



Finance Minister Lawrence Wong addressing some 200 student participants on the last day of the Singapore Model Parliament 2021 programme yesterday. PHOTO: MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION

Minister calls on students to shape the Singapore they want

Everyone has a part to play in shaping Singapore, through sharing their suggestions on policies to supporting disadvantaged members of society, said Finance Minister Lawrence Wong yesterday.

At the same time, it is important to listen to others with openness and humility, instead of just trying to push one's own views forward, in order to find common ground, he said.

In a speech to some 200 student participants on the last day of the Singapore Model Parliament 2021 programme, Mr Wong encouraged them to step forward and shape the Singapore they want to see.

He said: "When you see issues in the media, I hope you will use your experience in this programme and put yourself in the shoes of the policymaker. Reflect on the many different perspectives that Singaporeans may hold and what considerations will need to be weighed in reaching a decision."

He added that one of the key lessons participants should take away from the programme is that issues are often not as straightforward as they may first seem.

"Very often, you will have to view the issues from very different perspectives, weigh the options carefully and actively engage the public on their views, feedback and suggestions," Mr Wong said.

"Policymaking is really a dynamic process. You have to take into account context, present circumstances and realities, and because these things are fluid and keep on changing, policies are continuously being reviewed and updated over time."

The week-long programme, organised by the Government's feedback and engagement unit Reach and the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy

(LKYSPP), was held virtually over the past week.

It involved students from the Institutes of Technical Education (ITE), polytechnics, junior colleges and universities.

The participants attended workshops on Singapore's politics and parliamentary system led by LKYSPP faculty, and had virtual visits to Meet-the-People sessions with elected Members of Parliament, and dialogues with political office holders.

They also took part in simulated parliamentary debates on the topics of strengthening Singapore's social compact and promoting mental health and wellbeing. During the debates, groups of participants worked together to propose policies.

Ms Chloe Lin, 19, a third-year biomedical science student at Singapore Polytechnic, said her speech to the model Parliament centred on proposed policies to create fairer workplaces for those in the minority in sectors dominated by one gender.

"Our policies did not aim to replace the majority in these workplaces, but to recognise and create a more inclusive workplace for the minority and, in general, for all genders in Singapore," she said.

ITE student Tengku Mohamed Darwiis, 23, who is pursuing a work-study diploma in lifestyle and recreation management under a Sport Singapore scholarship, said he spoke on how more needs to be done to encourage people facing mental health issues to seek help.

He said: "There is a lot of help and resources around, but people are not seeking help because of the stigma attached to it. We need to raise awareness in schools and at work, as well as ease the financial burden of seeking help through grants and subsidies."

Rei Kurohi