

**OPENING REMARKS BY ACTING MINISTER FOR CULTURE, COMMUNITY AND YOUTH, AND SENIOR MINISTER OF STATE FOR EDUCATION DAVID NEO
AT THE MEDIA INTERVIEW ON THE ECONOMIC STRATEGY REVIEW (ESR)
MID-TERM UPDATE, 29 JANUARY 2026**

- Good jobs are central to Singapore's growth agenda.
 - As DPM highlighted, there are challenges, harder economic growth – and it may not necessarily translate into good jobs.
- Therefore, we have to put in the effort to really increase the number of good jobs and opportunities for Singaporeans.
- The economic transformation will lead to new roles and reshape existing ones. You can expect two things:
 - The pace of change will be faster because of new technologies.
 - AI is going to disrupt all sectors and it is going to be a lot more pervasive. I don't think any sector can claim that AI is not going to change their way of working.
- Therefore, we need to support our people and our businesses in all sectors to help them navigate these changes. We need to do this so that our growth is inclusive, and that progress is shared by all.
- ESR committees are working very closely with business leaders, unions, as well as our people, to find out how we can do this better, how we can work together to help everybody move in one step, towards the new economy that we will have.
- From that perspective, we are recommending three key moves to grow good jobs and to support our workers and businesses in their transformation.
 - First, we need to broaden the range of good jobs available to Singaporeans, and it should reflect their aspirations, as well as their talents and skills.
 - Second, with the new opportunities that will arise, we want to help Singaporeans gain new skills to be able to seize those opportunities and jobs that will come.
 - Third, with the disruption and the changes, we also want to be able to help support businesses reinvent themselves – new business models, new ways of doing things – to be a lot more productive.
- First, on job creation, we should broaden the range of good jobs in our economy. Jobs that reflect the aspirations of Singaporeans and make the best use of their skills.

- Some of these will come from the growth strategies that Ag Min Jeffrey talked about.
- With AI, there will be new roles. There will be both technical ones, in terms of research and development engineering, as well as non-technical ones – trust, safety, project management.
- With the effort to support entrepreneurs, we will also have a new generation of founders who will create new roles and new jobs for Singaporeans.
- But growth cannot be just in these few sectors or for a narrow band of jobs. We need to put in the effort to make sure that there is a more diverse and a larger set of jobs that are also being transformed, also being created.
 - Many of these jobs are in essential services that every Singaporean household relies on, as well as our businesses.
 - These are jobs from skilled trades to care services, demanding jobs that require a lot of dedication, a lot of skill and craft, a lot of mastery to do.
- We think there's a lot of potential to help create better success pathways, better ways for Singaporeans to acquire skills and build stronger pathways to success.
- We can do more to transform and uplift these jobs.
 - For example, we can do more with NTUC, with our trade associations. We can professionalise skilled trades, and then we can offer clearer career and skills progression ladders, including improving the recognition for these jobs that a lot of Singaporean take part in.
- Next, beyond creating good jobs, what's equally important is to help Singaporeans upskill so that they can take good advantage of these opportunities.
- We've done lifelong learning for quite a while now, almost a decade, SkillsFuture and all that. We need to double down on that effort and strengthen that effort.
- Beyond that, we also need to have a national AI Workforce Strategy.
 - AI's impact will be pervasive. We need to help every Singaporean become comfortable and confident with AI, so that they can use it to increase their productivity.

- For students, we recommend refreshing the core curricula of what they're learning in schools, so that students can learn about AI, learn with AI, learn to use AI, and, more importantly, learn beyond AI.
- For workers, we want to support them to be able to use AI and experiment with it in meaningful ways at the workplace, so they can be a lot more productive.
- For businesses, it's about supporting them to look at how they can use AI to transform their business processes and achieve much better business outcomes.
- Earlier, I said that we expect the pace of change to be faster. But a faster pace of change also means that skills get obsolete quicker.
- This is where we need to double down on SkillsFuture efforts, and the need to also shift a little bit more decisively, to intersperse and to weave 'work' and 'learn' together.
 - For our students, it's about getting work experience while they're still studying.
 - For fresh graduates and mid-career workers, it's about being able to continue to gain new skills, to continue their academic upgrading journey while they are still working. But we need to bring the two much closer together.
 - We should also strengthen the involvement of employers in this whole effort, so that the skills that they learn can be quite quickly and quite directly translated into good business and good productivity outcomes.
- When technology disrupts industries, our industry partners and businesses have also provided the feedback that sometimes it is a little bit difficult to navigate some of these transitions.
- We should empower every worker to take charge of their careers.
 - Today, Singaporeans can receive good career guidance, training and job placement support from government agencies, NTUC, as well as private firms.
 - But we feel that there's potential to strengthen this career and skills system to better support all our workers, if they should need to take on new roles.
- We also studied how other countries do this.
 - Sweden, for example, has involved job placement agencies, employment agencies at scale. They've done this well, and we find that

with competition, they achieve better outcomes, and it pushes up the quality of the services provided.

- We think there's something Singapore can learn from this.
- We also recommend that the government look at how we structure and provide this connection of skills training to jobs end-to-end, the entities that are involved, and whether we can put everything tighter together so that we can better serve Singaporeans when they need to move on to new roles.
- Last, to strengthen the career transition support for workers should they be displaced.
 - For PMEs, this can take the form of working with trade associations and chambers to aggregate jobs and to help find matches and placements.
 - For other workers, this can take the form of career bridges to provide some support as we help them move into new roles.
- Within this whole theme of transitions, it is about supporting our businesses to reinvent themselves.
- Through our engagement with businesses, they tell us that they can see some of these changes happening, such as supply chain changes, technological changes.
 - They can see that they need to restructure, they need to change their business model, they need to move to new business models.
 - They are also telling us that they may need some help to do so, whether they can grow and transform their operations through mergers and acquisitions, or through a little bit of offshoring, putting the higher value-add things in Singapore and shifting other things to other places which makes more economic sense.
 - They are asking whether some help in terms of advisory services to help them make these shifts, can be looked at.
- For a start, we could review the set of tools and different resources that are available to all our business leaders.
 - We are also not starting from clean slate. Enterprise SG has a lot of ongoing engagements with local firms. This is where they can really help us deepen the understanding of some of these challenges that are faced by the businesses undergoing restructuring. And look at how we can help them make some of these moves a little bit better?

- All these are still a work in progress. These will continue to inform the recommendations that the committees will make to the government to really help our businesses transform well.
- In short, three things to note:
 - First, about creating a diverse range of jobs that reflect Singaporean's aspirations, as well as makes good use of their skills.
 - Second, looking at giving Singaporeans new skills, so that they can seize the opportunities that will come about with this economic restructuring and new rules.
 - Lastly, supporting our businesses to be able to navigate this transition well, helping them with the advisory services so that they can come up with new models, new ways of doing things, things that will be way more productive and can help take advantage of the growth that will come.
- Thank you.