

SINGAPORE

Public debate to advance with civil society's participation: DPM Tharman

Deputy Prime Minister Tharman Shanmugaratnam says it will "do Singapore good" if there are more debate and peer review within civil society itself.

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POSTED: 03 Aug 2015 12:45 UPDATED: 03 Aug 2015 18:17

PHOTOS



Singapore 2065 comprises views from ministers, prominent economists, veteran diplomats as well as business leaders. (Photo: Hetty Musfirah)

CAPTION



SINGAPORE: Public debate in Singapore should advance with civil society playing a greater role in discussions, said Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister Tharman Shanmugaratnam on Monday (Aug 3).

Mr Tharman made the point as he launched a book, titled *Singapore 2065: Leading Insights on Economy and Environment from 50 Icons and Beyond*, which addresses the future of Singapore's economy and environmental landscape today.

"We have more ideas and views coming from scholars, public intellectuals, and a broader range of commentators today compared to even a decade ago. There is more active scrutiny of Government policies, and more active listening by Government," he said.

"But it will do Singapore good if we also have more debate and peer review within civil society itself, with participants evaluating each other's analyses and proposals, and pointing to the trade-offs, thoroughly and dispassionately. This debate, which does not depend on only the Government responding to arguments being put forward, will help us mature as a society," he added.

The book had roped in ministers, prominent economists, veteran diplomats as well as business leaders, and these include Education Minister Heng Swee Keat, Ambassador-at-large Professor Tommy Koh as well as CEO of Banyan Tree Ho Kwon Ping.

A common point raised by writers is that measures of Singapore's economic success are changing. Apart from GDP growth, there is the need to consider other aspects such as the overall quality of life, the magnitude of carbon emissions and extent of income inequality.

Some writers also looked at possibilities that could happen in 2065 and beyond. Dean of Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, Professor Kishore Mahbubani for example, postulated that Singapore may finally abolish private ownership of cars in 2065.

Mr Tharman said the book will make a valuable contribution to a healthy debate on the choices Singapore will make as the country goes forward together.

- CNA/kk