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In response to President Tony Tan Keng Yam's address on Friday, three ministries yesterday set out their plans for renewing Singapore's economy and providing opportunities to Singaporeans. **LINETTE HENG** (linheng@sph.com.sg) looks at the details

Blueprint for the future

IN EDUCATION MINISTRY OF EDUCATION (MOE)

Students can expect wider exposure and opportunities to discover and build on their interests and talents in a range of areas, and develop important life skills from a young age.

Excessive focus on academics will also be reduced.

In the pre-school sector, MOE will continue to develop, refine and share with the industry a quality kindergarten curriculum and age-appropriate teaching and learning resources.

In primary schools, programmes to help students discover their strengths and interests in areas such as arts, music and sports will be strengthened. A stronger emphasis will be placed on outdoor education.

Secondary schools will have distinctive programmes for students to develop their interests.

To ensure that no child gets left behind, there will be school-based levelling-up programmes to support academically weaker students and provide financial support for students from financially challenged families.

Student Care Centres will also be expanded.

Publicly-funded university places will increase from 32 per cent today to 40 per cent by 2020.

There will also be more options for university courses, for instance, Singapore Institute of Technology and UniSIM will launch more applied degree programmes.

To facilitate lifelong learning, there will be an increase in part-time programmes and skills-based modular courses at the post-secondary education institutions.

Said Acting Minister for Education (Higher Education and Skills) Ong Ye Kung: "Education is the start of a journey of lifelong learning."

"It is also a personal journey."

"From a strong academic foundation, we aim to help Singaporeans discover their strengths and interests, develop their potential, cultivate passions, and fulfil aspirations."



IN MANPOWER MINISTRY OF MANPOWER (MOM)

Singapore has a more educated generation with diverse aspirations and an ageing population with baby boomers retiring in increasing numbers over the next decade.

We also face a volatile global economy, keener competition, and faster technological change.

To deal with this, MOM will help companies become more manpower-lean, and strengthen their Singaporean core in all major sectors of the economy.

This means that companies need to speed up their economic restructuring efforts, improve productivity and innovation, and reduce reliance on low-skilled foreign manpower.

MOM will also support employers to re-design jobs, processes and workplaces to fully tap on the experience and contributions of all workers, especially mature workers.

They will also ensure that Singaporean workers are fairly considered by employers when hiring and have fair opportunities for leadership development and growth at all levels.

The Employment Act has also been enhanced to protect more workers. The Industrial Relations Act has been extended to cover more Professionals, Managers and Executives (PMEs).

The re-employment age will be raised from 65 to 67 by 2017.

Said Manpower Minister Lim Swee Say: "Our employment landscape will change in the next five years as we continue to reposition our economy...our challenge is to keep our economy competitive, improve the quality of jobs and raise the employability of our workforce so that Singaporeans can continue to build fulfilling careers and enjoy sustained income growth."



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