

Important to make climate change commitments, but must ensure policies can support them: Desmond Lee

Cheryl Lin

CNA, 24 January 2022

SINGAPORE: It is important for Singapore to make “headline commitments” to climate change goals, but it is even more crucial to make sure policies and operations support them, said National Development Minister Desmond Lee on Monday (Jan 24).

He said this at the Institute of Policy Studies' Singapore Perspectives conference, after an audience member asked whether Singapore has “done well” to earn other countries' respect as a regional leader in the fight against climate change.

Noting that Singapore often gets criticised for not signing certain international agreements, Mr Lee said this is usually because it has difficulty complying with all the terms immediately. But if given time, it will be able to do so, he said.

“It’s the same for climate (change goals). When we make commitments, better be sure you can deliver on them.

“Have not just the political will and longevity to see it through – also have the resources, mechanisms and policies on your own as government, and in partnership with private sector and community, to be able to see it through.”

He added that the Inter-Ministerial Committee on Climate Change (IMCCC) assesses each agreement “scrupulously” to ensure Singapore can honour any commitments it makes.

Mr Lee thus assured that when the country makes “promises in the international arena, especially on something as important as climate change”, it has the willpower to see it through.

SINGAPORE’S GREEN PLAN

It is also why Singapore’s Green Plan – a whole-of-nation movement to fight climate change – is “not just an advertising campaign”, he said.

Its five pillars include infrastructural changes and making Singapore a city in nature. But these changes to “hardware” will not be enough, he said in an earlier speech.

“We need the ‘software’ or ‘heartware’ too – by making sustainability a key part of how we live, part of our DNA, every single day.”

This includes reducing energy use and waste, and greening the economy, he said.

“So the Green Plan really is a whole-of-nation effort – it’s ambitious, it’s comprehensive. We’ll continue to push further and we will need everyone on board to make it a reality.”