

Managing tech's impact a key challenge: Sri Mulyani



Indonesian Finance Minister Sri Mulyani Indrawati also cited instant access to data as a challenge for leaders. PHOTO: LEE KUAN YEW SCHOOL OF PUBLIC POLICY

Dominique Nelson

Managing the impact of technology and instant access to information will be one of the key challenges for leaders in the future, said Indonesian Finance Minister Sri Mulyani Indrawati yesterday.

Speaking at a forum at the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, she said easily available information has ironically not made people more open-minded.

“Instant access to information has made it a lot easier to confirm one’s own assumption and stereotypes by blocking out the other side,” she said in a speech where she laid out what she saw as the key challenges for leaders.

Dr Sri Mulyani was speaking at the inaugural Festival of Ideas, a four-day forum featuring lectures and panels focused on public policy

and governance challenges.

She added that the public now has higher expectations of its leaders, saying: “The public is more impatient and people get angry quickly because their expectations are high, and they want delivery as fast as an instant message.”

She said future leaders must be able to explain policy impacts to people who live in a world where endless information competes for their attention.

Keeping one’s eye on technological transformation is imperative for tomorrow’s policymakers, to ensure the gap between developed and developing nations does not become unbreachable, she cautioned.

Last month, Dr Sri Mulyani was tapped by Indonesian President Joko Widodo to keep her old post as finance minister after he unveiled his new Cabinet line-up.

The theme of polarisation also

emerged during an earlier panel discussion on the future of media and journalism, featuring Institute of Policy Studies senior research fellow Carol Soon, Singapore Press Holdings assistant vice-president for media strategy and analytics Chan Cheow-Pong, and *The Straits Times* foreign editor Jeremy Au Yong.

The speakers said that one growing problem is the impact of fake news and polarisation on society’s trust in news. They noted that in the United States, for example, a media landscape where different organisations take clear partisan positions has led to an erosion of trust among consumers.

“With greater media plurality, we would expect trust in the media to be higher, but based on analysis, we find that it isn’t so,” said Dr Soon.

dnelson@sph.com.sg