

More debate, peer review in civil society will help Singapore mature: Tharman

SINGAPORE—Noting the increased scrutiny of policies and more “active listening” by the Government, Deputy Prime Minister Tharman Shanmugaratnam yesterday encouraged civil society participants to evaluate one another’s analyses and proposals, and point out the trade-offs “thoroughly and dispassionately”.

“We have more ideas and views coming from scholars, public intellectuals, and a broader range of commentators today compared to even a decade ago,” said Mr Tharman. “There is more active scrutiny of government policies, and more active listening by the Government. But, it will do Singa-

pore good if we also have more debate and peer review within civil society itself ... This debate, which does not depend on only the government responding to arguments being put forward, will help us mature as a society.”

Mr Tharman was speaking at the launch of the book *Singapore 2065: Leading Insights on Economy and Environment from 50 Icons and Beyond*, which looks at what the future holds for the Republic’s economy and the environment. Contributors include ministers, economists, diplomats and business leaders. Among them were Education Minister Heng Swee Keat, Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy

NEW BOOK ON FUTURE OF S’PORE’S ECONOMY, ENVIRONMENT

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dean Kishore Mahbubani, Ambassador-at-Large Tommy Koh and Banyan Tree Holdings executive chairman Ho Kwon Ping.

Mr Tharman said the book will make a valuable contribution to the “healthy debate” on the choices that Singaporeans must make as the country progresses. Mr Tharman, who is also the Finance Minister, said the Republic’s future will depend “not only on adapting and perfecting what has been done elsewhere, but more and more on creating value in Singapore through new skills and technologies, original business solutions and a spirit of experimentation in society”.

He said: “We must provide space for young Singaporeans to explore their interests and develop a deep sense of fellowship with their peers, as they grow up in our schools. And we

must develop a system that supports learning throughout our lives, and help everyone acquire skills to work alongside and take advantage of new technologies.”

Singapore is embarking on its next phase of development amid global changes and uncertainties, he noted. “But we start from a position of some strength, coming out of the sustained transformations we achieved in our first 50 years of nationhood,” he said.

Mr Tharman cited the Republic’s living standards and education system, its reserves, and urban planning and public housing policies. “But, it is the continual improvement in our human capabilities, in every vocation, and our ability to work together to achieve common goals, that is Singapore’s most significant strength,” he said. “We must keep evolving these capabilities.”