

## 1. BUILDING RACIAL UNDERSTANDING

There has been growing concern about racism, intolerance and insensitivity in Singapore over the past months. Many in the community have spoken out against such attitudes and highlighted the importance of building understanding between different groups. Here are some of the key points:



### Racial intolerance goes against our values as a country and the norms of our multiracial society.

- In an interview with TODAY on 19 Jun, Senior Minister of State for Communications and Information Dr Janil Puthuchery said that it is necessary to **understand Singapore's socio-historical contexts and future to have productive dialogues about race.**
- At a forum on race and racism on 25 Jun, Minister for Finance Lawrence Wong said that our multiracialism is the result of **deliberate policies and safeguards** put in place by our founding leaders.
- He added that Singapore's multiracialism does not require communities to give up their heritage. **Instead, we preserve, protect, and celebrate our diversity.** However, our multiracialism is still a **work in progress.**

### Singaporeans need to make efforts to understand one other, as tolerance without real understanding cannot work.

- In an interview with TODAY on 19 Jun, Associate Professor of Political Science, Chong Ja Ian, said it is necessary to **identity and understand biases and stereotypes** in order to begin addressing them.
- In the same interview, Mohamed Imran Mohamed Taib, from the Centre for Interfaith Understanding, urged the creation of **"brave spaces"** for dialogue, which "involves the willingness to interrogate our own assumptions."
- On 25 Jun, Minister Wong called on Singaporeans to **expand the space for agreement**, and deepen cross-cultural understanding.

### Public space is a shared space and must be safe for all.

- In a Facebook post on 8 Jun, Leader of the Opposition Pritam Singh said that in this shared secular public space, we must practise tolerance and make adjustments. He added that **"when it comes to racism – there can be no ifs or buts."**
- In a CNA938 interview on 10 Jun, Minister for Law and Home Affairs K Shanmugam said that while individuals can hold private views, it crosses the line when these are publicly imposed on others.
- On 25 Jun, Minister Wong added that it is **important for the majority to be sensitive to the needs of minorities.** He expressed gratitude that minorities have also reciprocated by recognising the needs of the majority community.

### Singaporeans must trust, have confidence in, and work with one another to expand common spaces.

- On 25 Jun, Minister Wong emphasised that Singapore must continue with our approach of **mutual accommodation, trust and compromise.**
- He added that **race-related policies are not cast in stone**, and the government will work with the community to make changes that strengthen our racial harmony, while allowing each community to continue its way of life as much as possible.

“*We need to move away from tolerance to acceptance and celebration.*”

Sharvesh Leatchmanan, co-founder and editor of Minority Voices, in a TODAY article on 21 Jun

[Sources: ST & CNA, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11 Jun; TODAY, 19 Jun; CNA, 21 Jun; MOF, CNA & TODAY, 25 Jun]

## 2. LIVING NORMALLY WITH COVID-19



In the past weeks, since the end of Phase 2 (Heightened Alert), Singapore has been adjusting its strategies to fight COVID-19. Here are some of the points made by our leaders:

- Singapore is **in a better position than last year**. However, as we face more infectious variants, Singapore must constantly adjust our strategies.
- **COVID-19 will likely be endemic**. Singaporeans must learn to carry on with our lives and keep the community safe, while we keep our borders open to the flow of people and supplies.
- We must **position ourselves strongly for the future** by staying united and working together. Countries that are united, disciplined, and have safeguards will be able re-open and re-connect to the rest of the world.

### Singapore's Strategies

**Test:** Routine, large-scale, fast, and simple testing will strengthen our confidence to resume larger-scale events.

**Trace:** Contact tracing will cast a wider net. Operations have improved due to better skills and tools, as well as the self-discipline, public spirit, and support of Singaporeans.

**Vaccinate:** Singapore will vaccinate more people, and faster, to allow us to provide good protection to as many Singaporeans as possible. By National Day, we aim to have two-thirds of Singaporeans fully vaccinated.

“*Singapore will be [...] more confident and resilient than before, and toughened by what we have overcome together, and experienced together as one nation.*”

– PM Lee Hsien Loong in a speech on 31 May

“*Science and human ingenuity will eventually prevail over COVID-19. Cohesion and social consciousness will get us there faster. We must all do our part.*”

– Co-Chairs of the Multi-Ministry Task Force on 24 Jun

[Sources: PMO, 31 May; ST, 24 Jun]

## 3. FOREIGN RELATIONS & TIES

On 10 Jun, Australian PM Scott Morrison made a stop in Singapore and spoke with PM Lee Hsien Loong on Singapore and Australia's bilateral relationship. Here are the key points:



- **Singapore and Australia have supported each other through the pandemic**. Authorities shared virus information, helped bring each other's citizens home, and maintained passenger and cargo flights between both countries.
- **We will work to resume travel** between both countries in a safe and calibrated manner, and prepare the required infrastructure to do so, such as mutual recognition of health and vaccine certificates.
- **The bilateral relationship is underpinned by the ten-year Comprehensive Strategic Partnership (CSP)**, launched in 2016. Under this, both sides have made progress in five sectors, including trade and defence.
- During the Q&A, when asked if he had advice to the Australia and G7 on how to handle relationships with **China**, PM Lee said that **countries need to work with one another to develop constructive relationships**. It is important to cooperate on shared interests, even with countries that are not completely like-minded.

[Sources: BBC, PMO, 10 Jun]

### The G7 (Group of Seven) Summit, June 2021

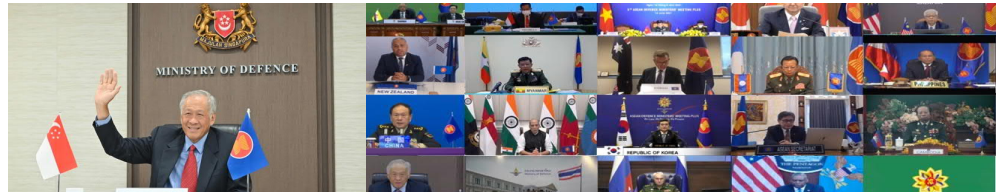
From 11 to 13 Jun, the G7 countries (United States, United Kingdom, Canada, Japan, France, Germany, and Italy) met in England. These countries constitute 40% of global Gross Domestic Product (GDP). They:

- **Agreed to cooperate** to tackle pressing global challenges. They pledged to donate one billion doses of COVID vaccines to poor and middle-income countries and to work together on challenges climate change.
- **Had discussions about China.** Some of the G7's plans were perceived as responses to Chinese actions, including vaccine pledges and the Build Back Better World (B3W) Plan, which was expressed as an alternative to the Belt and Road plan.
  - In response, a Chinese spokesman said, "We always believe that countries, big or small, strong or weak, poor or rich, are equals, and that world affairs should be handled through consultation by all countries."

[Sources: NYTimes, 11 & 16 Jun; BBC, 13 Jun]

## 4. ASEAN DEFENCE MINISTERS MEETING (ADMM) & ADMM-PLUS

In Jun 2021, Minister for Defence Dr Ng Eng Hen attended the 15th annual ADMM and the 8th ADMM-Plus, which involved eight Dialogue Partners (Australia, China, India, Japan, New Zealand, Republic of Korea, Russia and the US). They are key dialogue platforms to promote regional cooperation, peace and stability. The countries:



- **Discussed issues of common concern**, such as tensions in the South China Sea and the Myanmar Crisis.
- **Reaffirmed a shared commitment** to tackle existing and emerging transboundary security concerns, such as maritime security, counter-terrorism, CBR (Chemical, Biological and Radiological) threats, and cybersecurity.
- **Agreed to find new avenues** for strategic dialogue and cooperation, such as by establishing a Cybersecurity and Information Centre of Excellence (COE) in Singapore to strengthen ASEAN's defence against cyberattacks and mis- and disinformation, and extending the ASEAN Direct Communications Infrastructure to the Plus countries.
- **Commemorated 30-years of ASEAN-China dialogue** and expressed optimism about future defence cooperation, such as in think-tank exchanges, counter-terrorism, and humanitarian mine action.

[Sources: MINDEF, 15 Jun; MINDEF & ST, 16 Jun]

## 5. AIR FORCE DETACHMENTS IN THE US

On 4 Jun, the US Department of Defence (DoD) and MINDEF selected Ebbing Air National Guard Base at Fort Smith, Arkansas as the preferred location for hosting the Republic of Singapore Air Force's (RSAF) future F-35B fight aircraft and F-16 fighter training detachment.



Image: Wikipedia Commons

- It was **selected after a study** by the RSAF and US Air Force (USAF). Hosting the F-16s and F-35Bs in the same location will allow the RSAF to combine training.
- **Overseas training is important** for the SAF to overcome local airspace constraints and conduct realistic training. Acting Secretary of the USAF said that the multi-service, multi-national F-35 programme would increase interoperability between the US and other F-35 nations and strengthen bilateral relationships.
- **Singapore and the US have a long-standing defence relationship.** MINDEF and the US DoD regularly conduct exchanges, training, and courses, and cooperate on defence technology.

[Sources: MINDEF & CNA, 4 Jun]

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