

## ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Retreat

Foreign ministers of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) have gathered for the ASEAN Foreign Ministers' (AMM) Retreat in Jakarta, Indonesia from 3 to 4 Feb 2023.

The two-day AMM Retreat was the first major meeting under Indonesia's Chairmanship of ASEAN in 2023, and the theme for this year was **ASEAN Matters: Epicentrum of Growth**.

Three significant issues were discussed at the meeting:

### 1 Timor-Leste the 11th member of ASEAN in principle

Timor-Leste attended this ASEAN meeting as an observer for the very first time, after being granted in-principle approval for ASEAN membership. The ASEAN coordinating council's working group is in the process of working on the draft roadmap for Timor-Leste's full membership.

### 2 Myanmar

The situation in Myanmar is not getting better, and in fact, ground reports have indicated that the situation may actually be worsening.

The ASEAN foreign ministers agreed that inclusive national dialogue is key to finding a peaceful resolution to the situation in Myanmar. While ASEAN will do its best to facilitate, encourage and promote national reconciliation, the meeting also emphasised that the rate limiting factor for progress is not ASEAN - it is really the stakeholders within Myanmar itself.

As Chairman of ASEAN in 2023, Indonesia said it has formed the office of special envoy to Myanmar led by their foreign minister as mandated by the Five-Point Consensus. Meanwhile, ASEAN will continue to be involved in delivering humanitarian assistance to the people in Myanmar.



### 3 More specific details on the ASEAN agenda

The foreign ministers reaffirmed the importance of working together to facilitate an inclusive post-pandemic recovery and advance ASEAN's community-building efforts. Foreign Minister Vivian Balakrishnan emphasised that Singapore will work with Indonesia and fellow ASEAN member states to create opportunities for people and businesses in the digital, green, and blue economies:

- **Digital economy** - To advance negotiations on the ASEAN Digital Economy Framework Agreement, by enhancing digital literacy in the population, improving digital connectivity between ASEAN countries, and enabling cross-border flows of data because that is an essential element of a digital economy.
- **Green economy** - To decarbonise or at least reduce the carbon footprint of all our economies, and in particular, to help facilitate the transition towards renewable energy.
- **Blue economy** - To have a sustainable, resilient approach to using, conserving, and developing our maritime resources.

# Budget Statement 2023

On 14 Feb 2023, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Finance Lawrence Wong delivered Singapore's FY2023 Budget Statement in Parliament. He made these key points:



# 1

## Moving Forward in a New Era

- With Singapore entering a post-pandemic era amidst high inflation, this year's Budget focused on providing support to Singaporeans.
- We will need to adjust to this new era, reposition our economy, and refresh our social compact for the future.
- We build our collective resilience so that we continue to support one another, and bounce back stronger from external disruptions and shocks.

# 2

## Refreshing our Social Compact

- DPM Lawrence Wong said that the Government has worked to update its policies based on feedback and ideas shared during the Forward Singapore (#ForwardSG) exercise.
- Among the views shared by Singaporeans were social mobility and equality, uplifting those with less, reskilling and upskilling to secure good jobs, as well as aspirations and concerns about raising families.
- To achieve these shared aspirations, the next phase of the #ForwardSG exercise will focus on more targeted engagements that "go deeper in specific issues" and on co-creating solutions with Singaporeans. The collective vision and recommendations will be shared in a Forward Singapore report in the second half of 2023.

**FORWARD** 

Forward Singapore is organised along six pillars: (1) economy and jobs; (2) education and lifelong learning; (3) health and social support; (4) home and living environment; (5) environmental and (6) fiscal sustainability, each led by 4G leaders.



“Our efforts to strengthen our overall resilience must reflect the values that motivate us as a people and as a nation. We want a Singapore where we not only do the best for ourselves, but also help our fellow citizens succeed. And that is how we keep Singapore strong, resilient, and united.”

# 3

## Three Key Thrusts to Secure Our Future in a New Era

- We will grow our economy, equip our workers, and provide a full range of opportunities for everyone to advance in life.
- We will strengthen our social compact and provide better support for families, seniors, and vulnerable groups.
- We will build up our collective resilience so that we are able to bounce back strengthened from external shocks and setbacks.

# 4

## Everyone has a part to play in Total Defence

“Every citizen and every sector of society has a part to play in ensuring Singapore's security, and defending our way of life.”



Scan to read the Budget Statement 2023 in full.





Personnel from the Maritime Security Task Force engaging the public on maritime security



ITE College West students served nutritious meals cooked using long shelf ingredients



PUB's Automated water bag filling machine



SCDF demonstrating the use of a fire extinguisher

**3. TD Tower Defence Game:** Currently in the prototype stage, the game is designed and coded by a group of NUS High School of Math and Science students. It adds a TD-themed twist to the classic tower defence game, a popular sub-genre of strategy games where players allocate resources to build towers to defend their territories against enemy attacks.

To view other TD2023 activities which the public can participate in, please visit:

Visit this site for more TD resources, including the TD2023 poster, interactive video and engagement packages:



Sources: MINDEF, Defence Minister's FB Pg, We Are Total Defence FB Pg, ConnexionSG

## 59th Munich Security Conference

Minister for Defence Dr Ng Eng Hen was in Germany from 17 to 19 Feb 2023 to attend the 59th Munich Security Conference (MSC).

- At the Maritime Security Roundtable, he spoke on the topic “Bridging Troubled Waters – Mapping Escalation Potential in the Indo-Pacific Region”. In his speech, he called upon leaders to work towards preventing miscalculation or inadvertent physical conflicts.
- On the sidelines of the 59th MSC, Dr Ng also spoke at the 14th Munich Young Leaders (MYL) Roundtable on the topic of ‘Forging A Path To The World As We Hope It To Be’. At the session, he spoke about key global challenges and talked about three aspirational goals for the world: (1) to end oppression and marginalisation of different groups; (2) alleviate poverty; and (3) protect the fundamental rights of all citizens.



Source: Dr Ng's Facebook page

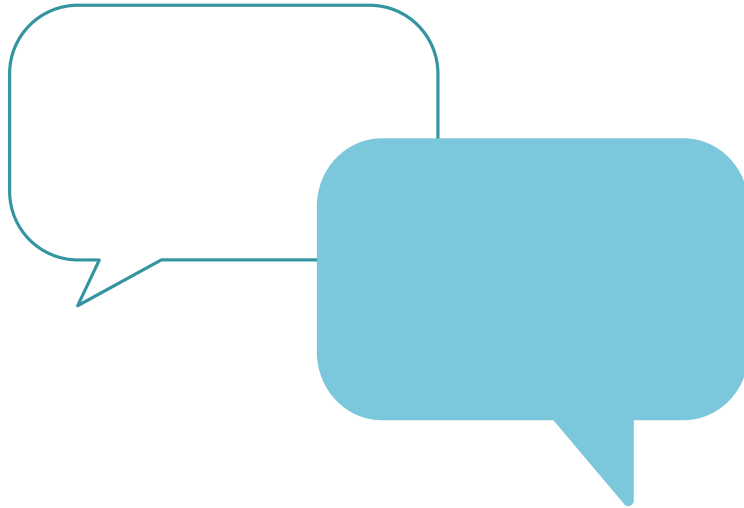
“War in Asia will be devastating, not only in Asia but globally. The reasons for war do not justify any in Asia. The stakes are not worth it, the consequences disastrous and viable alternatives do exist.”

➤ The MYL Roundtable brings together young leaders from governments, think-tanks, and the private sector from Asia-Pacific, Europe, Africa, the Middle East, and the US to discuss issues related to foreign and security policy.



Scan to read Dr Ng's Opening Remarks at the 14th Munich Young Leaders Roundtable.

Sources: MINDEF, 18 Feb



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