms of Reference and assumptions guiding the Chief Valuer's work. This would help clarify the methods and considerations involved in determining land value for public housing, with a view to appreciate and justify how, if at all, land sold for public housing can be made more affordable for all Singaporeans.

Address Business Costs for Local Firms

Increases in business costs ultimately hurt consumers in the form of higher prices, thus we must have more sustainable solutions to address recent increases in business costs such as rent.

Strengthen Heartland Shops

Heartland hawker centre and coffee shop food prices have gone up significantly over the years. This is partly driven by high rents charged by privately-owned coffee shops (acquired by business owners who have paid millions of dollars), and by hawker centres outsourced to and run by external for-profit entities.

Hawker centres directly managed by NEA should be built ahead of demand as a key feature of new estates. Pioneering hawkers of these new hawker centres should pay lower rents as they build up their demand, with stalls awarded leases based on criteria including retail diversity and price range.

To better keep rents stable and manageable, HDB should reacquire all privately owned coffee shops. NEA should also manage hawker centres directly.

HDB should continue to build and directly manage shopping plazas for neighbourhoods, aiming for a diverse retail mix that favours small businesses and microenterprises.

Ensure Affordable Commercial and Industrial Rents

Rent is a significant cost for local businesses. For micro-businesses and start-ups operating in our heartlands, the policy of pegging HDB rents to commercial rates can be crippling.

JTC Corporation should expand its market share for industrial space and continue offering low-rent options at different price-value points for SMEs alongside its private sector-run facilities. Low-rent commercial spaces should be allocated by ballot conducted by HDB, to stimulate micro-businesses and entrepreneurship in the heartlands, possibly with priority granted to those living in the vicinity through the price-quality method, an evaluation framework introduced by HDB.

To minimise the rental surges seen in the last decade, the government's commercial and industrial land policies should also ensure that commercial and industrial rental growth does not outpace inflation.

Improve School Access for Vulnerable Groups

Extend Fee and Financial Assistance to All Preschools

Early childhood education costs remain higher on average, than sending a child to primary or secondary school. While 88 per cent of three to four-year-olds are enrolled in preschool, this drops to 78 per cent for lower-income families.

The Kindergarten Fee Assistance Scheme (KiFAS) is currently limited to parents whose children attend kindergartens operated by anchor operators or the Ministry of Education. This should be expanded to include all preschools located in HDB housing estates. Working mother subsidies for childcare and preschool should be expanded to all families, as stay-at-home mothers also contribute via other means such as unpaid care work.

An alternative to subsidies could be to give parents vouchers to be applied to their children's childcare or preschool fees.

This approach would be to give parents more autonomy to choose a preschool that suits their children's needs best.

Equalise SPED and Mainstream School Fees

Families with members with special needs generally already incur greater medical and living expenses. **The fees for special education (SPED) schools should be lowered from the current \$90 a month to the \$13 currently charged by mainstream schools.**

Limit Skyrocketing Vehicle Ownership Costs

Record high Certificate of Entitlement (COE) prices have revealed flaws in the current Vehicle Quota System (VQS). The government has not addressed problems such as imbalanced monthly quotas and significant demand from private hire cars and affluent car buyers driving up COE prices.

Comprehensive reforms are needed to align the system more closely with its original goals.

Reduce COE Volatility

To tackle excess COE price volatility, we should redistribute the vehicle quota supply to ensure that there are comparable numbers of COEs offered every year. Excess quotas from high-supply years should be transferred to years with lower supply. This measure will stabilise prices and make the system more predictable. The current “cut-and-fill” system is only done on an *ad hoc* basis. There should be a clear target for COEs offered every year, which is balanced across years.

Make Ownership of Smaller-Capacity

Motorcycles More Affordable

Many motorcycle owners are from lower income groups and rely on their vehicles for work. The existing COE system puts all motorcycles into a single category which means that owners of expensive high-capacity motorcycles are bidding against those who need smaller-capacity motorcycles for work.

COEs for motorcycles should be categorised into different classes based on their open market value, aligning with the categorisation used for motorcycle licences. This approach would keep COEs more affordable for owners of smaller-capacity motorcycles.

Require Private Hire Car Companies to Bid for COEs in the Open Category

The surge in private hire platforms has intensified competition for COEs as private hire car (PHC) rental companies compete for COEs alongside private car owners. This surge has pushed up COE prices, most acutely affecting families with modest means but use a car to transport young children, elderly parents or disabled family members.

PHCs should be required to bid in the Open category, paying prices aligned with their engine sizes in Category A or B.

This mirrors the approach currently in place for taxis.

Equitable Distance-Based Charging Regime Under ERP 2.0

The government has acknowledged that there is a possibility to switch to distance-based charging (DBC) under ERP 2.0. This may end up causing hardship for those who live further away from the city centre, or drive for a living, leading to inequitable outcomes.

Designing an DBC should aim for a more equitable system, and involve an extended transition period. During this period, discounts should be given to those who purchased their vehicles before DBC was implemented and live further away from the city centre. A discounting system should also be available for those who depend on driving for their livelihoods.

Additionally, should the existing COE system and quotas be maintained, there should be a phase-in period where COE prices are discounted by the corresponding average distance charge, until market prices fully adjust to reflect the new dual COE-DBC regime.

Make Public Transport More Affordable and Accessible

Public transport must remain affordable and accessible to Singaporeans and should not be for-profit, given the crucial role it plays in our daily lives for work and recreational activities.

Establish a National Transport Corporation

Over the past decade, public transport fares have increased many times, with fare hikes outpacing core inflation in some years. Even though we have seen fare reductions, recent increases ranging from a 7 per cent hike in adult fare in 2019 and 2023 and a further 6 per cent hike in 2024 have significantly contributed to commuting costs. Bearing in mind that the government provides over \$2 billion annually in subsidies to support bus and train services, we observe public transport operators posting large profits at the group level.

We propose the establishment of a National Transport Corporation (NTC). The NTC will be a publicly-owned, non-profit, multi-modal land transport entity, which will oversee the planning and operation of all MRT, LRT and trunk bus services in Singapore.

The NTC would reinvest profits for commuters' benefit, ensure fare sustainability, optimise infrastructure revenue, attract top talent, enhance service and transparency, leverage data for improvements, achieve economies of scale and enable the Land Transport Authority to focus on its regulatory role.

Increase School Bus Fare Subsidies for People with Disabilities

School bus fares are a significant concern for the disability and special needs community. Families in the community are more reliant on specialised transport options, and often have additional medical appointments or special programmes to attend, which raises transportation expenditures.

The monthly household income limit for the Financial Assistance Scheme (FAS) and Enabling Transport Subsidy (ETS) should be increased to decrease the impact of increase in transport costs for families who depend on school buses to send their children with disabilities for early intervention programmes and special needs care centres.

Free Off-Peak Public Transport for Seniors and Persons with Disabilities

Some seniors and persons with disabilities (PwDs) in Singapore may be deterred from working or maintaining an active lifestyle due to the costs of public transport. This not only affects economic participation but also mental and physical health.

The WP proposes free off-peak public transport for seniors and PwDs, funded by the government. This initiative would go some way in encouraging them to remain economically active and socially engaged.

SECTION II

Economic Growth and Opportunities

Prioritise Local Talent

In 2024, Singapore's labour force participation rate was 68.2 per cent, a slight drop from 68.6 per cent in 2023, with male participation at 74.0 per cent and female at 62.8 per cent. Yet, **Singapore remains heavily reliant on foreign labour. Refocusing policies to prioritise local hiring could reduce this dependence, lower costs and strengthen the local workforce, especially for professionals, managers, executives and technician (PMET) roles.** While foreign manpower is necessary for meeting industry demands, over-reliance may hinder the development of home-grown talent and the long-term sustainability of Singapore's labour market.

Tie Employment Passes to Skills Transfer to Singaporeans

The renewal of work passes in key industries should be subject to employers demonstrating that there has been effective skills transfer to local workers.

A new type of fixed-term work pass should be introduced for specific industries. These work passes would require employers to demonstrate that local workers with the company or industry benefited by acquiring skills through transfer or upgrading, before the passes can be renewed or re-issued. This scheme should be introduced to industries where there is less of a shortage of skilled local workers.

Skills acquisition or transfer should be tracked, monitored and publicly reported as key performance indicators that are part of the Industry Transformation Roadmaps 2.0. When this is not done, clear reasons should be provided, along with plans to address the gaps. There should also be government-facilitated formal and informal interactions between Overseas Networks & Enterprise Pass holders and local employers and workers to maximise the potential for skills and network transfers.

Increase Higher Education Intake for In-Demand Skills

ITEs, polytechnics and universities should expand course intakes for occupations listed in the Shortage Occupation List (SOL). Institutions should admit all students who meet the required standards for courses tied to industry shortages, regardless of relative performance. This approach will ensure that more Singaporeans are better equipped to fill these roles, reducing reliance on foreign workers.

Lower SkillsFuture Mid-Career Qualifying Age

The qualifying age for the SkillsFuture Mid-Career Enhanced Subsidy and the SkillsFuture Level-Up Programme is 40 years. Yet the speed of technological advancement means that skills or knowledge acquired after completing education become outdated quickly. Additionally, most workers now expect to stay in their current jobs for an average of around only three years. This means that we can expect more workers to need some form of skills upgrading much sooner than has been the case.

The qualifying age for these programmes should be lowered to 35, for Singaporeans who need to upgrade or are facing career disruptions at an earlier age to receive support.

KPIs for SkillsFuture and Career Coaching Programmes

Existing SkillsFuture and Career Coaching Programmes do not currently have or publish clear KPIs that track their effectiveness.

KPIs, such as take-up rates among eligible workers, duration of unemployment and post-training placement into related employment, should be measured and publicly released on a regular basis. This data should also be collated across demographic dimensions such as age, race, gender, vocation and disability status. Doing so will raise the accountability and transparency of these programmes, as well as better aid the adjustment of policies to ensure that they achieve their intended effects.

Introduce an Interest-Free SkillsFuture Education Loan

Modern jobs and workplaces demand even greater investments in human capital in the future. These may not necessarily be offered by the Autonomous Universities (AUs), but by a wide range of private Continuing Education and Training (CET) training providers. Existing Grants that support training in specific skills are limited and highly competitive.

The government should establish a zero-interest SkillsFuture education loan to support the cost of CET programmes and qualifications, to supplement the \$4,000 SkillsFuture Credit top-up and the SkillsFuture Training Allowance. This will also address how those from lower income backgrounds may be disadvantaged by commercially-available loans that may require credit background checks or charge commercial interest rates.

To further expand the scope of courses on offer, loans to CET programmes could be calibrated towards courses in either high-growth industries that lack Singaporean manpower, or in other economically or socially important areas.

Align School Curriculum with Evolving Needs

Singapore's education system is academically oriented and does not give our students and graduates the full complement of skills to meet the broader needs of our labour market. This is seen in our persistent structural shortages and the Ministry of Manpower's Shortage Occupation List (SOL).

More systematic and longer-term coordination between manpower and education policies are needed to ensure Singaporeans can perform jobs on the SOL, such as healthcare. It is insufficient to keep relying on short-term manpower policies to address long-term structural shortages. This problem is likely to get worse as advances in artificial intelligence and robotics rapidly alter the employment landscape.

We propose a comprehensive framework to institutionalise collaboration between the Ministries of Education and Manpower, so they work together to ensure continuous alignment between our education system and the evolving needs of our economy. This framework will include regular joint reviews of critical skills shortages, integrate labour market insights into educational programmes developed with industry partners and strategically allocate funds to address structural skills gaps in both the domestic and global economies.

We should also implement skill-demand feedback loops from industry on three levels: (a) curriculum design, (b) funding for structural skill-gap areas and (c) career guidance for students. This targeted approach ensures that our education system can provide students with the knowledge and skills needed to achieve high-value career pathways both domestically and globally.

Allow SkillsFuture Credit to be Used for AI Subscriptions

Innovations in AI can be used to boost productivity, especially among workers who are relatively less experienced or lower-skilled. However, the quality of AI tools vary greatly, with paid models functioning significantly better than their free counterparts. Singaporean workers should have the opportunity to use the best models available, to ensure that they level up their skills in line with the latest technology.

The government should expand the scope of SkillsFuture Credits to cover expenses for subscriptions to AI assistants and tools to accelerate skills acquisition to improve productivity to level the playing field for Singaporeans with less means to pay for such subscriptions.

Uplift Tradesperson Jobs

While employers have stated preferences for skills over academic qualifications and experience, government subsidies for young Singaporeans (under 40 years of age) remain heavily weighted towards academic programmes that result in a diploma or degree.

Singapore also has a shortage of skilled tradespersons and artisans, resulting in an overreliance on foreign workers to fill these jobs. The government should thus offer the same level of subsidies to Singaporeans aged below 40 for tradespersons licensing courses, to support professions such as electricians and plumbers.

The relevant agencies should also more rigorously enforce licensing regulations and raise public awareness about why we should hire licensed tradespersons. Vocational skill levels and wages should be raised to be more attractive to young Singaporeans. Similarly, our agencies should also work to change perceptions about these jobs lacking prestige and also increase early awareness amongst students that these are viable career options.

Track and Address Chronic Underemployment

Underemployment is the underuse of a worker due to a job that does not use the worker's skills, is part time, or leaves the worker idle. Singapore currently only measures time-related underemployment where hours worked are less than what the worker is willing to engage in. However, this is only one of three underemployment statistics that the International Labour Organization measures.

Skills-related underemployment is closer to the reality facing Singapore workers, such as PMETs becoming a private-hire worker after losing their jobs in their 50s. We must urgently track and regularly publish underemployment measures to enable Singaporeans to assess if the government's efforts to get these workers into suitable full-time employment have been successful. An accurate understanding of skills-based underemployment can also feed into the selection criteria for foreign work pass applicants to more accurately address labour shortages.

Recognise Unpaid Labour

National income statistics exclude the measurement of important contributors to economic activity. The most significant of which is the contributions of those undertaking unpaid labour in our households, which may result in wrongly entrenching the perception that these workers are less valuable – particularly economically – compared with those who undertake paid work. This is especially problematic because equivalent *paid* services – such as foreign domestic workers, cleaning companies and home nursing care – *are* included in official economic statistics.

While this issue affects all modern economies, it is important to first determine the size of unpaid labour in Singapore. Measurements of unpaid work such as time-use surveys should be included and valued, as part of our national income statistics. Policies and their targets can then respond to the data gathered on the basis of duration, magnitude/intensity of the care work undertaken and other contextual factors.

Improve the Competitiveness of Our SMEs

In Singapore, SMEs include established companies that provide vital supporting services to large MNC firms as well as fast-growing but thinly capitalised start-ups in the tech, food, healthcare and various sectors. **Their ability to grow, compete, raise productivity and confront challenges such as decarbonisation and digitalisation is crucial to the longer term prospects of our economy.**

Build Up Leadership in SMEs

SMEs employ 70 per cent of the resident workforce in Singapore. A large number of SMEs are new businesses that are looking to grow. With support, they have the potential to develop into larger companies that are able to employ more Singaporeans.

Training in leadership and management for SME managers is crucial for them to enhance their teams' productivity and well-being, grow their business and become more sustainable. Training programmes should be critically evaluated as to whether they effectively meet business needs. Enterprise Singapore should work closely with industry and researchers to identify, support, disseminate and evaluate skills and leadership development efforts. Such training of managers on modern management practices can improve firm productivity and worker well-being, which in turn enables them to pay more competitive salaries to employees and be more attractive places to work.

Help SMEs Better Attract Talent

The labour market in Singapore is tight with fierce competition for talent. The government should provide more support to SMEs to become more attractive places for Singaporeans to work. While SMEs generally may not be able to pay salaries that are as attractive as those offered by MNCs, their offerings include greater work variety and flexibility, and giving employees more exposure to different business roles and functions.

SMEs can be made more attractive by transparent benchmarking of salaries by sector, for potential employees to better understand the trade-offs they face.

Support SMEs to Achieve their Green Transition

SMEs must be on board the green transition, especially as many are suppliers to MNCs that have made commitments to reduce their emissions down their supply chain and are fully empowered to achieve their green transition.

Although a \$180 million Enterprise Sustainability Programme was introduced in 2021 to promote the green transition, very few SMEs have tapped on the programme. Better efforts must be made to support, track and measure SMEs' transition.

Given that many SMEs have to prioritise sustaining daily operations, application processes should be streamlined, and grants such as the Energy Efficient Grant should be provided in cash, rather than as reimbursements. This would also assist businesses facing tight cashflow, and encourage them to put sustainability concerns at the centre of their planning and operations.

Establish an Exim Bank to Support SME Expansion and Sustainability

Export-import (Exim) banks finance cross-border projects less popular with the private sector. Surveys reveal that access to financing by SMEs remains a significant concern.

Singapore should establish an Exim bank, as suggested by the Economic Strategies Committee in 2010. Exim banks have contributed to the industrialisation of countries, like Japan and South Korea, and can be harnessed to advance Industry 4.0. The Exim bank would be mandated to focus on providing credit for exports and promoting foreign direct investment for promising SMEs. The Bank's mandate can include a focus on financing for digitalisation, sustainability and Industry 4.0 projects by local firms.

Support Older Workers

Older workers bring about a wealth of skills, experience and diversity to the workplace, and should be supported. Having older citizens who choose to remain in meaningful employment also promotes their well-being and benefits the economy and our society.

Abolish the Statutory Retirement Age

WP calls for the abolition of the statutory retirement age to enable older workers to continue to participate in meaningful employment if they choose to. This may also positively affect their mental and physical health and delay frailty.

Removing the official retirement age will permit workers the freedom to continue to work at any age as long as they are able and willing to. It also serves to remove age discrimination in the workplace, as employers can no longer use the excuse that hiring a worker with a short runway before retirement is a bad business decision.

The Workplace Fairness Act 2025, which outlaws ageism in the workplace, can boost the employment of older workers, making the abolition of a retirement age an effective complement to such laws.

The absence of an official retirement age does not mean workers will be forced to continue working even if they are in poor health or prefer to stop working, nor does it imply a delay in the CPF Payout Eligibility Age.

Nurture Silver Industries

Singapore is an ageing society and by 2030, we will have nearly a million elderly citizens. While this is a challenge, it is also an opportunity for our local companies, especially if they pivot toward developing and market products for older persons domestically and internationally.

Market opportunities exist in telemedicine, healthtech, mobility tech, elderly nutrition and assisted living. Singapore should pioneer, pilot and grow silver industry players who can export these goods and services to other economies facing the same demographic challenges. Government agencies can do more to collaborate with the private sector and encourage local enterprises and startups to expand into aged care and ageing related technologies.

Strengthen Retirement Adequacy by Reforming the CPF

The CPF scheme plays an important role in securing Singaporeans' retirement needs. Any enhancement of these returns will benefit Singaporeans, particularly when inflation and interest rates are relatively high. **There is a need to regularly review and refine CPF policies to ensure they function as effectively as possible in fulfilling their purpose.**

Enable Co-Investing of CPF Savings with GIC

GIC Private Limited (GIC) has attained a 6.9 per cent return over the past 20 years. In contrast, CPF Special Account (SA) rates have remained at a floor rate of 4 per cent and Ordinary Account (OA) rates have been even lower. Excess returns above CPF interest rates, earned by GIC via investing CPF monies, through the issuance of special Singapore govt securities, should be shared with CPF account holders.

Higher returns are even more important when inflation is high. CPF interest rates have not made up for the rate of price increases, resulting in negative real returns. This has eroded our retirees' purchasing power, who do not have inflation-adjusted wage adjustments, and this ultimately compromises their retirement adequacy.

CPF should give members the option to co-invest a portion of their CPF savings with GIC in a dynamic portfolio, to enjoy higher returns without incurring high management fees.

Introduce a Special Dividend from GIC Investments for CPF members

As GIC indirectly invests CPF funds, CPF members must be provided transparency on the nature and performance of their money. The government should notify CPF members of GIC's annualised total and investor returns for not just the five, 10 and 20-year horizon, but also the one- and three-year horizon. This is consistent with the standard reporting practices of private sector asset managers, as well as other sovereign wealth funds with strong governance scores.

GIC should also report the 10-year moving average difference between the investment returns of GIC and the net interest payable on CPF member balances. A third of this difference, where positive, should be returned as a special dividend and paid into CPF members' SAs.

Review the CPF OA Interest Rate Formula and Set a New Level

The CPF OA interest rate serves as an important benchmark rate for Singaporeans' semi-liquid CPF savings. The current formula – which is tied to the three-month average rate of major local banks' interest rates, subject to a 2.5 per cent minimum – has been in place since 1999 and has not kept up with significant changes to the global interest rate environment or local deposit offerings.

The formula for setting the CPF OA interest rate should be reviewed and set at a level that is more consistent with market realities. One possibility is to link OA rates instead to the Singapore Overnight Rate Average (SORA).

Permanently De-Link HDB Loan Rate from CPF OA Rate

Presently, the interest rate of HDB concessionary loans is set at 0.1 per cent above the CPF OA rate. This unnecessarily limits the freedom of CPF to increase OA rates, for fear of affecting those serving HDB loan mortgages.

The HDB concessionary loan rate should be de-linked from the CPF OA rate. It should instead be pegged at 0.1 per cent above the average three-month fixed deposit rate of the major local banks, with a floor of 2.6 per cent.

SECTION III

Inclusion and Equality

Track Social Outcomes and Development Beyond GDP

Singapore's historical focus on GDP growth as a measure of policy success needs to be supplemented by indices that measure and report social development. Bonuses for the public service are currently attached to GDP growth figures, which often fails to capture other non-economic measures of development.

Alongside GDP growth figures, the government should publish a developmental dashboard to account for our progress when making the annual Budget announcement. The elements of the dashboard should be created in conjunction with input from the public. This way, **Singaporeans will be pivotal in making their voices heard about how they would like to measure the nation's success.**

Topics that should be considered for inclusion in the scorecard beyond GDP include: inequality measures for both income and wealth inequality, participation in society, and physical and mental measures of health. We should also add our climate and sustainability goals, and measure how well our children are doing beyond just educational league tables.

Having a detailed breakdown on our performance in different areas would be the first step in ensuring that apart from topline figures about how much we are spending on each area, we can also see if our policies are having the desired effect.

A first step would be to adopt the Social Protection Framework developed by the ILO, and to present an annual report on the success of our social policies. Measures tracked would include our progress in enabling vulnerable groups to move up the social protection ladder, and key performance indicators for the public and the government to evaluate our assistance programmes. These measurements should take into account not just what the government believes is adequate for Singaporeans, but what Singaporeans themselves report as essential needs.

Set an Official Poverty Line

Alleviating poverty in Singapore requires a multifaceted approach that addresses both immediate needs and long-term systemic issues. Singapore, while often recognised for its economic success, still faces challenges in ensuring that all its residents benefit equitably from its prosperity.

A poverty line is the lowest income level that would be deemed adequate in a particular country. Such lines are important for the accurate identification and support of those most in need.

Singapore lacks an official poverty line. Instead, we have a dizzying array of qualification thresholds, applied by different agencies at different times. This causes a lot of confusion, and the absence of a common target also complicates the targeting of social assistance programmes.

We repeat our call for the establishment of an official poverty line to accurately identify and support those in need. A committee, with representatives from the government, civil society and experts from academia, should be tasked to make recommendations on the quantum. All thresholds for government assistance, including ComCare and the minimum wage, could be pegged to this line.

Enhance Support for Parents and Caregivers

For married couples who have chosen to have children, additional institutional support can assist in making the parenting journey more fulfilling, and perhaps help to convince those undecided about whether to have or have more children that it is a choice they wish to make.

As our population ages and life spans increase, more are assuming caregiving roles, facing significant burdens while caring for their elderly parents or children with disabilities. **Financial and practical support for carers should thus be enhanced.**

Extend Childcare Leave

Parents currently each get six days per year of childcare leave until the year their child turns seven years old, regardless of the number of children they have, with the total number of childcare leave capped at 42 for each parent over their lifetimes. Families – especially those with multiple young children – find that this barely supports their reality where children often fall sick often and sequentially.

Childcare leave should be extended on a per-child basis up to the age of 12, to better allow working parents to balance their work and child-raising responsibilities. This will also provide more support for parents who have chosen to have more children.

Establish Family Care Leave

Employees who face the challenge of balancing work commitments with family caregiving responsibilities have higher levels of stress, lower quality of life and reduced productivity. We need a more equitable leave policy that acknowledges the importance of both childcare and other forms of informal care, including elder care. Doing so will improve the economic security and wellbeing of workers, and can pay for itself in terms of improved productivity and reduced turnover.

WP proposes establishing a Family Care Leave scheme, modelled after and in addition to the existing paid Childcare Leave provisions. Employees with primary caregiving responsibilities for elderly parents or family members with severe disabilities should be entitled to up to six days of Family Care Leave per year, with the first three days paid by employers and the remaining three paid by the government. To better support individuals with multiple care recipients, an additional two days of leave could be granted. This will provide a more balanced and supportive framework for employees managing both work and family caregiving responsibilities.

Compensate Family Caregivers

The total value of informal care for seniors aged 75 and above was estimated to be \$1.28 billion annually, equivalent to 11 per cent of government healthcare expenditure.

Informal care is essential work that deserves proper compensation and recognition, and the financial and other costs associated with it should not only fall on caregivers. We propose a tiered caregiver payment for those who reduce their work hours or leave work to care for a family member, provided they meet a minimum caregiving threshold. They should also receive CPF contributions to safeguard their long-term financial security.

The Home Caregiving Grant, which has been raised to a maximum \$600 per month for families earning per capita income of \$4,800 a month, should be expanded to assist those who are unable to perform Instrumental Activities of Daily Living (IADLs), and not just Activities of Daily Living. IADLs are tasks that allow individuals to live independently, and include managing finances, communicating, taking medication and using transport, which can be affected by neurological or psychiatric conditions such as stroke, dementia and depression.

Enhance Support for Parents of Children with Disabilities

Parents of children with disabilities often experience significant anxiety concerning the care of their children and often need to seek help from multiple sources to meet their children's needs. Currently, many parents still remain uncertain about how to access such services.

There should be a single point of support for parents of children with disabilities, which streamlines access to information and assistance. Additionally, the government should provide more resources for the Early Intervention Programme for Infants and Children (EIPIC) to expand their service capacity and range to ensure that children receive comprehensive early intervention in locations near their homes, in order to reduce logistical burdens and costs for families.

Expand Respite Care for Caregivers

Respite care services are essential to allow caregivers to run errands, respond to unexpected developments or simply take a short break from their care responsibilities. Despite the crucial need, the current availability of respite care services is insufficient for the approximately 210,000 caregivers in Singapore.

Respite care services should be substantially expanded to ensure all caregivers can avail themselves to regular breaks. Caregivers should have the option to draw on a shared pool of suitably-qualified respite home care workers or place their loved ones in care centres. Government subsidies should be made available for all caregivers from lower-income households to ensure that financial constraints do not hinder access to respite care services.

Enhance Workforce Reintegration for Caregivers

Individuals returning to full-time employment, particularly those who had care responsibilities, often face challenges in re-entering the workforce. Currently, there are insufficient incentives for employers to hire such returnees and inadequate support for the returnees to update their skills and reintegrate.

The government should offer tax relief to employers who implement successful re-entry programmes for Singaporean caregivers returning to work. Additionally, the government should introduce paid return-to-work programmes tailored for individuals such as full-time mothers or family caregivers looking to re-enter the workforce. These programmes should include comprehensive support such as mentorship, re-training and guarantee a permanent position upon successful completion.

Strengthen Preventive and On-going Healthcare for Families

Close the Gender Health Gap

In Singapore, women spend 12 per cent more time in poor health than men. Some estimates suggest that closing this gap could generate over US\$3 billion in annual incremental GDP for Singapore by 2040, due to reduced poor health, fewer early deaths, increased productivity and expanded labour force participation.

Pre-emptive check-ups for peri- or menopausal women should be included as part of the Healthier SG programme. Additional healthcare subsidies should be provided for older women to seek physiotherapy for aches, pains and lack of mobility if recommended by their doctors.

Mothers should also be better supported in their parenthood journey. This will range from postnatal health visits or recovery care, maternal mental health, supportive lactation and baby care advice, and education for new mothers who are struggling.

Include Dental Care in Healthier SG

Dental care does not feature strongly in Healthier SG, making regular and preventative dental treatments less accessible and affordable for many. Existing subsidies are only for orange and blue CHAS cardholders, and MediSave may only be used by patients aged 60 and above from mid-2026. We have to encourage more Singaporeans to take better care of their dental health from a younger age. Poor oral health and dental problems not only affect the teeth and mouth but can also lead to broader health complications, including links found between poor oral health and cardiovascular disease.

To improve national oral health standards, dental care should be integrated into the Healthier SG programme, with expanded availability and affordability.

Increase Walk-In Slots at Polyclinics

Some Singaporeans – including the elderly and some persons with disabilities – struggle with accessing online polyclinic booking systems. This can hinder their ability to obtain primary healthcare services.

To address this, MOH should increase the number of walk-in slots at polyclinics and other government primary healthcare providers, specifically catering to seniors and others who face challenges with securing online bookings.

Beyond Poor Mental Health: Enabling Singaporeans to Thrive

Efforts to address the mental health crisis in Singapore have largely focused on supporting and treating those suffering from psychiatric disorders or poor mental health, and on breaking down the stigma associated with these conditions. However, we have to take a more holistic view. **In the words of the World Health Organization (WHO): health is not simply the absence of disease, but a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being.**

Singapore should encourage further, localised research into the right tools and environment on the necessary ingredients for individual and societal flourishing, in line with the WHO's call to have high quality data for specific populations. An example would be to see if results from Europe correlating higher rates of optimism with lower cardio-vascular disease rates also apply in Singapore. Studies should also be conducted in the local context to understand how best to optimise our food and nutritional intake to support good mental health.

Such data should be used to design policies on all fronts to maximise individual and community well-being.

Develop the Mental Health Profession

The government should make regulating mental health professionals a priority, to ensure that vulnerable individuals seeking support for mental health conditions are provided a minimum standard of care and ethical guidelines. Those seeking help are by definition already at risk, and should not be exposed to unqualified or unethical individuals purporting to be able to help them.

Regulate Mental Health Professionals

The Ministry of Health should work with existing professional bodies to announce a detailed plan for regulating the sector, with a clear commitment to timelines for implementation. The plan should also be sensitive to existing manpower shortages and ensure that barriers to entry are not overly high.

Public education efforts to explain the various types of work done by professionals in the mental health space should be carried out. Singaporeans should also know where to seek redress or advice if there are concerns about the services being provided to them.

Regulating the sector would also be an essential first step in expanding our existing healthcare financing framework to allow Singaporeans to be able to pay for mental health treatment beyond purely psychiatric settings.

Track Mental Health Service Outcomes

While the National Mental Health Office (NMHO) currently tracks data relating to access to mental health services, it should also start tracking and publishing details relating to the quality of mental health services. This would ensure that practitioners will know how well the sector is performing and to identify areas of strength and concern. Apart from tracking data, the NMHO should also set minimum standards of quality across the services outlined in the NMHO Tiered Care Model.

Empower the Teaching and Nurturing of Every Child

Fifteen-year-old students in Singapore consistently rank the highest in Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) tests. Yet, Singapore also consistently ranks amongst the countries that spend the most on private tuition.

This leads to two main areas of concern: first, anxiety levels amongst 15-year-old Singapore students are higher compared to other mid to high income countries. Second, there is a significant amount of inequality within the Singapore education system that disadvantages children from less well-resourced families from fairly competing within the meritocratic and standardised testing framework of our policies.

Measures must be taken to address these ill effects within our system and the focus must be shifted to empowering the learning and nurturing of every child, regardless of their background.

Reduce Class Sizes

Singapore currently has relatively large class sizes of 29 to 33, compared with an average of 21 to 24 in advanced industrialised economies in the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).

The government has already implicitly acknowledged that small class sizes help students, with the Gifted Education Programme and Integrated Programme classes having significantly smaller class sizes. All class sizes in primary and secondary schools should be capped at 23 students. This will allow teachers to provide more personalised attention to students, alleviate the need for private tuition, and help lower-income households bridge academic disparities.

Later School Start Times

A significant 80 per cent of teenagers in high-ranked Singaporean schools suffer from sleep deprivation, adversely affecting their physical and mental health. Their natural sleep cycles are to sleep and wake later, but our school start times continue to be very early.

Primary schools should start at 8:00 am, and secondary schools at 8:30 am. Post-Secondary institutions like ITEs, Polytechnics and Junior Colleges should begin at 9:00 am. This adjustment not only addresses student well-being, but will also ease traffic congestion around popular school zones, benefiting local residents.

10-Year Through-Train Programme

Our education system forces children to face their first major examination when they are just 12 years old. Test anxiety is likely to be greater for young children, and can lead to poorer performance during exams. Parents and children also report high levels of stress relating to this examination.

An optional 10-year through-train programme (10 YTS) will allow students to progress from Primary 1 to Secondary 4 without taking the PSLE. Parents will be able to choose the 10 YTS or the traditional primary-secondary school route, based on their children's needs. This programme would link existing primary and secondary schools and operate alongside the traditional tracks, offering a more flexible learning pathway that allows students to develop more fully before facing major examinations.

Teach for Singapore

Students from low-income households frequently encounter a range of challenges that necessitate social worker interventions, adding layers of complexity to their efforts to establish solid foundations for successful future careers.

Implement a “Teach for Singapore Scheme” that develops teachers trained in both education and social work, equipping them to offer both academic guidance and holistic care to at-risk students. This dual training would enable teachers to more effectively support disadvantaged students in overcoming the barriers they face and achieving their full potential.

Improve Access to Tuition Programmes for Low-Income Children

The high costs of private tuition widens the gap between children from different income groups. Subsidised tuition programmes currently in place do not plug the gap and remain inaccessible to many vulnerable families.

MOE should coordinate centralised government-supported tuition programmes for students from lower-income families. Schools should pro-actively secure places for their students in these programmes, with eligible students encouraged to enrol in these classes. The classes should be held on school premises after school hours or weekends. Additional incentives such as cash Edusave awards may be offered for attendance.

Enhance SkillsFuture Accessibility for Persons with Disabilities

PwDs face barriers in accessing SkillsFuture-funded courses, mainly due to most training providers' lack of accommodations tailored to their physical and learning needs. Although SG Enable offers a Capability Development Grant to create customised training programmes for PwDs, the take-up rate has been low.

To significantly increase the accessibility of SkillsFuture courses for PwDs, all SkillsFuture-funded training providers should be required to implement reasonable accommodations. This will ensure that PwDs can fully participate in these courses.

Facilitate Residency for Foreign Spouses of Singaporeans

An increasing number of Singaporeans marry foreigners, with one in four having a foreign spouse. The integration of foreign spouses is crucial for fostering strong family ties and establishing deep roots in Singapore.

Changes should be made to our immigration policies to provide a better balance between government's prerogatives and the needs of Singaporean families, while upholding national interests. This could lessen anxiety and frustration for Singaporeans with foreign spouses, children and parents.

Points-based Evaluation Framework for Foreign Spouses of Singaporeans

The Immigration and Customs Authority (ICA) should publish and utilise a structured, points-based system that outlines the residency criteria for foreign spouses, to increase the transparency of immigration processes, while maintaining the prerogative to reject applications that meet the points threshold.

Provide Reasons for Rejection of Residency Applications

Currently, when residency applications are rejected by ICA, no reasons are provided. Barring national security considerations, ICA should disclose the broad reasons for rejections of Long Term Visit Pass, permanent residence and citizenship applications for spouses and children of Singaporeans. It should also provide clear mitigation paths for future applications and increase the transparency of the application process.

Improve Access to Public Housing

Over 80 per cent of Singapore residents reside in HDB public housing. **Measures should be taken to improve access to HDB living.**

Allow Singles to Apply for BTO Flats at 28

Single Singaporeans currently have to wait until they are aged 35 to apply for a 2-room BTO flat. However, the high cost of market rentals makes having a place of their own unfeasible for most singles aged 28 to 35.

The eligibility age for single Singaporeans to apply for a 2-room BTO flat should be lowered from 35 to 28, aligning housing policy with current financial and societal trends and enabling earlier home ownership for young singles. This reduction is unlikely to discourage marriage and family formation.

Review Ethnic Integration Policy for HDB Resale Flats

The Ethnic Integration Policy (EIP) was introduced in 1989, to maintain the ethnic balance within HDB estates.

In practice, this has resulted in racial minorities facing difficulties in selling their flats freely, and often forces them to accept lower prices when ethnic quotas are exceeded. This results in the cost of the EIP being disproportionately borne by the lower and middle income flat sellers from minority races.

The government should allow the policy to evolve and aim to abolish block quotas while retaining neighbourhood quotas. In the long run, as Singapore becomes more ethnically integrated, the EIP may no longer be necessary.

Improve the Work Environment

Singapore's tight labour market could benefit from continual efforts to lower barriers to entry, and ultimately encourage locals currently outside the workforce for a variety of reasons to take up employment.

Address the Gender Pay Gap with More Transparency

Greater gender equality is associated with higher economic growth. Yet a gender pay gap of around 6 per cent persists in Singapore, even after adjusting for differences in age, education, occupation, industry and usual hours worked. There is currently no systematic way to measure wage disparities between genders across different sectors.

Employers with 10 or more employees should be required to report their gender wage gaps for identical roles to MOM, which would then publish aggregated and average pay gap statistics by industry. Additionally, remuneration disclosure guidelines for SGX-listed companies should be updated to mandate the inclusion of gender pay gap details in their annual reports. The government should also provide support, particularly to smaller firms, to facilitate the regular collection and reporting of this data.

Ban Non-Compete Clauses in Employment Contracts

Non-compete clauses should be banned in employment contracts for mid-level and low-level employees. Such employees are unlikely to be privy to specialised, proprietary knowledge, and human resource departments should not include boilerplate non-competes in standard contracts for these workers. This will address concerns about non-competes having an inhibiting effect on employees who have left their previous job, and feel unable to move forward to explore new options, particularly if they are unsure if the restraint of trade provisions in their previous contracts apply to them.

Enhance Legal Protections for Workers with Disabilities

PwDs working in Singapore currently lack sufficient legal protection against discrimination, particularly in employment. This gap in the law leaves them vulnerable and with insufficient support at the workplace.

The Workplace Fairness Act should include a comprehensive and inclusive definition of disability. It should legally mandate employers to provide reasonable accommodations for PwD employees and be enforceable with prompt remedies and preventive measures for repeat offences.

Extend Tax Benefits to More Working Mothers

The government's adjustments to the Working Mother's Child Relief (WMCR) with effect from Year of Assessment 2025 to a fixed dollar tax relief leaves a large majority of working mothers either unaffected or worse off, while offering minimal additional tax savings of about \$40 per year or less to a small minority.

The WMCR should revert to a percentage of income. By reinstating the percentage-based tax relief, more meaningful financial support can be provided to mothers.

Additionally, lower income working mothers who earn less than \$22,000 a year do not pay taxes and thus do not benefit from the WMCR. We propose a \$1,000 Working Mother's Tax Credit for all mothers earning under \$25,000 annually. This will extend tax benefits to more working mothers, including single mothers.

Reinstate Thaipusam as a National Public Holiday

In 1968, when the government reduced the number of public holidays, the Hindu community was asked to choose between Deepavali and Thaipusam and opted to retain Deepavali. This left the community with only one religious public holiday.

Thaipusam is a spiritually significant and joyous affair for Hindus in Singapore. It is time to reinstate Thaipusam as a national public holiday for the religious observance of Hindus in Singapore, and to increase the total number of public holidays in Singapore to 12.

Sports Development and Excellence

Increase the Profile of Local Sports

Local sports coverage is often limited. This means that many Singaporeans have less chances to support their national athletes and represents a missed chance to inspire more to take up sports.

To increase public interest and support for local sports, all matches featuring Singaporean athletes in advanced stages of international competitions should be broadcast live on free-to-air television or streamed free online. The media should also regularly feature interviews with high-performance athletes, including those from less well-known sports, providing insights into their sport, their training and daily routines, to engage fans and attract commercial sponsors.

Provide a More Structured Pathway for World-Class Athletes

World-class athletes are not made through talent alone. Success on the international stage requires a strong support system, structured development pathways and sustainable funding to give Singapore's top athletes the best chance to train, compete and win.

The Singapore Sports School provides one such pathway, but has only 10 academy programmes. These programmes should be expanded to include more sports. At the same time, Sport Singapore and National Sports Associations (NSAs) should work more closely with mainstream schools to create flexible schedules that allow student-athletes to train and compete without sacrificing their education.

Many families of athletes bear the full cost of coaching, travel and competition expenses in the early years. Without external funding, only athletes from wealthier households may have the chance to excel. SportSG and NSAs should take a more active role in securing sponsorships from corporate and private sources to support athletes from more diverse backgrounds.

Better Care for Former National Athletes

National athletes often face health issues related to their sporting activities, sometimes with inadequate support for the treatment of sports injuries.

The government should provide lifelong health subsidies for national athletes who have represented Singapore to cover treatment of sports injuries at public healthcare institutions. A multidisciplinary task force, including sports medicine professionals, should determine the quantum of these subsidies.

SECTION IV

Accountability and Democracy

Improve Public Accountability

Accountability in a democracy goes beyond the holding of elections every few years to choose elected officials.

Accountability as a practice should be enhanced by entrenching institutions that not only check and balance the incumbent powers-that-be, but are also empowered to do so with full independence.

Establish an Office of the Ombudsman

The existing appeals system to government agencies and ministries routes appeals back to the same bureaucracy that decided on the original case, which is of concern for those seeking an independent review of their case.

Ombudsmen address complaints while also preventing misconduct. An independent ombudsman can be tasked to investigate complaints about administrative decisions, the actions of any public agency, as well as the conduct of public servants. Any citizen should be able to lodge a complaint with the Ombudsman, with assistance provided to citizens who may struggle to provide a written complaint.

Singapore should establish an independent office of the Ombudsman, which will be given powers to issue immediate corrective action recommendations to government agencies to deal with identified issues. The Ombudsman should also publish annual reports detailing any patterns and trends of concern, alongside recommendations to address them.

Set Up Parliamentary Select Committees for Each Ministry

Parliamentary Select Committees are not currently tied to the functional ministries, in contrast to many other legislatures around the world. This absence is a lost opportunity for MPs to engage in finer committee work to better scrutinise each ministry's policies, spending, and administration, and represents a missed chance to improve the quality of debate and

decision-making in public policy. Select committees also play a useful role in the oversight of the executive and regulators.

Parliament should establish Standing Select Committees for each ministry or groups of related ministries. These Committees should include MPs from all political parties in Parliament, and be resourced and supported by the Parliamentary Secretariat. The government should be more open in the sharing of information with MPs in the Committees. Regular engagement would lead to better understanding between Parliamentarians and ministry officials, promote more informed decision-making, improve governance, and build stronger national unity.

Form a Non-Partisan Parliamentary Budget Office

A Parliamentary Budget Office can improve fiscal performance in Singapore by providing non-partisan assessments of major policy proposals by the government, ruling-party backbenchers and opposition MPs. It will also promote greater transparency to track the efficiency of government policies and expenditure outcomes, including expenditure on fighting climate change. Greater transparency will instil greater trust in our institutions among Singaporeans, avert political cynicism and serve as a counterweight against fake news or speculation.

A non-partisan Parliamentary Budget Office should be formed, and tasked with the mandate to score all major policy proposals from all Members of Parliament, for budgetary and macroeconomic implications. The Parliamentary Budget Office should report directly to Parliament and form a central part of the government's fiscal framework. It must be competent and independent – and seen to be so – to provide credible fiscal and economic forecasts and to provide scrutiny of fiscal risks and the long-term sustainability of our public finances. It should comprise non-politicians (current or former), and should perform its duties under a Charter for Budget Responsibility.

Non-Political Members on the Presidential Council for Minority Rights

The Presidential Council for Minority Rights (PCMR) was formed in 1970 to scrutinise bills passed by Parliament for any differentiating measures that discriminate against any racial or religious community, and refer the bill back to Parliament for reconsideration if concerns are identified.

Today the PCMR comprises 18 members, five of whom are appointed for life. These five members have been or still are Cabinet Ministers. This presents a clear conflict of interest as Cabinet Ministers are behind the vast majority of bills that are being reviewed by PCMR.

The PCMR should be reformed as a council of distinguished citizens who are non-political, and to serve on fixed terms rather than for life, as recommended by the Wee Chong Jin commission in 1966.

Enhance the Ministerial Code of Conduct

The Ministerial Code of Conduct should set out clearly the circumstances under which a minister should recuse themselves from decision-making and when such recusals or decisions should be brought to Parliament. This will make the public aware of any potential or perceived conflict of interest.

An independent entity – such as the Auditor-General's Office, a judge, or a retired judge – should be vested with the authority to deliver routine, independent assessments on the interpretation and adherence to the Ministerial Code of Conduct by standing ministers.

Enact Legislation to Regulate Lobbying

Lobbying is a common practice in market driven societies. Regulation of lobbying ensures that proper political process is not circumvented, and there is no undue disadvantage for different groups in society, especially those with less money, access and voice. The sharply widening wealth gap that Singapore has witnessed over recent years makes it imperative that we improve lobbying oversight. This will address potential conflicts of interest and reduce chances of excessive influence by certain groups.

Political lobbying should be regulated in Singapore. There should be a publicly accessible register of individuals whose work entails lobbying political office holders, MPs and senior civil servants. The register should also record all MPs' board memberships.

Enhance the Voice and Agency of the People

Voters choose their representatives to speak for them in Parliament, and it is through their MPs that the people express their voice. The Workers' Party proposes the following policies, practices and institutions to ensure that the votes of the electorate more effectively reflect and represent their collective interests, hopes and desires.

Lower the Voting Age to 18

Singapore is currently only one of eight countries with a minimum voting age of 21 or older. This disenfranchises many young people. If 18-year-old Singaporeans are entrusted to bear arms for their country, be appointed company directors with heavy fiduciary duties, they should also be allowed to directly participate in decisions over the future governance of our country. Research has found that younger voters who exercised their rights to vote increased their interest and engagement in political matters.

The voting age should be lowered to 18. Enfranchising younger Singaporeans will allow earlier meaningful participation in civic life, and may even promote greater interest in bolstering their understanding of public affairs.

Safeguard the Independence of National Institutions

National institutions should be independent in theory and practice, and crucially also be seen to be so.

The Corrupt Practices Investigation Bureau should no longer report to the Prime Minister and should instead be reconstituted as the National Anti-Corruption Commission (NACC). It should be led by an independent Commissioner,

several Deputy Commissioners, and a Chief Executive Officer, who are appointed for a fixed term, and cannot be removed by any political office holder. The NACC needs to be overseen by a multi-partisan Parliamentary Committee.

The Elections Department of Singapore (ELD) and Electoral Boundaries Review Committee (EBRC), which ensures the impartiality of parliamentary elections, should not report to the Prime Minister's Office. Similar to the NACC, the ELD should be overseen by a multi-partisan Parliamentary Committee. Close relatives and current or former party colleagues of political office holders should not be appointed to key positions in national institutions, including organs of state, national media companies and sovereign wealth funds. We must institutionalise independence in these bodies and improve public confidence in them.

Abolish the GRC, NCMP and NMP Schemes

Singaporeans have matured as a society and there is now no evidence that Singaporeans vote solely along racial lines. Continuing the Group Representation Constituency (GRC) system may unintentionally suggest that minority candidates cannot get elected on their own. This was not borne out in past elections.

All GRCs should revert to Single Member Constituencies (SMCs). This will ensure that every candidate is fully accountable to the voters in the constituency they manage. Parties should endeavour to field multiracial slates of candidates to reflect the racial mix of the Singapore population. With the abolition of GRCs, there would be no need for Non-Constituency Members of Parliament (NCMP). The Nominated Member of Parliament (NMP) scheme should also be abolished.

Hold By-Elections within Three Months for SMCs

Article 49 of the Constitution states that by-elections must be called when the seat of an elected member of parliament has become vacant for any reason other than a dissolution of Parliament but does not give a timeframe by which a by-election must be held. The Prime Minister has the power to determine the exact timing of the by-election, including not holding it if a general election is on the horizon.

Article 49 should be amended to specify that a by-election must be held within three months should an SMC be rendered vacant.

Revert to a Ceremonial President

The President is the Head of State, a unifying figure and symbol of the nation. Having Presidents chosen by Parliament resulted in Heads of State who were held in high esteem and greatly respected by the people. An Elected President may potentially be a divisive figure because of the contested nature of the position.

The President should revert to being appointed by Parliament and serve as a Head of State who unites Singaporeans and represents the nation. The ceremonial President should not be tasked to safeguard the past reserves and the integrity of the public service. Instead, a separate Senate should be established and directly elected by the people to exercise all the discretionary powers currently vested in the Elected President. Parliament should be able to overturn any Senate veto with a three-quarters majority.

Abolish the Office of the Mayor

Mayors head the Community Development Councils (CDCs) that were established in 1997 to coordinate grassroots bodies and community programmes to bring the community closer. In practice, the assignment of mayors align with that of the existing political divisions, with each handling between four and six GRCs and SMCs, and roughly dividing the country's population into equal parts. They are invariably MPs from the governing party.

Many roles that were previously handled by the CDCs under the respective mayors have since been devolved back to other organisations, such as the Social Service Office. The reduced role of Mayors does not justify a salary of about \$660,000 a year. The Office of the Mayor should be abolished.

Transparency on Public Sector and Political Advertising

Public relations campaigns, outreach via social media influencers, social media shows and advertising by government agencies that were paid for by taxpayers should be accountable to the public. All sponsored content should be openly declared with an indication of who is paying for it. Government agencies should also be transparent about how much money is spent on these efforts and how effective the expenditure was. Public campaigns should be planned, designed and run only if there is a measurable public interest benefit. Government agencies should measure the effectiveness of different campaigns and outreach programmes, and a return on investment test should be applied.

This framework ensures that Ministries' budgets are not spent on advertisements that generate "feel good" vibes for the government or which simply aim to persuade people that the government is performing well. The latter is more akin to political advertising and should not be funded with public money. Similarly, political parties or candidates that pay digital content creators, either directly or indirectly, to post content either before or during election campaigns should be required to disclose these payments, and the content creators should also be required to declare the nature of their partnership with political parties or candidates within their posts.

Independent Trade Unions

In order to fully protect and advocate for workers without being encumbered by political considerations, trade unions should be independent. The composition and mission of the tripartite system should be reviewed so as not to disadvantage workers.

Workers should be free to form and register their own associations that are not affiliated with the National Trades Union Congress (NTUC) if they want to have representation that is not beholden to any political party or the government.

Freedom of Information Act

Access to data and information is an important prerequisite for credible decision-making and proper debate. Yet even as the government has adopted an Open Data Initiative, it retains control over the release of information to domains of its choosing, and often at a level too coarse for reasonable scrutiny. This impedes access to publicly-generated information that should be made publicly available, and reveals a fundamental lack of trust in our citizens being able to draw their own conclusions.

We must institute a Freedom of Information Act to allow citizens to be able to make requests for information from public agencies, at the level of detail that is requested. This empowers citizens to discover facts for themselves, and makes it harder for misinformation to spread. Initiatives which require public feedback will likewise be far more successful and broad-based if respondents can make enquiries of the government for data to ensure their ideas are workable and practical.

Declassify Our National Archives

Government documents and documents in the National Archives that are declassified after 25 years from the date of record should be made freely accessible to all. This will ensure greater transparency and accountability and lead to a better understanding of our history.

In the interests of national security, only material marked “Secret” would still be subject to requests and approval. An independent panel of experts should be set up to consider all requests for access and early declassification. All Cabinet papers should be automatically released after 40 years.

Publish the Government's Population Projections

The government has clarified that it does not aim for Singapore's population to increase to 10 million and it is anticipating a population of significantly below 6.9 million by 2030. However, with 2030 only a few years away, a key question arises: what are the government's longer-term forecasts?

Population projections are a critical tool for public policy planning. Given current birth rates and the intake of new citizens and permanent residents (PRs), the figures that the government is projecting for population in 2040 and 2050 are pivotal not just for immediate policy adjustments, but for securing a sustainable future for all.

The government should publicise its population scenarios ahead of time for the public to understand and accept the policies that will have to be put in place for each scenario, as well as the trade-offs.

Enhance Judicial Oversight

Ministerial decisions should be subject to comprehensive judicial oversight, particularly legislation such as the Foreign Interference (Countermeasures) Act (FICA) and the Protection from Online Falsehoods and Manipulation Act (POFMA), where ministers are granted significant discretionary power to determine whether a particular action contravenes the law. **Appeals against such decisions should be made to the Singapore courts, rather than to the ministers in charge. In cases involving national security, state secrets or diplomatic relations, judicial review can be conducted in camera to safeguard sensitive information.**

Protect Judicial Independence

Judicial independence is crucial for both individual freedom and economic performance. Independent judiciaries also entrench the rule of law, which promotes domestic and foreign investment.

The present provisions for the appointment of fixed-term Judicial Commissioners and short-term Senior Judges should be removed. Extensions and short-term appointments can lead to the weakening of independence.

The Administration of Justice (Protection) Act, which seeks to protect Court proceedings from external influence, should be amended to remove the government immunity clause, which allows the government to comment on Court proceedings in ways that members of the public cannot.

The threshold for the offence of scandalising the judiciary should be restored to a “real risk” rather than merely a “risk”, to avoid inadvertently stifling public discussions about judicial decisions.

Separate the Role of Public Prosecutor and Government Legal Advisor

The Attorney-General (AG) is both the government's legal advisor and the public prosecutor. As the government's legal advisor, the AG has a duty to protect the interests of the government of the day. Yet as the public prosecutor, the AG's duty is owed to the public, to be exercised without fear nor favour. As a result, there may be actual or perceived conflicts of interest between these roles.

The role of the AG should be split into two separate positions – that of the Public Prosecutor and the government's Legal Advisor. This separation would enhance the independence of the office of the public prosecutor.

Raise Retirement Age of Judges

Raise the retirement age of judges from 65 to 70 in line with rising life expectancy. Allowing judges to work until 70 is better than the current practice of reemploying judges on short-term contracts after reaching 65. This mitigates the loss to the nation of experienced judges retiring pre-maturely when they still are able to contribute and can continue to work on cases with less distractions and concerns.

Decide Capital Cases by a Tribunal of Judges

The stakes for determining guilt in death penalty cases are exceedingly high. It is imperative that the possibility of a false conviction be reduced as much as possible.

Trials for capital cases should be conducted by a tribunal of two judges, whose decision to impose the death sentence must be unanimous. The mandatory death penalty for offences should be removed, as it takes away the discretion of the judge to adjust a sentence to suit the individual case circumstances. On appeal, the death sentence should be upheld only upon a unanimous decision from the Court of Appeal.

Improvements to Policing

Enhance Protections Against Scams

At least \$1.1 billion was lost to scams in 2024, of which only \$182 million was recovered. Digital scams are now the most prevalent form of crime in Singapore. The existing Shared Responsibility Framework (SRF) adopted by MAS does not sufficiently protect consumers, allowing banks, telcos and tech platforms to maintain a stronger bargaining position relative to customers, resulting in the latter usually bearing the burden of scam-related losses for the majority of cases.

Requiring banks, telcos and tech platforms to ensure that they have updated their IT systems and alert customers promptly when transactions are effected is just a first step. There also needs to be incentives to ensure that these service providers increase their vigilance against fraud, with proactive steps, such as deploying artificial intelligence to recognise unusual transactions.

We propose an insurance scheme to cover losses from scams, with a consumer liability cap of up to \$500. This measure will provide greater fairness, and also strengthen anti-fraud systems within financial institutions by roping in all actors to police digital transactions.

Consumers need a stronger advocate in their fight against scams. The Competition and Consumer Commission of Singapore (CCCS) is best placed to set and enforce national consumer protection standards, with a focus on consumer rights.

In addition, a Scam Victim Restitution Fund financed by recovered funds should be explored.

Safeguard the Constitutional Rights of Arrested Persons

Arrested persons must be told their legal rights upon arrest, especially the constitutional right to counsel under Article 9 and the right against self-incrimination. An arrested person's constitutional right to consult legal counsel should be protected by allowing early access to a lawyer. All interviews and the taking of statements by law enforcement should be video recorded.

There should be an Independent Police Complaints Commission to oversee complaints about the police and the Internal Security Department. Better oversight can prevent the overstepping of authority and excessive use of force.

Depoliticise Taxpayer-Funded Community Organisations

Organisations that have been set up to benefit communities or broader society and funded by tax revenue should not be used to influence any political agenda. Their mission and operations must be strictly non-partisan and apolitical.

Non-Partisan People's Association

The People's Association (PA) is known to appoint individuals with close links to the PAP as grassroots advisers (GRA). In opposition-held constituencies, the GRA is usually the PAP candidate who was defeated in the previous election, or a potential candidate for the next. These GRAs and associated organisations have at their disposal the PA's vast resources to organise events and connect with residents.

The PA is a government statutory board, funded mainly by taxpayers for the purpose of community development. It should not be politicised and should transcend sectional loyalties.

The position of GRA should be abolished and government outreach activities should be conducted and led by politically neutral civil servants employed directly by the PA. This will fulfil PA's mission to build and bridge communities to promote racial harmony and social cohesion in Singapore.

Ground Up National Sport Associations

NSAs should be apolitical and led from the ground up. Decisions on selection and training should also be made based on merit and ability.

Establish an Independent Arts Body

Our arts and culture could bring significant benefits to students, the economy, and society. For arts to thrive and contribute to society, the arts should be allowed to operate as freely as possible from bureaucratic and political interference.

An independent body of the arts should be formed, led by representatives from the arts community, to oversee arts licensing and the distribution of grants. This new body will ensure that support for artistic projects based solely on artistic merit, reducing state interference, and promoting a thriving arts and cultural sector.

Conserve our Environment

Singapore's natural resources, especially our forests, are crucial for maintaining ecological balance, offering recreational spaces and preserving biodiversity. Forests serve as the city-state's lungs, replacing carbon dioxide with oxygen and regulating temperatures. Despite their importance, the need for infrastructural development in land-scarce Singapore poses a threat to these green spaces.

Urban development should be balanced and prioritise sustainable growth over rapid expansion at the cost of forested areas. **To protect our forests, we must have stronger environmentally-focused laws, and more ecologically-conscious land-use planning. This includes continuous monitoring of land use, prohibiting the clearing of secondary forests by designating them as nature reserves and ensuring that environmental impact assessments are done with civil society.**

Hasten the Switch to Renewables in Power Generation

According to the Energy Market Authority, in the first half of 2024, natural gas contributed 94.1 per cent to electricity generation in Singapore, other energy products (municipal waste, biomass and solar), coal, and petroleum products accounted for 4.7 per cent, 0.9 per cent, and 0.3 per cent of the fuel mix.

The proportion from non-fossil fuel sources should be increased closer to 30 per cent by 2030, 40 per cent by 2035 and 50 per cent by 2040, through a mix of renewable energy imports, solar, various forms of hydrogen, biofuels, nuclear power, and geothermal power.

Track Our Natural Wealth

Singapore should incorporate natural capital measurements into our national income accounts. The Department of Statistics, should work with the Ministry of Sustainability and the Environment, to account for our ecological assets such as forested land and coastal mangroves.

We must preserve the little that remains of our forests, coastal mangroves and protected land rather than remove it all in the name of urban development. Publishing a measure of what these natural assets are would guide us in understanding the benefits that natural assets bring to our economy.

Address Greenwashing

Ensure that purported green practices by companies and agencies are meaningful and justifiable. Agencies should work more closely with non-profit civil society organisations that monitor and call out 'greenwashing' attempts and to strengthen and enhance public awareness of such issues.

Additionally, we must require that listed and large firms that are major emitters routinely report environmental audits for all their planned projects and during major milestones of developing these projects.

Make Public All Environmental Impact Studies

Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs) should be done for all development projects affecting green areas to accompany the land use masterplan and should be made permanently accessible to the public.

The requirement for EIAs and Environmental Monitoring and Management Plans (EMMPs) must be enshrined into the law, to give teeth to expert recommendations on the impact any development has on the environment. The government should openly engage with civil society through data sharing and joint studies and to make public all EIAs and EMMPs, subject to national security concerns.

Stamp Out Discrimination in All Forms

Discrimination is the unfair and unequal treatment of people based on ascribed characteristics as race, gender, age, sexual orientation and physical abilities. **Discrimination and its related demonstrations such as harassment, exclusion and biases must be addressed using legislative measures.**

Tackle Workplace Harassment

Current legislation and recommendations offer limited recourse to victims of sexual harassment in the workplace. Taking action can be expensive and time-consuming and fail to ascertain whether sexual harassment has indeed occurred, due to the absence of a statutory definition. The lack of information, data and understanding about workplace harassment, particularly sexual harassment, impedes the work of trying to address the problem.

Surveys should be commissioned by MOM and related agencies to uncover the extent of workplace harassment in Singapore. Survey findings should be shared, after which they should guide the formulation of workplace and national policies, including exploring putting in place legislation to criminalise such behaviour not already covered by existing criminal laws.

SECTION V

Security and Geopolitics

Robust National Defence

National defence is the core responsibility of any government and underpins our national resilience. WP supports maintaining and building up a strong military to protect our nation's sovereignty and security.

Stronger Countermeasures Against Grey Zone Tactics

As a small nation, Singapore is vulnerable to grey zone tactics. These include disinformation campaigns, cyber-attacks on critical infrastructure, economic pressure through trade restrictions or investment leverage, and political influence operations targeting key figures and institutions. Such tactics threaten Singapore's sovereignty and stability. While the government has enacted foreign interference laws, they do not fully address grey zone tactics.

Surveillance and patrols in regional waters and airspace should be increased by deploying advanced sensors and using intelligence fusion centres to enhance situational awareness. Defence arrangements and strategic agreements should be strengthened to improve regional security cooperation and intelligence sharing. Information resilience should be enhanced through media literacy and integrating critical thinking into school curricula and National Service training to counter any disinformation efforts by foreign powers.

Protect Singapore's Subsea Interests

As a maritime nation, Singapore relies heavily on uninterrupted access to sea lanes, air routes, and underwater infrastructure, including submarine cables and pipelines that are crucial for data transmission and energy supply. Disruptions to these connections, whether through deliberate attacks or accidental damage, pose significant risks, especially with increasing geopolitical tensions in Asia and the South China Sea.

To mitigate these risks, Singapore must enhance its capabilities to protect and repair undersea assets. Collaborative efforts with regional and international partners are essential to ensure the security and resilience of these critical infrastructure.

Psychological Fitness of Soldiers

Modern warfare requires not only physical preparedness, but also mental and moral resilience among soldiers. True readiness involves developing a balanced force capable of enduring and thriving amid the complexities of contemporary conflicts. We should develop structured interventions that promote optimism, resilience, well-being and proportionate behaviour to empower servicemen and women. Such proactive policies will also better prepare servicemen and women when they reintegrate into post-service civilian life.

To address this, Singapore should implement comprehensive psychological assessments and resilience training similar to the US Army's Global Assessment Tool (GAT) and Master Resilience Training Programme. The GAT evaluates soldiers' psychosocial well-being across emotional, social, family and spiritual domains and informs tailored training.

A similar tool in Singapore could help identify and enhance the strengths of military personnel, improving unit cohesion, decision-making and overall mission success. Integrating resilience training into the SAF's Centre of Excellence for Soldier Performance would further support the mental and moral fortitude of soldiers, ensuring they are well-equipped to face modern warfare's demands.

Defend Singapore's Digital Space

Cyber-attacks on critical infrastructure pose significant threats to national security and public well-being, and require decisive state leadership. The Digital and Intelligence Service (DIS) should be tightly integrated with other arms of the SAF – the Army, Navy and Air Force – and should collaborate closely with digital government agencies, such as the Cybersecurity Agency, Home Team Science and Technology Agency and the Government Technology Agency to counter these threats.

“Zero-day” vulnerabilities – security flaws in software, hardware, or firmware that are unknown to the parties responsible for patching or fixing them, or the software makers or antivirus vendors – can be exploited by malicious actors to execute damaging attacks. Government agencies may choose to keep zero-day vulnerabilities a secret in order to retain a strategic advantage over adversaries, for surveillance and espionage, or to buy time to develop patches. Yet, not disclosing them to vendors could leave Singapore's critical information infrastructure exposed to hacking. The government should implement a vulnerability equities process to decide whether to retain or disclose vulnerabilities discovered by these agencies, ensuring a more robust defence against potential cyber-attacks.

Better Utilisation of Security Budgets

Raise NSFs' Salaries

National Service (NS) imposes significant opportunity costs on Singaporean men and second-generation PRs, as they begin their careers two years later than their female peers, first-generation PRs, new citizens and foreigners. This affects their career progression, and poses challenges especially for aspiring professional athletes and artistic performers, whose training, competition, and performance opportunities are disrupted during their peak years.

To better reflect the contributions and sacrifices that our young men make, the median NS allowance should be set to at least a living wage of \$1,600 per month. The term “NS allowance” should be changed to “NS salary,” and should include CPF contributions.

Ensure Equal Opportunities in the SAF

Article 154 of the Constitution of the Republic of Singapore mandates impartial treatment of all government employees, regardless of race. Fair and equitable representation of all communities in the SAF is crucial to build trust among Singapore's diverse population. Singaporeans of all races and religions should be fairly considered for all positions in the SAF, including sensitive roles, as long as they meet the necessary security clearance requirements.

Transparency in Defence Spending

The budget of MINDEF is the largest in Singapore's national budget. Singapore spends 3.0 per cent of its GDP on our military. The total expenditure of MINDEF in FY2025 is projected to be \$23.44 billion, of which \$22.0 billion went towards a single line-item estimate named "Military Expenditure" in the government's Revenue and Expenditure Estimates. The amount involved means that additional scrutiny should be possible to ensure that the right balance between transparency and military secrecy is achieved.

MINDEF should provide a breakdown of military expenditure into four broad areas: Military equipment, maintenance of equipment and camps, allowances for National Servicemen and salaries of regular servicemen and women. This will enhance public confidence in government spending and is a common practice in public budget estimates in other territories. In addition, the Public Accounts Committee in Parliament should have access to a further breakdown of military expenditure for more effective scrutiny of MINDEF's expenditure and accounts.

Strengthen Internal Resilience

Supply disruption and delays during the Covid-19 pandemic brought home the importance of raising our domestic capabilities to meet local demand for essential goods and food.

Internal resilience is also required to build the trust required for every citizen to do their part in the nation's effort to counter any threat.

Maintain Domestic Manufacturing Capabilities for Essential Goods

Since the Covid-19 pandemic, supply chains worldwide are being actively reconsidered, with regional supply chains replacing global ones in part. We should be prepared for the changes being brought about by “glocalisation”. Singapore's small size and open nature means that we are especially vulnerable to external supply chain disruptions. Our nation's reliance on foreign sources for critical items exposes us to supply disruptions that could erupt as a result of pandemics, natural disasters, or conflicts.

We should establish more domestic manufacturing facilities for essential goods to ensure a greater level of self-sufficiency. During crises, selected local companies would receive blueprints and designs to rapidly increase production under government requisition. Additionally, legislative powers should be granted to the government to commandeer R&D and production resources for national emergencies, with regular drills to test these powers for readiness.

Increase Local Farm Uptake to Promote Market Viability and Food Security

Singapore imports over 90 per cent of its food. It is imperative that we are able to establish a reliable food supply chain, with diversified food sources.

To support Singapore's goal of producing 30 per cent of our nutritional needs locally by 2030, efforts should focus on increasing uptake of locally produced food by major institutional buyers. Institutional buyers supply food to key public entities like the SAF, public hospitals, central school canteens, prisons, welfare homes and senior care centres and play critical roles in scaling demand for domestic food. We should work with major institutional food buyers through long-term contracts, contractual requirements or price support measures, and also explore community-supported agriculture frameworks where consumers subscribe to harvests from producers on a regular basis. Together, these would make locally sourced products more competitive, promoting the market viability of Singapore's local food producers and enhancing national food security.

Repeal the Internal Security Act

The Internal Security Act (ISA) allows for indefinite detention without trial, limiting suspects' legal recourse. Without the due process assured by a trial, there is a heightened risk that a rogue government could deploy the ISA for purposes other than national security, such as suppressing political dissent or silencing the opposition.

The ISA should be repealed and replaced with a new anti-terrorism law that permits swift detention for a limited time while providing suspects clear legal channels to challenge their detention and secure their release if wrongfully detained. These cases could be tried in courts with necessary modifications to safeguard national security, enhance transparency and counter terrorist propaganda.

Diplomacy and Trade Relations

A small state can significantly enhance its national security, economic prosperity, and international influence with proactive diplomatic efforts. Singapore can secure collective defence and ensure greater national security by building strategic alliances and promoting cross-border economic agreements, and also open up new markets that foster economic growth and attract trade opportunities and international investment.

Diplomatic engagement in international organisations and cultural exchanges also enhances our nation's soft power, an area which we can improve on. Robust crisis management and routine environmental cooperation contributes towards stability and sustainability. This multifaceted approach will allow Singapore to navigate the complexities of regional and international geopolitics more effectively.

Strengthen ASEAN's Credibility and Effectiveness

Since ASEAN's founding in 1967, Singapore has benefited from membership, enjoying regional peace, cooperation and economic integration. However, ASEAN's consensus-based decision-making has resulted in slow responses to critical security issues, while weak enforcement mechanisms limit its ability to manage regional conflicts. Growing US-China tensions also means member states are being pulled in different directions.

Reforms are needed to keep ASEAN effective. Decision-making should allow majority voting on key issues for timely action. Stronger enforcement measures such as suspending non-compliant members would improve accountability. Deeper collaboration with external partners can safeguard regional interests while stronger ASEAN centrality will improve collective negotiation power with major global players. Finally, greater people-to-people exchanges will strengthen regional unity and understanding.

Support Myanmar's Return to Stability

The conditions in Myanmar following the 2021 military coup continue to deteriorate. The civil war has also exacerbated regional security issues, including heightened human trafficking, expanded drug production, and increases in scam compounds operating in Myanmar, affecting both scam victims in Singapore, or Singaporeans being ensnared by syndicates to work in the compounds.

It is in Singapore's national interest to play a constructive and proactive role in supporting Myanmar's return to stability.

Singapore should work with ASEAN to effect the Five-Point Consensus, which calls for an immediate cessation of violence, constructive dialogue among all parties, the appointment of a special envoy to facilitate mediation, humanitarian assistance to be provided through ASEAN channels, and a visit by the special envoy to Myanmar to meet with all parties involved in the crisis. Singapore, through ASEAN, should engage all key stakeholders, including the military and the National Unity Government, to work towards a peaceful resolution. Among the calls would be for the unconditional release of President Win Myint and State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi, while applying pressure on the Myanmar military to restore democratic governance and respect human rights.

Additionally, Singapore should also step up enforcement of its prohibition of arms and dual-use item exports to Myanmar,

through enhanced monitoring and intelligence sharing with international partners, implementing stricter compliance and due diligence requirements for companies involved in exports to Myanmar, and ensuring that enforcement agencies such as the Singapore Customs and the Monetary Authority of Singapore conduct thorough investigations and monitor compliance effectively.

Support Maritime Peace and Stability in East Asia

The well-being of Singaporeans depends on peace and stability in our region. The ongoing geopolitical tensions across the Taiwan Strait, the South China Sea (SCS) and other parts of the region are potential flashpoints that could lead to conflict. Singapore does not and should not take a position on competing sovereignty claims in the SCS. However, any escalation of tensions leading to conflict poses a significant risk to Singapore's economic and strategic interests due to the potential disruption of crucial sea lanes, air routes and submarine cables connecting Singapore to the world.

Singapore should continue to encourage adherence to international law, including the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), and encourage the peaceful, non-coercive resolution to disputes. Singapore should work through ASEAN to expeditiously finalise a Code of Conduct in the SCS that is consistent with international law and practices.

Recognise the State of Palestine

The Israel-Palestine conflict is one of the most enduring and complex disputes in modern history. Many Singaporeans care deeply about the pain and suffering of the people in these lands, and wish to see a peaceful resolution to the conflict.

We support a negotiated two-state solution where two democratic states, Israel and Palestine, live in peace within secure and recognised borders.

Singapore should formally recognise the State of Palestine, even before negotiations on a two-state solution are concluded. Such recognition would lend legitimacy to our two-state position.

Progress towards and achieving a durable two-state solution will ultimately bring greater hope, peace and security to Israelis and Palestinians, and the wider Middle East region. It will also diffuse racial and religious tensions over this issue among local populations in Southeast Asia. We have to ensure this conflict does not precipitate social divisions within Singaporean society.

Singapore Agency for International Development

Despite being one of the wealthiest countries per capita in the world and with a global footprint, Singapore has no agency that provides Official Development Assistance (ODA) to support sustainable development in less developed countries, apart from the Singapore Cooperation Programme (SCP), a department under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The SCP provides technical assistance in the form of training programmes to share Singapore's development experience with government officials in developing countries. Singapore does offer contributions to multilateral development organisations, but these run the risk of politicisation to meet the objectives of other, more powerful, nations.

Singapore should establish a foreign aid agency, the Singapore Agency for International Development, to direct ODA more effectively. Efforts should focus particularly on our Southeast Asian neighbours, and assist in their economic development and capacity building. This agency would manage the funds for both bilateral and multilateral aid, and ensure that aid is delivered efficiently and transparently. All ODA disbursed funds must be rigorously monitored and reported on, to ensure transparency, accountability, and effective delivery. Any budgets allocated for ODA must ensure that the needs of Singaporeans are prioritised first.

Such an agency can be a key aspect of our diplomatic efforts. This in turn will garner both tangible and intangible benefits for Singaporeans, when we uplift our neighbours in their time of need and their economies improve with time.

