

Tharman lists innovation and inclusivity as keys to S'pore's advancement

Book of essays on Singapore's next 50 years, which he launches, also picks up this point about S'pore's future

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Singapore

TO adapt to an unpredictable world, Singapore must continually improve its human capacities and its people's abilities to achieve common goals, Deputy Prime Minister Tharman Shanmugaratnam said on Monday.

"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 at the launch of a book of essays that set out to imagine how Singapore might evolve over the next 50 years.

The book, titled *Singapore 2065: Leading Insights on Economy and Environment from 50 Singapore Icons and Beyond*, brings together insights from prominent Singapore observers on how life here could shape up in the fields of economics, technology, social issues and the environment.

Mr Tharman, who is also Finance Minister, said of the next 50 years of Singapore's post-independence story: "We are making an even better Singapore, both more innovative and more inclusive."

"We must do so with the blend of imagination and practicality that got us to where we are today, and always with a sense of fairness."

This sentiment is reflected in the book, said its editor Euston Quah, professor and head of the economics division at Nanyang Technological University.

He said: "Predicting the far future has always been challenging and exciting. Fifty years ago, not many would have predicted that today, Singapore would have become a narrative of economic success."

Among the essays is one by Monetary Authority of Singapore managing director Ravi Menon, who put together a "Budget 2065" speech, which the government allocates the most funds for its "Ministry of Wellbeing" and "Ministry of Lifelong Learning".

Kishore Mahbubani, dean of the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy at the National University of Singapore, posited a Singapore in which private ownership of cars is abolished, just like in New York and Shanghai.

As Singapore adjusts to a shifting, Asia-centric economic landscape, it will need to continue developing quality infrastructure, managing industrial relations and continue improving the people's level of education and job skills.

Mr Quah said tackling these issues in an inclusive way is a theme several essays pick up on, through discussions on wealth, income inequality and the changing measures of economic success.

He said the Singapore of the next 50 years will need to consider more holistic aspects of advancement, such as the liveability of the physical environment, the magnitude of carbon emissions, the extent of income inequality and overall quality of life.

"(The book's contributors hold) an apparent unanimous agreement that inclusive growth should be made an indispensable goal over the next 50 years," he said.

Mr Tharman, calling for the public to take the debate further, said: "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. 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.

"This book will make a valuable contribution to this healthy debate on the choices we must make as we go forward together."



Mr Tharman (left) said at the launch of the book edited by Prof Quah (right) that the book would be a valuable contribution to the national debate on the choices Singapore must make going forward. PHOTO: WORLD SCIENTIFIC

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Mr Tharman on the next 50 years of Singapore's post-independence story