

**ECONOMIC STRATEGY REVIEW HUMAN CAPITAL COMMITTEE
INTERVIEW WITH CNA TV, 28 MAY 2026**

**BROADENING THE RANGE OF GOOD JOBS AND
PREPARING OUR WORKERS FOR THEM**

Mr Eugene Chow (CNA): David, Marcus, thank you both for joining us. The Economic Strategy Review (ESR) sets out how Singapore can stay competitive, but for workers the questions are very immediate. What jobs will be secure? What skills will matter, and how do you make sure people are not left behind?

David, what does a good job mean in Singapore in 2026? Is it about wages and stability, or should Singaporeans expect jobs that also offer progression, purpose, and resilience against disruption?

Ag Min Mr David Neo: A good job is not just a job that offers a good paycheck. We believe that a good job should be one that offers good dignity, stability, as well as social mobility. And that's why the ESR has also emphasised quite a fair bit on the need to broaden the range of good jobs in the economy.

And with the AI disruptions, I think there will be new opportunities that come about, in new sectors, in new industries. For example, a prompt engineer wasn't something that existed just two or three years ago, but now it is a thing.

In addition to that, we also want to make sure that all workers are able to make use of this opportunity, this advantage, to also upskill and make changes. I think this is a wonderful opportunity for all businesses to also seek to make that social impact; how can they also provide a quality job, a good job that is not just good in terms of providing mobility, providing dignity, as well as stability, but also provides that meaning and purpose, for all our people to be able to align their personal values to, so that everybody is way more engaged and way more productive at work.

Ms Caitlin Ng (CNA): There sounds to be a lot about change, and a lot of disruption that could be happening. So, Marcus, maybe I'll ask you this question: what exactly is it that you're hearing from the ground that workers are anxious about? Is it AI disruption? Is it something else?

Mr Marcus Lam: We are an open economy - highly competitive, highly skilled, with high value-add. What that means is technological advancement has a compounded impact on us, as an economy. You will feel the impact faster than anyone else in the world. And that creates anxiousness.

I think fresh graduates, I would say, at the moment are all looking at 'Can I find a job that I love to do, and I can see progress'?

The one that is in, I would say, midstream, they are knowledge workers within the organisation. I think what they are worried about is: how am I going to stay relevant? How am I going to be

accretive to the organisation, so that the organisation stays relevant in the market and be competitive.

Ms Caitlin Ng (CNA): The ESR says that Singapore shouldn't slow down AI adoption. In fact, there is an emphasis on that, and we shouldn't slow it down just to preserve jobs.

I think the general sentiment is that, while we understand that's economically necessary, it could come off as harsh for these workers, where their livelihoods are affected. So, in your opinion, how should Singapore balance out these economic benefits as well as job security for these workers.

Ag Min Mr David Neo: In this whole disruption, in this whole transition, you find that over time, the countries, the industries, and the sectors that are better able to incorporate AI to augment their workers to do well, will be the ones that come up on top. And the countries that don't will end up seeing businesses, industries moving out of their countries into more competitive countries. If we were to just protect jobs in the short term, you find that we will be doing our workers a disservice in the long term. Because in the long term, if we are not competitive, then those things will move out of Singapore.

Therefore our approach is, let's protect every worker, but let's also evolve the jobs as fast as we can, so that as a whole we continue to be an attractive, competitive place for companies, for industries to come to take root, because that ultimately is going to be what provides good jobs, not just today, but tomorrow for all our workers.

Mr Eugene Chow (CNA): If you could paint a picture for us, what would a successful AI-augmented worker look like to you five years from now?

Ag Min Mr David Neo: I think that's a mightily difficult question to answer, but an AI-augmented worker that is doing well five years from now will be somebody who is able to allow AI to do the dull, the repetitive, and the boring work. Because that doesn't require human intuition or critical thinking. Allow AI to do that, and best be able to harness AI in the current business and production process in a way that leads to meaningful business outcomes. Also, be able to see new opportunities that can be brought about by using AI — things that you couldn't do before, perhaps because it requires too much time, too much computation effort, but yet with AI you can narrow that, you add the human intuition, and that creates new possibilities.

Ms Caitlin Ng (CNA): We hear from the ground that there are graduates having a lot of difficulties, they send out hundreds of applications, they hear, like, two back.

Then on the other hand, we hear employers saying that maybe fresh graduates are a bit more selective in what they're looking for nowadays. So, Marcus, I'm curious, what are you hearing from the ground and what is the situation like?

Mr Marcus Lam: There's an expectation gap naturally, between what employers hope to get, and what the employees want to get. But the expectation gap in this period of time is compounded by the huge difference on what technology can bring about.

Our advice to ourselves is for fresh grad, finding a job that match your expectation is not useful in this period of time. Because when you're out of a job for a year, to me in this AI age, you feel like you're out of a job for two years. Because you did not have a chance to join an organisation to let you experiment how AI will work in a real workplace. And that advancement of technology will accelerate that difference. So, don't get into that situation.

Mr Eugene Chow (CNA): [David, if I may, I think a lot of people would like to hear from you, on your thoughts about this expectation gap between fresh graduates and employers.](#)

Ag Min Mr David Neo: We do have established yardsticks, but those might not be the most important, at this current point in time. Things like, is there a structured career pathway? I mean, it's important, but is it as important as before?

There's this thing about whether or not our Singaporeans are hungry, and are willing. I don't believe for a second that our Singaporeans are not hungry and willing. I believe our young people are very competitive, they're very willing. And I think there are enough of them who are willing to do things differently, to do things that require a little bit more of themselves.

I think perhaps this is where we can all adopt that more entrepreneurial mindset, and it's a lot more about what can I learn from this job opportunity, what skills can I pick up? How can I become a better version of myself.

Ms Caitlin Ng (CNA): [So, final question to the both of you — if there is one thing that you think Singapore must get right in the next five years when it comes to this economic transition, what do you think it must be?](#)

Mr Marcus Lam: What we need to do is just be pragmatic. If it doesn't work, don't be afraid to call it out. Don't second guess and say, 'Oh, you're trying to take my pie'. Who wants to take your pie? You fail; I fail.

We just need to execute. Pragmatism, with the trust that we have had for 60 years, I don't see why we can't do it. The only reason is ourselves, it's not anyone else.

Ag Min Mr David Neo: For me, I think it is this very strong relationship that we already have between the Government, the businesses, the unions, and the workers. I think that is a unique strength that we've had, that has brought us so far over the last 60 years.

And it's that one thing that we continue to need to have operating well, because the more we are able to have that sense of community, those relationships, and that trust between us, to be able to candidly share observations and conversations about things that are working, things that are not working, and for us to make those changes, I think the more we'll be able to ride this transition well.