



A round-up of events with possible lessons and implications for Singapore

In earlier issues of News in Focus this year, we talked about how we can strengthen our social compact under Forward SG. In this issue, we distill highlights from the newly released Forward SG report which examines how Singapore can navigate the increasingly troubled global and domestic landscape, and cover three security issues that continue to preoccupy Singapore.

Forward SG: Building our Shared Future

“ This is our refreshed social compact.
Our promise to each other, as we chart our new way forward.
It is not built upon one person, or one entity.
Because we are all in this together. We all have a part to play.
We truly succeed only when we all succeed together.
Together, let us build our shared future.”

What is Forward SG?

Launched in June 2022, Forward SG is an exercise for Singaporeans to explore the values, priorities, and policies needed to strengthen our social compact for the next bound of our nation’s journey, amidst a more troubled external environment and more domestic constraints.

From the exercise, participants identified that they want a **Vibrant, Inclusive, Fair, Thriving, Resilient and United Singapore**:

Vibrant and Inclusive, with opportunities for all to learn and progress across diverse pathways, and where everyone is valued and respected for who we are and what we do.

Fair and Thriving, where Singaporeans are assured of their basic needs through every life stage, and we can all pursue fulfilling and dignified lives, with more help given to our fellow citizens with less.

Resilient and United, with a stronger sense of shared identity and collective responsibility amongst all stakeholders to do our part for the common good and for future generations of Singaporeans.



FORWARD 

<https://go.gov.sg/forward-singapore>



What is a social compact?

We've got each other's backs. It is the glue that holds society together, the shared understanding of our roles and responsibilities towards each other, and our shared values and aspirations as a people.

7 Shifts to reach our Shared Future

Over 200,000 participants contributed to the Forward SG exercise over 16 months to discuss various issues and identified 7 shifts to reach our shared future. Here are the extracts from the Forward SG report.

01

Embracing Learning Beyond Grades

Education has been a key part of Singapore's remarkable transformation. Unfortunately, we have also seen mounting anxiety about exam scores and pressure to get into the 'right' schools.

Instead of getting caught up in an education arms race, we should re-orientate our mindsets towards becoming a full-fledged learning society, where we strive to learn and improve throughout our lives in order to navigate a world that will be very different in 20 to 30 years. We can do more in these areas:

- Give every child a good start
- Provide more diverse pathways to develop every student to their full potential
- Beyond school, pursue lifelong learning



Participants at one of the Forward SG engagement sessions (Forward SG Facebook Page)

02

Respecting and Rewarding Every Job

Today, we have built a thriving and highly productive economy with diverse jobs and opportunities. Yet, many still worry about our jobs in expectation of more economic volatility ahead. From the Forward SG exercise, Singaporeans showed a growing desire for 'good jobs' to go beyond the pay cheque — to include a sense of meaning and purpose, and the opportunity to develop mastery of skills. Collectively, we need to make these shifts when it comes to jobs and careers to:

- Further reduce wage gaps across professions
- Empower Singaporeans to build career agility and resilience
- Invest more in Singaporeans, even as we keep our economy open

If at an early age, [children] are already expected to fulfil or get good grades in preparation for PSLE, it's taxing for the kids and parents as well.

- Participant of Ministry of Education (MOE) Parent Support Group Engagement, 3 September 2022

Supporting Families through Every Stage

Strong and stable families are the bedrock of our society. We want Singapore to be the best place for Singaporeans to start, grow and nurture their families. However, our families are experiencing greater stresses due to the higher caregiving burden from an ageing population and shrinking family sizes. Many Singaporeans are facing the dual pressures of raising young children while caring for elderly parents.

To support all families through every stage of life, be it young couples embarking on their parenthood journey, middle-aged parents caring for both children and seniors, or families that have persons with disabilities (PwDs), we will collectively strengthen support for families in these areas:

- Ensure continued access to affordable public housing
- Provide more assurance to parents in the first stage of a child's life
- Improve Singaporeans' well-being
- Support our caregivers, especially those caring for family members with disabilities

Enabling Seniors to Age Well

Singapore is one of the fastest-ageing nations in the world. By 2030, around one in four Singaporeans will be aged 65 and older. This demographic shift will be the most significant social transformation of our generation, with healthcare being a critical challenge.

We can do more as a society to help our seniors age with meaning and purpose so they can have fulfilling golden years:

- Empower seniors to age healthily and well
- Strengthen services for seniors with care needs
- Improve the physical environment for seniors
- Ensure seniors retire with peace of mind



Participants at one of the Forward SG engagement sessions (Forward SG Full Report)

In 2030, I hope Singapore can embrace the challenges faced by families that have a child born with high medical needs. My wish is for society to be willing to provide more help to ease the difficulties of lifelong caregiving for individuals with more needs - a situation that we had not chosen to be in but nonetheless have embarked on.

- Participant of EMP2030 Focus Group Discussion



A new national programme called **Age Well SG** to strengthen our aged care system and to enable our seniors to age well in the community will be launched. Find out more at <https://www.agewellsg.gov.sg/>

Empowering Those in Need

Singapore's approach towards social support has evolved over the years, as the Government continues to do more to support disadvantaged and vulnerable groups. However, the challenges of social mobility and inequality will get tougher as our society develops.

To ensure that Singapore remains a society that provides opportunities for all, regardless of our starting points, we will do more in these areas:

- Uplift lower-income families
- Close early gaps for children from lower-income families
- Make Singapore a more inclusive society for PwDs



"There should be more wheelchair-friendly options at venues for work, play and learning." -- S. Narresh Babu, Aspiring Entrepreneur and Forward SG participant (Forward SG Website)

Investing in Our Shared Tomorrow

Our social compact is an intergenerational one; and the Singapore we have today is the result of the sacrifices and hard work of those before us. We will need to continue stewarding our limited resources sustainably, to deal with the challenges of today, and provide a strong foundation for the future on three fronts:

- Manage our limited land and environmental resources
- Strengthen our food and water security
- Uphold fiscal prudence and responsibility

Doing Our Part as One United People

The collective strength of our society depends on how well we care for each other, and how united we are as one people. Every one of us should know and feel that we have a stake in our society. To facilitate Singaporeans', businesses' and the community's contribution towards our shared future, we will step up efforts in the following areas:

- Give back to our society
- Strengthen our Singaporean identity
- Take collective action towards our shared future

To make this happen, the Government will play a bigger role to support Singaporeans in their pursuits and aspirations. But everyone else in society — from employers, to community groups, families and individuals — can, and should, also contribute towards this collective effort.

Together, we can build our shared future and make Singapore our best home.

[Success is] fulfilment and contentment. I'm okay with not achieving certain material goals, but the non-material goals are very important. Everything I do should carry some value and meaning.

*- Student participant at the Forward SG Student Engagement at Nanyang Technological University (NTU),
11 November 2022*



Look out for these upcoming events under Forward SG!

END OCT TO NOV

More highlights about specific shifts under Forward SG in the media

4 NOV TO 28 JAN

More Forward Singapore Festivals will be organised in Nov and Jan, across the island



After understanding more about the seven shifts under Forward SG, how do you think you can contribute towards our shared goals and aspirations in your own ways?

Scan the QR code below to access the **full Forward SG report:**
<https://go.gov.sg/forwarding-report>



<https://go.gov.sg/forwarding-report>



Credit: Internal Security Department Facebook Page

Three Security Threats that Continue to Preoccupy Singapore

The Internal Security Department (ISD) celebrated its Diamond Jubilee recently on 24 Oct 2023. At the ISD's anniversary gala dinner, PM Lee gave a speech where he mentioned **three security issues** that continue to preoccupy Singapore.

Threat of Terrorism

This threat has been high on ISD's list, especially the threat from transnational Islamist terrorist groups which has evolved but remains persistent. Today, we continue to be affected by trends in the region and beyond. Our terrorism threat also does not arise domestically, but springs from the broader security situation in the region.

Dangerous groups continue to operate in our neighbourhood, including in Indonesia, Philippines, and other parts of Southeast Asia. At the same time, new forms of extremist ideologies are emerging, such as far-right extremism.

We take this danger which could tear apart the racial and religious harmony and trust that we have painstakingly built over the decades seriously. ISD's vigilance has repeatedly pre-empted and disrupted terrorist plots against us, and also helped to rehabilitate radicalised individuals, through partnerships with the Religious Rehabilitation Group and the Inter-Agency Aftercare Group.

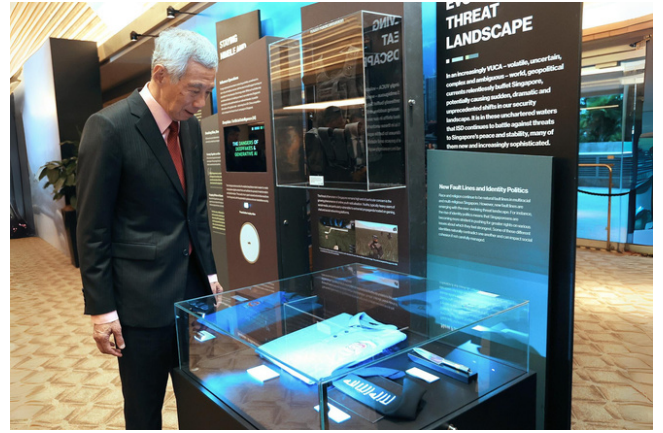
“ ... Singapore is more vulnerable than most other countries. As a diverse multiracial and multi-religious nation, our inherent fault lines will always exist. And being such an open and interconnected society, our people are susceptible to many external influences.

- PM Lee Hsien Loong at ISD's 75th Anniversary Gala Dinner”

Foreign Influence and Espionage

These are not wars or physical attacks, but more insidious threats that lurk in the shadows. They can include foreign actors who seek to subvert or mount influence operations to manipulate us, or conduct increasingly sophisticated espionage, including in the cyber realm, to compromise our most precious secrets. Such things have happened to Singapore.

While ISD is our first line of defence, we must be equally capable and remain vigilant against such influence and espionage operations.



PM Lee at ISD's 75th Anniversary Gala Dinner (PM Lee's FB Page)

Our Domestic Vulnerabilities

Our society will always have inherent faultlines, because of the diversity of races and religions in our population. While we have come a long way in building trust between different communities since independence, it would be unwise of us to imagine that differences in perspectives and attitudes have entirely disappeared. This can be seen from Singaporeans' different reactions to recent developments such as the US-China tensions, or ongoing Israel-Hamas conflict. We have to continue to watch racial and religious relations carefully because misunderstandings and frictions can still arise, and cause serious problems if not properly handled.

Besides race and religion, we also have to watch out for emerging social divisions, dividing people for and against various causes.

Sometimes people think that nation building is all sweetness and light... Real life is more complicated. Societies have to defend themselves against all sorts of dangers. We would be gullible to think that everyone wishes us well. From abroad, we can be targeted by foreign influence operations and covert activities. On the domestic front, vulnerabilities and fault lines need to be managed.

- PM Lee Hsien Loong at ISD's 75th Anniversary Gala Dinner



In what ways can you promote vigilance and guard against these three security threats in your daily life?



Read PM Lee's full speech here:
<https://go.gov.sg/isd75thspeech>



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



<https://go.gov.sg/feedbacknif>