

4G leaders want equal opportunities for all

They will strive to create opportunities for citizens at every stage of life

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To tackle inequality in its current form, Singapore's fourth-generation (4G) leadership will not just strengthen support for those who have less, but also strive to create opportunities for all citizens at every stage of their life.

Second Minister for Education and Finance Indranee Rajah yesterday set out how the 4G team will address inequality and ensure social mobility, even as she acknowledged that the issue has been around since Singapore became independent.

"Singapore must always be a society of opportunities for all, throughout life, where everyone can progress irrespective of the starting point," she said at the National University of Singapore's Social Service Research Centre Conference.

Flagging that society could fracture in the face of widening inequalities, she said: "What is at stake, therefore, is the very nature of our society. This is not just the task of the Government. It is the task of everyone because it affects all of us."

Inequality and social mobility have been in the spotlight in recent years. In March, Minister for Social and Family Development Desmond Lee said inequality

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ity needs to be tackled on multiple fronts.

Yesterday, Ms Indranee said tackling inequality and social mobility is a "fundamental tenet of achieving a fair and just society".

The nature of the problem has also changed.

Advancements in technology threaten to deepen the divide between higher-skilled and lower-skilled workers, who risk being shut off from new opportunities.

"Left unchecked, they will

cause less advantaged Singaporeans to be left behind and feel that opportunities available can only be accessed by a privileged few," Ms Indranee added.

The 4G team's approach, she said, is not to do away with meritocracy, which some have blamed, or cap the top, but to uplift the bottom by improving access to opportunities among the less advantaged.

Ms Indranee detailed various Government assistance schemes, such as enhancing subsidies for childcare, and increasing the qualifying cap and raising the annual maximum payout for the Workfare Income Supplement. The 4G leaders will share more in the coming months on strengthening support for the disadvantaged, she said.

"The Government will strive to ensure that no one, no matter the conditions of his or her birth, will be denied the opportunities to improve the conditions of their life," she said.

"We will make sure that all are enabled to take advantage of the opportunities we provide in education, skills training, housing and other relevant areas."

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