

PM unveils plans to secure S'pore's future

- More support for pre-school, tertiary fees
- Moves to raise retirement age, CPF rates
- Steps to defend against climate change

BUILDING SINGAPORE, GENERATION BY GENERATION

Over the years, I have talked about many major projects at National Day Rallies. These are all progressively taking shape. In 2013, I described Jewel at Changi Airport. At that time, Jewel was just a concept and an ambition. Now we have completed it, on time and within budget. Singapore has a spectacular new gateway to the world. Many of you have visited it, and we are all rightly very proud of it. What we talk about, this Government, we will deliver. In the same way, we are realising our other ambitious plans... All these will not be done in a decade, or even in one generation. There will be space for successive generations to fill with their hopes and dreams. Each new generation will leave their mark on our city, as their predecessors have done.



PRIME MINISTER LEE HSIEN LOONG



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Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong making his National Day Rally speech at the Institute of Technical Education College Central in Ang Mo Kio yesterday. ST PHOTO: JASON QUAH

Pre-school, tertiary education to be more affordable

Eight in 10 pre-school places will be government-supported in five to six years' time, bringing it to the same ratio as public housing.

The monthly income ceiling to qualify for additional subsidies for pre-school education will be raised from \$7,500 to \$12,000 next year. The quantum of subsidies will also be increased.

Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong said yesterday that these are part of the Government's plan to make quality early-years education more affordable and accessible.

He said that in the future, 80 per cent of pre-school places will be government-supported, up from the 50 per cent currently.

With 30,000 more households qualifying for additional subsidies, pre-school expenses should come down to the costs of primary school education.

Touching on tertiary education fees, PM Lee said the Singapore Institute of Technology and the Singa-

\$12k

Monthly income ceiling to qualify for additional subsidies for pre-school education next year, up from \$7,500.

pore University of Social Sciences will lower their yearly tuition fees next year – from \$8,000 to \$7,500 for general degree courses.

Government bursaries for university, polytechnic, Institute of Technical Education, Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts, Lasalle College of the Arts students will also be enhanced.

"Anyone who works hard will have a chance to succeed, regardless of starting point or family background," PM Lee said.

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Retirement age and CPF rates for older workers to go up

As Singaporeans are living longer and many want to work longer, the retirement age will be raised gradually from 62 to 65, and the re-employment age will go up from 67 to 70.

The process will start in 2022, and be completed by 2030, said Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong yesterday.

Central Provident Fund (CPF) contribution rates will also go up for workers aged 55 to 70, so that the full rate of 37 per cent is extended to those aged up to 60 before it tapers off.

This process will start in 2021 and take place gradually over 10 years or so, depending on economic conditions, said PM Lee at the National Day Rally.

He added that these recommendations had been made by a tripartite workgroup, and the Government accepted them, in full.

The Government will take the lead as a major employer to raise

65

New retirement age by 2030. The re-employment age will also be raised to 70.

retirement and re-employment ages in the public service in 2021, a year ahead of schedule, he said.

Deputy Prime Minister Heng Swee Keat will announce a support package to help businesses adjust to these new arrangements in next year's Budget, PM Lee added.

He also stressed that there are no changes to CPF withdrawal policies or withdrawal ages – CPF members can still withdraw some money at age 55 and start their monthly payouts from age 65.

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Long-term battle to safeguard S'pore from rising sea levels

It may cost \$100 billion or more over the long term to protect low-lying Singapore against rising sea levels, said Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong yesterday.

There are good engineering solutions to the problem which could include reclaiming offshore islands and connecting them with barrages. But they come at a cost.

"How much will it cost to protect ourselves against rising sea levels? My guess is probably \$100 billion over 100 years, quite possibly more.

"If we only have 10 years to solve the problem, we won't have the time or resources to do it," PM Lee said in his National Day Rally speech. "But because this is a 50- to 100-year problem, we can implement a 50- to 100-year solution.

Climate change defences should be treated like the Singapore Armed Forces (SAF) – with utmost seriousness, he added.

"Both the SAF and climate change defences are existential for

\$100b

What it may cost over the long term to protect low-lying Singapore from rising sea levels.


Singapore. These are life and death matters. Everything else must bend at the knee to safeguard the existence of our island nation."

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Rally highlights

NDR 2019: Eight things to know

Grace Ho sums up the highlights from PM Lee Hsien Loong's speech.


1  **More affordable pre-school education**

- Monthly household income ceiling to qualify for pre-school means-tested subsidies will be \$12,000, up from \$7,500.
- Full-day pre-school expenses to come down to about \$300 a month in the medium term.
- Proportion of government-backed pre-school places to go up to 80 per cent, from 50 per cent.
- KidStart for the lower income to include another 5,000 children in next three years.


2  **Lower tertiary education fees, bigger bursaries**

- Annual fees for Singapore Institute of Technology and Singapore University of Social Sciences students to be lowered to \$7,500, from \$8,000.
- Bursaries to cover up to 75 per cent of fees for general degrees at local universities, from 50 per cent now, and up to 95 per cent of polytechnic fees, from 80 per cent now.
- Enhanced bursaries also for courses at ITE, Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts and Lasalle College of the Arts.
- Bursaries for medical students will be significantly more than for other university courses. For lower-income medical students, fees will be capped at \$5,000 a year.




3  **Retirement and re-employment ages to go up from 2022**

- Retirement age to be raised from 62 to 63 in 2022, then gradually to 65 by 2030.
- Re-employment age to go up from 67 to 68, then to 70 by 2030.


4  **Higher CPF contribution rates for older workers**

- CPF rates for workers older than 55 to be raised from 2021.
- By around 2030, those 60 and younger will get full rates.
- Businesses to get help to adjust. Support package will be announced in next year's Budget.
- No changes to CPF withdrawal policies or withdrawal ages.



5  **Government to help businesses and workers in downturn**

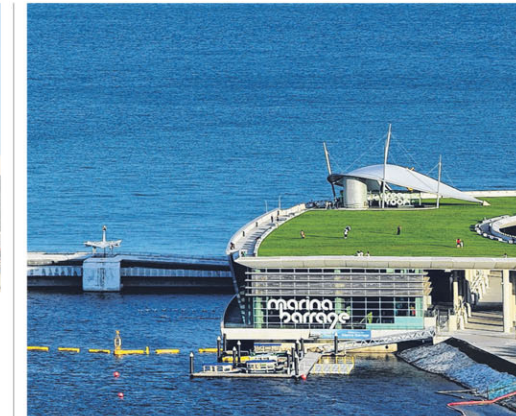
- Current situation does not warrant immediate stimulus measures.
- If it gets much worse, the Government will respond with interventions to sustain workers' livelihood.

6  **Greater Southern Waterfront to be a 'Punggol by the Bay'**

- 9,000 public and private homes to be built at the site of Keppel Club.
- New offices, waterfront promenades, greenery and open spaces along southern coastline.
- Greater Southern Waterfront to link up with other green areas: West Coast Park to East Coast Park, and the Rail Corridor with Sentosa.

7  **New resort on Pulau Brani, attractions**

- Pulau Brani and Sentosa to be developed, with new attractions.
- 'Downtown South' resort may be built on Pulau Brani.
- Sentosa's beaches to be revitalised, and nature and heritage trails expanded.
- Two old power stations in Pasir Panjang could be nightlife destinations.



8  **Measures to tackle climate change**

- Protecting Singapore against rising sea levels estimated to cost \$100 billion or more.
- Second pump house to be built at opposite end of Marina Barrage.
- A series of new offshore islands from Marina East to Changi could be reclaimed and connected with barrages to create a reservoir.
- Polders and dykes could be built along the coastline to help protect Singapore from rising sea levels.



PHOTOS: MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, ST FILE STRAITS TIMES GRAPHICS

Education

SIT, SUSS to lower fees; MOE to enhance bursaries

More help for needy tertiary students so they can pursue education without money worries

Sandra Davie
Senior Education
Correspondent

Singapore's two newest universities, the Singapore Institute of Technology (SIT) and Singapore University of Social Sciences (SUSS), will lower their annual tuition fees.

Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong

said yesterday that the fees will go down next year from \$8,000 to \$7,500 for full-time general degree students.

The Ministry of Education will also significantly enhance government bursaries for university, polytechnic, Institute of Technical Education, Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts (Nafa) and Lasalle College of the Arts students.

Students from less privileged backgrounds must not be deterred from pursuing a course just because of money, PM Lee said. "This is fundamental to maintaining Singapore as an open meritocracy," he said.

He said the MOE looked at whether the universities can operate more economically and concluded that SIT and SUSS, which emphasise applied learning through industry attachment and internships, can lower their operating costs.

This is especially as they achieve economies of scale as their intakes grow. SIT has grown from 500 stu-

dents in 2010 to 7,000 currently.

PM Lee also announced that government bursaries for students taking up general degrees at the six universities will increase from up to 50 per cent of fees to up to 75 per cent. After the bursary enhancement, a student taking up computer science or economics, for example, will pay \$2,000 a year instead of \$4,000. Full fees are about \$8,000 a year.

Bursaries for polytechnic students will go from up to 80 per cent of fees to up to 95 per cent. This means that bursary students will pay only \$150 a year. Currently they pay \$600 a

year. Full fees are around \$3,000.

The enhanced bursaries will also apply to diploma and degree students at Nafa, Lasalle and ITE.

PM Lee said six in 10 polytechnic and university students are eligible for government bursaries, so many students from middle-income families will benefit too.

SIT president Tan Thiam Soon, who was in the audience at the National Day Rally, welcomed the increased bursaries.

Revealing that 50 per cent of SIT students receive bursaries, he said: "Education is the engine that powers social mobility... These financial assistance schemes will allow students from the lower-income groups, many of whom are the first in their families to go to university, to attain a degree, without worrying about the costs."

SUSS president Cheong Hee Kiat said the schemes will enable Singaporeans "to chart new pathways and build promising futures".

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GOOD EDUCATION FOR EVERYONE

We want every Singaporean son and daughter to have the opportunity to receive a good education, and start well in life, regardless of family circumstances. Students from less privileged backgrounds must be confident that they will get financial help, if they need it to see them through their education. They should neither feel disadvantaged nor inferior comparing themselves to better-off classmates, nor should they be deterred from pursuing a course just because of money.



PRIME MINISTER LEE HSIEN LOONG

Needy medical students in local varsities to pay less in school fees

Fabian Koh

Aspiring doctors who need financial help for medical school here will soon pay less in school fees.

Government bursaries for medical courses in local universities will be enhanced to make them significantly more than those for other university courses, Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong announced at the National Day Rally yesterday.

Medicine has the highest course fees among all university courses and the Government wants to encourage more students from lower-income families to study it, he said.

After government subsidies, medical school fees today are almost \$29,000 per year at the National University of Singapore, and \$35,000 at Nanyang Technological University.

Along with bursaries from the universities, the changes will see lower-income students paying at most \$5,000 a year for medical school, which can be covered by student loans with much less difficulty, he said.

He noted: "We should not let the cost of medical school deter good students from studying medicine and becoming doctors. In fact, we want doctors to come from different segments of society, and have diverse educational and family backgrounds."

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The Government wants every Singaporean to have the opportunity to receive a good education and start well in life, regardless of family circumstances. Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong said this is fundamental to maintaining Singapore as an open meritocracy.
ST PHOTO: LIM YAOHUI

More paths for ITE students to upgrade themselves

Adrian Lim
Political Correspondent

After failing his Primary School Leaving Examination, Mr Mohammad Abdillah Mohamad Sam went to Northlight School.

There, he told his teacher that his ambition was to be a designer, but deep in his heart, he had doubts that he would realise his dream.

Today, the 25-year-old is a motion graphics artist, whose journey was cited by Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong yesterday as typifying the large proportion of Institute of Technical Education (ITE) graduates who go on to upgrade themselves.

Mr Abdillah's teachers at Northlight played a pivotal role in his progress. With their encouragement, he excelled and went on to the ITE to study animation, and later to Nanyang Polytechnic, where he graduated in 2016 with a diploma in motion graphics, recounted PM Lee in his Malay speech at the National Day Rally.

The audience at the rally was shown a visual montage of his work. "Very impressive!" PM Lee declared, as he expressed his confidence that Mr Abdillah would be successful in his profession.

To help more ITE students do better, the Education Ministry will introduce more pathways for them



Mr Mohammad Abdillah Mohamad Sam studied animation at the Institute of Technical Education, and went on to Nanyang Polytechnic, where he graduated in 2016. The 25-year-old is now a motion graphics artist. ST PHOTO: KEVIN LIM

to upgrade themselves, the Prime Minister said, adding that details will be announced soon.

Currently, seven in 10 Nitec graduates improve their skills during their careers. "This is a good statistic, but it would be even better if we can make it 10 out of 10," he added.

It is important they upgrade, because demand for better skills and knowledge is ever rising, he noted.

PM Lee also said the Government would ensure the fees for polytechnics and universities are as affordable as possible, even for the poorest families.

In a speech underlining how the Malay community's emphasis on

education has propelled its progress, he said each successive generation of Malays has been better educated, held better jobs and led more fulfilling lives.

PM Lee gave several examples of the community's progress, including the 10-fold increase in 10 years of the number of Anugerah Mendaki (Mendaki Awards) recipients who graduated with first-class honours, from seven in 2007 to 70 last year.

He noted that more Malay parents are sending their children to pre-school, and more are attending the Kelas Mate Matika@CC parent-child programme, which helps

with learning mathematics and encourages family bonding.

It would be even better if more parents send their children to pre-school even earlier, from the ages of three or four, he said.

PM Lee said the quality of pre-schools has improved, and fees are now more affordable. "With government support, the cost of full-day nursery or kindergarten for a needy family can be as low as \$3 (a month)," he said, adding that the Government will ensure that pre-school education is more affordable for the middle income as well.

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NUS law student Quek Lu Yi applied for financial aid and received a bursary which covers a portion of her fees. She subsequently sent a thank-you letter, which PM Lee mentioned in his speech yesterday. ST PHOTO: JASON QUAH

Bursary helps to ease law student's financial worries

Goh Yan Han

A few years before she entered university, Ms Quek Lu Yi was worried about how her parents would cope with the fees as they were struggling with their housing loan.

Her older brother was already an undergraduate while her younger brother also wanted to get a degree.

In 2017, she got into the National University of Singapore's law school and received an NUS Merit Scholarship. But the award did not end her financial worries. While it helped to cover part of her fees, money was still needed for law books, a laptop and school trips.

In her second year, she applied

for financial aid and received the Kwa Geok Choo Bursary, the 20-year-old, now in her third year, told *The Straits Times*.

She subsequently sent a thank-you letter, which Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong mentioned in his National Day Rally speech yesterday when he announced bigger government bursaries for university students here.

The bursary she received was named in honour of Mr Lee's late mother, who was a lawyer.

It came as a relief to Ms Quek, as it covers the remaining portion of her fees. "It is a load off my mind, and my parents'," she said.

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