

Singapore Economic Policy

The Forty-Third **Singapore Economic Roundtable**

Nov 2025

Organised by
Institute of Policy Studies

Edited by
**Cassandra Ho Jing Jing
Sharanya Shanmugam
Manu Bhaskaran
Faizal bin Yahya**

The Singapore Economic Roundtable

The Singapore Economic Roundtable (SER) is a forum of leading economists, policy makers and business leaders who gather twice a year to discuss important issues that affect Singapore's position in the global economy. It deliberates on the role that government agencies and the private sector in Singapore should play in meeting new challenges facing the Singapore economy.

About the Institute of Policy Studies

The Institute of Policy Studies (IPS) was established in 1988 as an independent think tank to study and generate public policy ideas in Singapore. IPS joined the National University of Singapore in 2008 as an autonomous research centre of the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, before transitioning to an autonomous research institute within the University in 2026. Today, IPS continues to analyse public policy, build bridges between thought leaders, and communicate its findings to a wide audience. The Institute examines issues of critical national interest across a variety of fields, and studies the attitudes and aspirations of Singaporeans through surveys of public perception. It adopts a multi-disciplinary approach in its analyses and takes the long-term view in its strategic deliberation and research. It also tests policy interventions through programme pilots and evaluations. For more information about IPS, visit ips.nus.edu.sg.

The Forty-Third Singapore Economic Roundtable. Nov 2025

Edited by Ho Jing Jing, Cassandra; Shanmugam, Sharanya; Bhaskaran, Manu; and Yahya, Faizal

ISSN 2424-9181 (e-periodical)

© Copyright 2025 National University of Singapore. All Rights Reserved.

Institute of Policy Studies

National University of Singapore

1C Cluny Road House 5, Singapore 259599

Web: ips.nus.edu.sg

Registration Number: 200604346E

The Forty-Third

Singapore Economic Roundtable

November 2025

Organised by

Institute of Policy Studies

Edited by

Cassandra Ho Jing Jing

Sharanya Shanmugam

Manu Bhaskaran

Faizal Bin Yahya

Contents

Foreword	4
Macroeconomic Outlook for Singapore	6
1. Remarks by Mr Manu Bhaskaran	6
2. Remarks by Mr Aninda Mitra	14
3. Remarks by Mr Marcus Fum	19
4. Discussion Session 1	21
Weak Job Market Despite Strong Growth	21
Local vs Foreign Talent	22
Digital Transformation in SMEs	23
Rebalancing Sustainability Goals	25
Special Session: AI and the Economy	27
5. Presentation by Dr Kati Suominen	27
6. Presentation by Mr Tancho Fingarov	43
7. Remarks by Dr Benjamin Mah	53
8. Discussion Session 2	56
Human Capital and AI Skilling	56
National and Regional Governance	57
Move Towards On-premise Infrastructure	58
Singapore's Strengths and 2027 ASEAN Chairmanship ...	58
AI Readiness and the AI Bubble	60
Appendix 1: List of Participants	62

THE FORTY THIRD SINGAPORE ECONOMIC ROUNDTABLE

Appendix 2: Curricula Vitae of Chairperson, Moderator and Speakers	74
Appendix 3: Addenda	80
Addendum: Remarks by Mr Aninda Mitra	80

THE FORTY THIRD SINGAPORE ECONOMIC ROUNDTABLE

Foreword

The Institute of Policy Studies convened the 43rd Singapore Economic Roundtable (SER) in November 2025. Since 2003, IPS has been organising the SER to bring public and private sector economists together with policymakers and business practitioners to discuss key aspects of Singapore's economy and their policy implications. The SER is structured into two sessions — the first to discuss the macro-economic outlook and its implications for monetary and fiscal policy while the second session focuses on an issue of longer-term interest to the Singapore economy.

For the first session, it was noted that the outlook was marked by great uncertainty. However, the economy had proven to be remarkably resilient and monetary and other policy settings were in a good place. Participants did worry, however, about the labour market not being as strong as the overall economy. Several reasons for this disconnect were discussed, but there needs to be more research to better understand this issue and what policy action is needed.

The second session started with an overview of the trends in AI and how it was impacting the ASEAN region. Overall, the

THE FORTY THIRD SINGAPORE ECONOMIC ROUNDTABLE

artificial intelligence (AI) economy was enjoying strong growth. The prospects for substantial transformation were also noted, once generative AI began to be more widespread. Firms will need to know how to harness its transformative powers to gain the full benefits of this new technology. ASEAN as a region needed to do more to derive the maximum value from the advent of AI. For example, there should be more efforts to create consistent standards in AI and digital governance and trust frameworks.

Participants showed considerable interest in the human capital and skills implications of AI. There was also concern about the appropriate balance between national and regional AI governance frameworks. Some participants noted that Singapore, as ASEAN chairman in 2027, could act as a convenor, and advocate for more regional coordination, for example, to create a platform for more open access to data. The discussion noted two concerns — will small-medium enterprises in Singapore need more help to better adapt to AI and what will be the consequences if a financial bubble around AI were to grow.

THE FORTY THIRD SINGAPORE ECONOMIC ROUNDTABLE

Macroeconomic Outlook for Singapore

1. Remarks by Mr Manu Bhaskaran

Adjunct Senior Research Fellow

Institute of Policy Studies

Introduction

The year ahead will be a challenging period for policymakers. There are many questions around the key variables shaping the economy: first, geopolitical risk — not only between the United States (US) and China but across other global flashpoints, including in our region; and second, the direction of the trade war, even if tensions have eased recently. The outlook for both the Chinese and US economies is also uncertain: Will US inflation spike? Will the capital expenditure (CapEx) boom continue?

The truth is that we do not have clear answers to all these questions. We can make educated guesses, but uncertainty is higher than usual. Policymakers face a challenge in deriving the optimal measures in an era of such great uncertainty. In the meantime, we must make sense of the world and form a

THE FORTY THIRD SINGAPORE ECONOMIC ROUNDTABLE

view on growth, inflation, monetary policy and the implications for other policies.

Key Economic Drivers

The global economy has shown far more resilience than many expected. Several factors contribute to this resilience, which may persist in the near term.

First, whatever the longer-term potential damage from President Trump's trade war, there is now more clarity on the extent of the increase in protectionism. We have a better sense of where US tariff rates against each country will settle at, and we know that it will be substantially higher than before. Corporate leaders making capital spending decisions now have a better sense of the risks compared to the immense uncertainty in the period just after the April 2025 announcement of US tariffs. Some of the deferred hiring and postponed capital spending observed in 2025 may be reversed as 2026 begins, and that should result in a bounce-back in economic activity.

THE FORTY THIRD SINGAPORE ECONOMIC ROUNDTABLE

Second, as the shape of the new global trade order becomes clearer, supply chain reconfiguration should pick up. This is likely to drive a further surge in foreign direct investment into Southeast Asia which many believe will be a significant beneficiary. If that is the case, Singapore as the regional hub should also benefit.

Third, ongoing advances in technology are a major positive, and I hold a more optimistic view of its potential than the prevailing consensus. It is often underestimated how individual technologies are bootstrapping one another. For example, artificial intelligence (AI) is accelerating the discovery of molecules in pharmaceuticals and new crystalline structures for advanced materials. Chinese innovation is particularly noteworthy, especially in carbon capture and storage, battery technology and nuclear technology. Global competition in technology will intensify and drive more R&D spending. Defence spending will also increase, which may have technological spillovers.

THE FORTY THIRD SINGAPORE ECONOMIC ROUNDTABLE

Oil prices are another positive factor. They have fallen this year and are expected to remain benign. Financial conditions also remain supportive, with more central banks easing rates. In the US, tax rebate checks will go out in early January, which should support household spending, and accelerated depreciation rules should spur capital spending.

Taken together, these points suggest that we should not have an overly pessimistic outlook, at least for the early part of 2026.

Potential Risks Ahead

However, neither should we underestimate the lagged effects of the developments over the past year. Much has happened, and many issues are simmering beneath the surface.

First, the average US tariff rose from about 2.3 per cent at the start of the year to roughly 15–18 per cent, depending on sectoral tariffs and pending court decisions. This is a substantial increase and unprecedented in 90 years. It is a

THE FORTY THIRD SINGAPORE ECONOMIC ROUNDTABLE

major shock to the global trading system, and its negative effects may be underestimated.

The second trade shock is the surge in Chinese competitiveness, which has led to a sharp increase in Chinese exports worldwide. China is producing necessary, high-quality products at good value — this is positive for consumers, but it is also displacing local producers in both developed and developing countries. Interestingly, many of the countries imposing sanctions or trade restrictions on Chinese goods are not Western powers but China's partners in the Global South. This may spur further protectionist actions within those economies, which may not be positive for the rest.

There is also a growing risk of a major correction in financial markets. While not on the scale of the years 2001 or 2008, Gita Gopinath, former International Monetary Fund (IMF) Deputy Managing Director, has argued that even a modest correction could have significant ripple effects, given the increasing exposure of households to equities. The global economy may

THE FORTY THIRD SINGAPORE ECONOMIC ROUNDTABLE

not require a large shock to experience a painful impact, and this is a risk we should be cautious about.

Impact on Singapore and the Region

Despite these developments, Singapore's small and highly open economy has performed remarkably well. Growth dipped to about 2.4 per cent quarter-on-quarter in the third quarter of 2025, which is strong given the global uncertainty. Business surveys released on October 31, 2025, by the Economic Development Board and Partners Statistics were also reasonably optimistic.

Inflation remains low. Core inflation in the same period is 0.4 per cent year-on-year, and overall consumer prices (headline Consumer Price Index) are up just 0.7 per cent year-on-year. We currently have both solid growth and low inflation.

Looking ahead, however, we cannot assume this Goldilocks economy will continue. Demand is likely to decelerate. Much will depend on the electronics and semiconductor sector,

THE FORTY THIRD SINGAPORE ECONOMIC ROUNDTABLE

which in turn depends heavily on capital spending in the US and other developed markets.

Protectionism will also exert downward pressure, and the recent surge in capital spending may require some degree of rebalancing. We must assume a cautious external outlook. In financial markets, we should be prepared for more turbulence and potential concerns about financial stability in some economies.

At the same time, safe havens become attractive in a turbulent world. Singapore, viewed as a safe haven, can expect inflows of capital, talent and business activity. While positive, this may bring more capital than we are fully comfortable with, and we will need to manage those pressures.

Regionally, Malaysia has performed better than expected and appears to be on a positive trajectory, which is beneficial for Singapore as we are tightly integrated economies. Indonesia, however, faces challenges: inconsistent economic management and grassroots discontent, reflected in its

THE FORTY THIRD SINGAPORE ECONOMIC ROUNDTABLE

recurring protests, which is a troubling combination. Thailand faces continued political uncertainty, with an election upcoming and more than two decades of unresolved political crises. These developments remain a concern and there is much to monitor in the year ahead.

THE FORTY THIRD SINGAPORE ECONOMIC ROUNDTABLE

2. Remarks by Mr Aninda Mitra

Vice-President and Head of Asia Macroeconomics and
Investment Strategy
BNY Investments Singapore

Introduction

Singapore is a small, open and vulnerable economy, but it also has significant flexibility and structural resilience.

Despite elevated global uncertainty, Singapore has performed exceptionally well. It recorded one of the strongest post-pandemic recoveries among developed economies, with growth returning to pre-COVID trends. Inflation eased more than expected to well within the Monetary Authority of Singapore's (MAS) comfort thresholds.

There are, however, developments on the horizon that require caution. Many relate more to international relations management than to fiscal or monetary policy. International observers would credit Singapore for maintaining close relationships with both the US and China — something few

THE FORTY THIRD SINGAPORE ECONOMIC ROUNDTABLE

countries have managed. This balancing act has been handled well so far, but it could become more difficult over time.

Tariff Payback, or Have We Moved On?

There may eventually be a payback from tariff actions, although it has not yet materialised in a significant way.

There are several reasons for this. First, the AI-driven CapEx boom is import-intensive and is fuelling a surge in Asian, including Singaporean, exports into the US. Second, markets expect the Fed to cut rates significantly. Even though it remains uncertain whether the Fed will follow the Trump administration's preferences, there is widespread expectation of the exertion of greater political influence by the Trump administration on the Fed as the Board of Governors and regional governors change next year. Fiscal settings are also expected to be loosened in 2026. Third, monetary easing has been occurring globally, including in Europe and, to a more limited extent, in China. Clarity on China's upcoming five-year plan is still needed to understand how they will prioritise Total Factor Productivity (TFP) growth versus consumption

THE FORTY THIRD SINGAPORE ECONOMIC ROUNDTABLE

rebalancing. The recent weakness in Chinese activity is a relatively new trend; prior to the last one to two quarters, exports, domestic production and retail performance were generally strong.

Economic Buffers

Against this backdrop, Singapore's economic buffers have become clearer. Liquidity is ample, and there is substantial fiscal space. Fiscal policy remains somewhat accommodative, reflected in the ongoing distribution of government vouchers. Singapore also continues to invest heavily in infrastructure, climate resilience, and long-term structural projects. These will yield long-term dividends while also supporting near-term activity.

On the monetary side, the policy stance appears near neutral. If inflation falls further, there will be calls for additional easing. However, the current uncertainty warrants the maintenance of existing buffers.

THE FORTY THIRD SINGAPORE ECONOMIC ROUNDTABLE

The AI-driven Economy

AI-related investments are enormous. Consultants estimate that global AI investment requirements will reach US\$5–7 trillion by 2030, which amounts to more than US\$1 trillion every year, from now until 2030. A high-end technology-oriented producer of AI components and advanced chips could offset some tariff-related impacts by capturing even a small share of this investment.

However, the economy is also becoming increasingly bifurcated. In the US, there is a clear divide between the AI economy and the non-AI economy, where the non-AI side is under pressure. Without AI-related capital expenditure, US investment and overall GDP growth would be considerably weaker.

Global Outlook

The global outlook is not bleak. For instance, Europe should provide some positive spillovers. A more resilient Europe

THE FORTY THIRD SINGAPORE ECONOMIC ROUNDTABLE

would be beneficial for the broader global economy, including Singapore.¹

¹ Refer to Appendix 3 for addendum.

THE FORTY THIRD SINGAPORE ECONOMIC ROUNDTABLE

3. Remarks by Mr Marcus Fum

Executive Director

Economic Analysis Department

Monetary Authority of Singapore

I will make a few points on the Singapore economy and monetary policy.

Macroeconomic Outlook

Singapore is currently benefiting from positive terms-of-trade effects from lower oil prices and cheaper imports from China and other countries. Singapore's exports in financial services, trade, and logistics have performed well. Electronics, in particular, has seen a surge in demand, much of it front-loaded.

The key question is how long these positive terms of trade will last. After the difficult post-COVID years of 2022–2023, the economy recovered well but faced high inflation. Now, real incomes are picking up, and as input costs decline, firms should begin to see increasing profit margins.

THE FORTY THIRD SINGAPORE ECONOMIC ROUNDTABLE

Monetary Policy

On monetary policy, I will reiterate what was shared in the last monetary policy briefing: Singapore's monetary policy is in a good place. We eased our monetary policy twice earlier this year, in January and April. The Singapore dollar is now on a more modest appreciation path and remains accommodated within the currency policy band.

In real exchange rate terms, we do not see significant misalignment relative to medium-term structural conditions. In the long term, the real exchange rate reflects factors such as non-tradeable to tradable productivity in Singapore. This requires non-tradeable prices, such as land and labour, to be set at a certain price to economise the usage of it.

Meanwhile, the tradable sector continues to perform well, lifting incomes, wages and, inevitably, prices. From this perspective, we see no major misalignments in Singapore.

THE FORTY THIRD SINGAPORE ECONOMIC ROUNDTABLE

4. Discussion Session 1

Building on the presentations, several questions emerged during the first discussion session, most notably around why fresh graduates continue to face weak job prospects despite the strong economic growth. Participants also examined issues related to digital transformation, including the barriers that hinder small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in technology adoption, and potential solutions to address these gaps. Finally, questions were raised about Singapore's sustainability efforts and whether its long-term commitments are wavering amid increasing economic pressures.

Weak Job Market Despite Strong Growth

Panellists were asked why, despite Singapore's strong post-pandemic recovery, job prospects for fresh graduates remained weak. Several reasons were highlighted: earlier over-hiring in sectors like finance, professional services and tech during the pandemic recovery, heightened tariff-related uncertainty and major tech firms prioritising cash flow towards AI investments rather than manpower — all of which have dampened hiring.

THE FORTY THIRD SINGAPORE ECONOMIC ROUNDTABLE

Recent research in the US also indicated that entry-level workers in AI-exposed roles face tougher employment prospects than their peers in non-AI fields, while experienced professionals in these roles continue to enjoy strong wage growth and employment outcomes.

Local versus Foreign Talent

The roundtable also reflected on the skillsets of Singaporean graduates. While local graduates tend to perform well in roles requiring analytical thinking and having well-defined processes, they may struggle with creative problem-solving and navigating unfamiliar situations. As a result, one participant suggested that international graduates may be preferred for roles involving international business dealings, digital transformation or futures-oriented work.

A human capital survey was also cited to explain why companies may not hire local talent for entry-level positions, which pointed to unrealistic salary expectations, insufficient technical skills and unrealistic promotion expectations. For more senior roles, firms highlighted gaps in technical skills,

THE FORTY THIRD SINGAPORE ECONOMIC ROUNDTABLE

leadership capabilities and knowledge of target markets — areas where local candidates were perceived to be weaker.

Digital Transformation in SMEs

Building on the discussion about hiring local talent, it was emphasised that digital transformation must precede hiring, as without adopting new technologies, firms have little need for digitally skilled workers. This contributes to a surplus of graduates, who otherwise could be absorbed by Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), which employ about 70 per cent of the workforce. However, MSMEs often struggle to digitalise due to thin margins and low risk appetite. It was suggested that greater government risk-sharing could help these firms invest in digitalisation and create more opportunities for graduates.

Once MSMEs implement technologies, they inevitably need digital talent, because existing workers may lack the skills to operate these systems. This creates demand not only for AI specialists, but also for graduates with strong analytical, research and writing skills. It was noted that Singapore may

THE FORTY THIRD SINGAPORE ECONOMIC ROUNDTABLE

be over-investing in the computer science field and should build more foundational capabilities needed for simpler tasks such as AI prompting, AI-assisted coding and applied digital problem-solving.

A major barrier SMEs face is a lack of clarity around the workflows and guardrails needed for digital transformation, coupled with a reluctance to acknowledge these gaps. It was recommended that the government can curate a set of practical use-cases, such as how to apply AI to marketing or hiring, to guide SMEs through adoption. Integrating AI into day-to-day workflows is far more challenging than adopting new technologies, and helping companies become truly AI-ready will require walking with them through their entire transformation journey.

Finally, funding remains a hurdle. It was noted that government funding schemes may often require minimum headcount levels or turnovers, which can exclude smaller firms. Large tech companies like Google, Microsoft and

THE FORTY THIRD SINGAPORE ECONOMIC ROUNDTABLE

Amazon are also increasingly partnering with SMEs to help embed digital tools into their daily operations.

Rebalancing Sustainability Goals

Questions were raised about whether sustainability efforts in Singapore are slowing amid heightened tariff pressures and firms prioritising short-term survival. While sustainability may no longer be at the forefront of the government agenda, Singapore's long-term commitments to sustainability remain firm, including investments in climate resilience, greener energy sources for data centres, raising carbon taxes and the continued promotion of electric vehicles.

It was argued that what may appear to be an anti-sustainability shift is more likely a global recalibration. Europe's earlier push for full-scale sustainability had strained its industrial competitiveness, prompting countries to pursue more balanced and realistic targets.

Additionally, technological progress can support sustainability goals. For example, it was claimed that China's

THE FORTY THIRD SINGAPORE ECONOMIC ROUNDTABLE

advancements in carbon capture and storage have made coal less carbon-intensive, improving its viability as an energy source.

THE FORTY THIRD SINGAPORE ECONOMIC
ROUNDTABLE

**Special Session:
AI and the Economy**

5. Presentation by Dr Kati Suominen

Founder and CEO
Nextrade Group

Introduction

This presentation begins with an overview of AI is projected to impact the economy in Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), before examining AI policy in ASEAN economies and how ASEAN nations can move forward in the era of agentic AI.

AI in the Economy in the next 5 years

AI is expected to boost ASEAN economies strongly in the near future. Statista estimates show that the ASEAN AI market was growing at strong double digits in the last few years. According to Kearney and Asian Development Bank Institute, the ASEAN AI market was forecast to generate US\$1 trillion in economic gains by 2030. Figure 5.1 provides a projected overview of the size of ASEAN economies' AI markets in 2025 and 2031.

THE FORTY THIRD SINGAPORE ECONOMIC
ROUNDTABLE

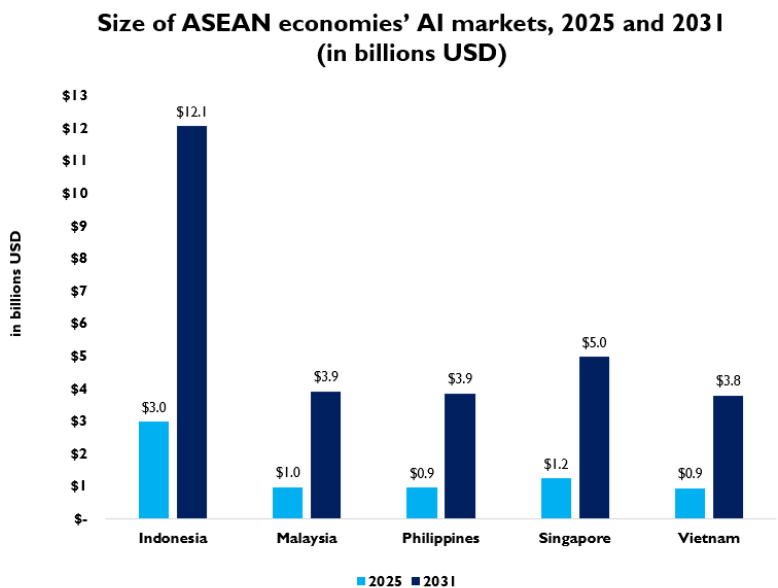


Fig. 5.1

AI is also expected to expand AI-related jobs and data centre capacity, with 28 million new jobs expected to be created and 4,620MW of data centre capacity planned in Southeast Asia — a projected increase of 180 per cent.

THE FORTY THIRD SINGAPORE ECONOMIC
ROUNDTABLE

AI startups have grown sixfold since 2015, with more AI-driven startups in the recent years. Figures 5.2 and 5.3 show the growth of these AI startups by year in the former, and as a percentage of all startups between 2021 to 2025 in the latter.

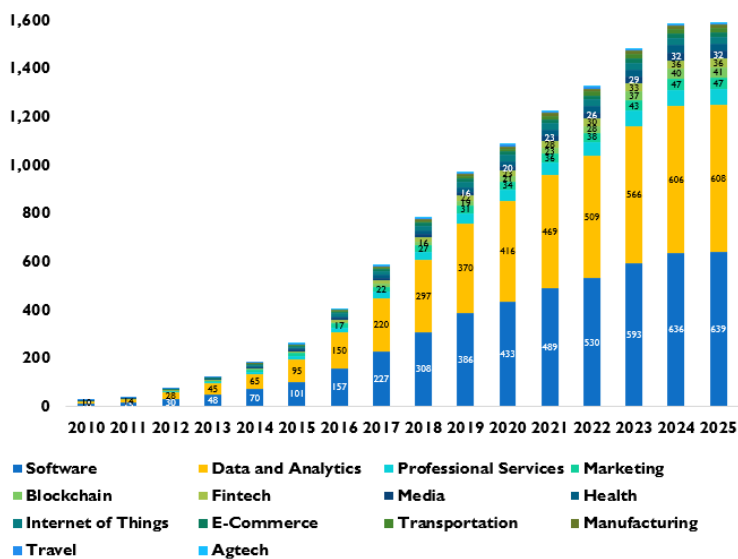


Fig. 5.2

THE FORTY THIRD SINGAPORE ECONOMIC
ROUNDTABLE

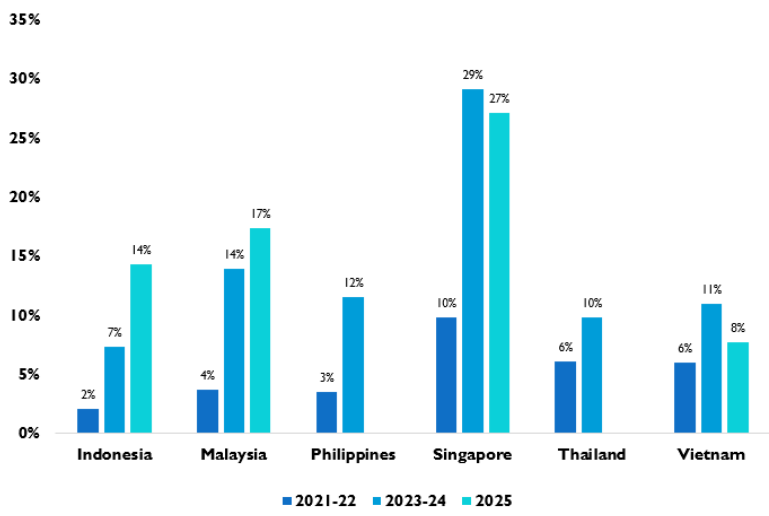


Fig 5.3

Investments into the AI startup ecosystem reached over US\$16 billion over the past 10 years (Fig 5.4).

THE FORTY THIRD SINGAPORE ECONOMIC ROUNDTABLE

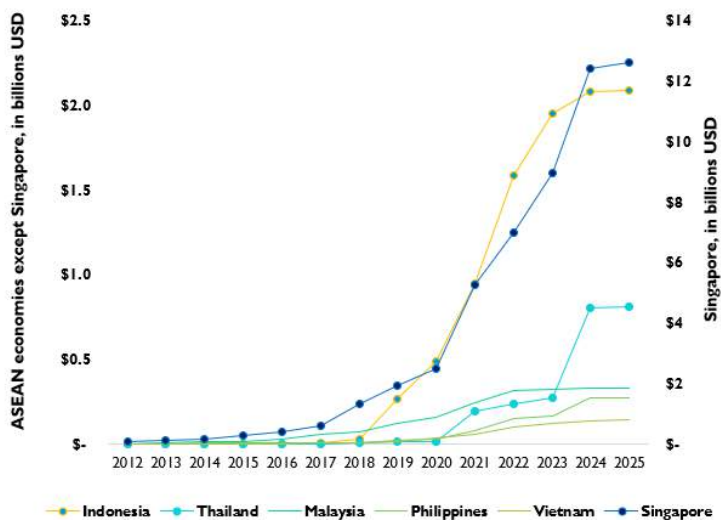


Fig. 5.4

For startups, being AI-driven forms a strong part of their value proposition, and AI-driven startups are more likely to get investments as well as become more robust. As seen in Figure 5.5, over 20 per cent of AI-driven startups in ASEAN raised more than US\$1 million. In contrast, less than 15 per cent of all startups raised more than US\$1 million.

THE FORTY THIRD SINGAPORE ECONOMIC ROUNDTABLE

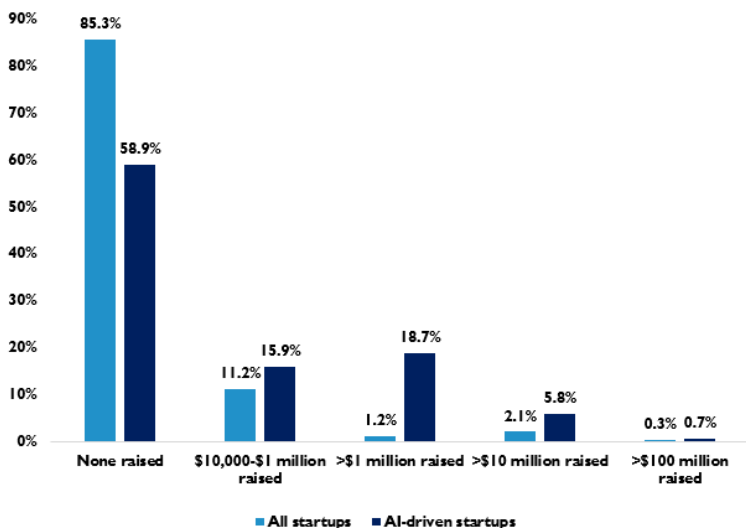


Fig. 5.5

Additionally, AI-driven start-ups seem to be faster to internationalise and regionalise and grow in the ASEAN region.

ASEAN is now the third largest digital services exporter in the world with Singapore in the lead. As per Figure 5.6, digitally delivered service exports have been significantly and exponentially outpacing merchandise exports.

THE FORTY THIRD SINGAPORE ECONOMIC
ROUNDTABLE

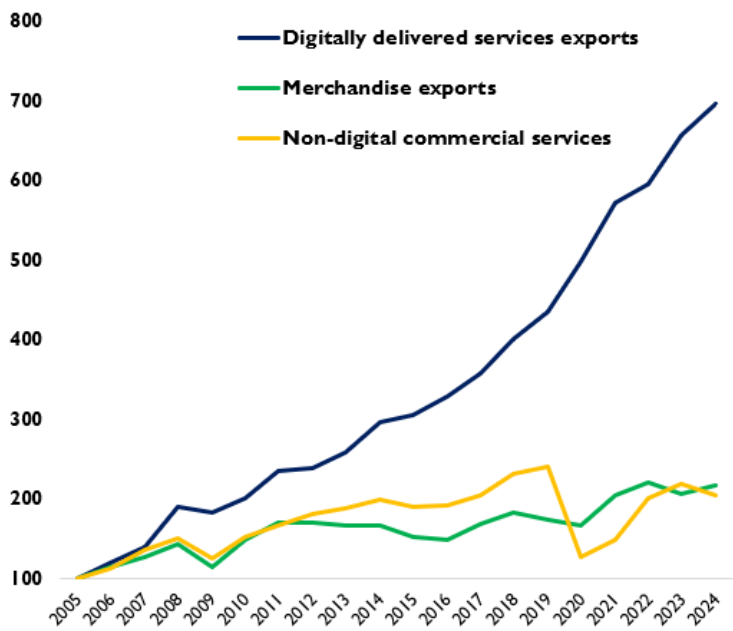


Fig. 5.6

There also appears to be a positive relationship between the growth of AI startup ecosystem and regional digital markets. When the AI startup ecosystem doubles in growth, digital trade similarly grows by about 14 per cent.

THE FORTY THIRD SINGAPORE ECONOMIC ROUNDTABLE

SMEs are also investing more into AI. Over 60 per cent of SMEs report investing 3 per cent or more of their revenue into AI (Fig 5.7).

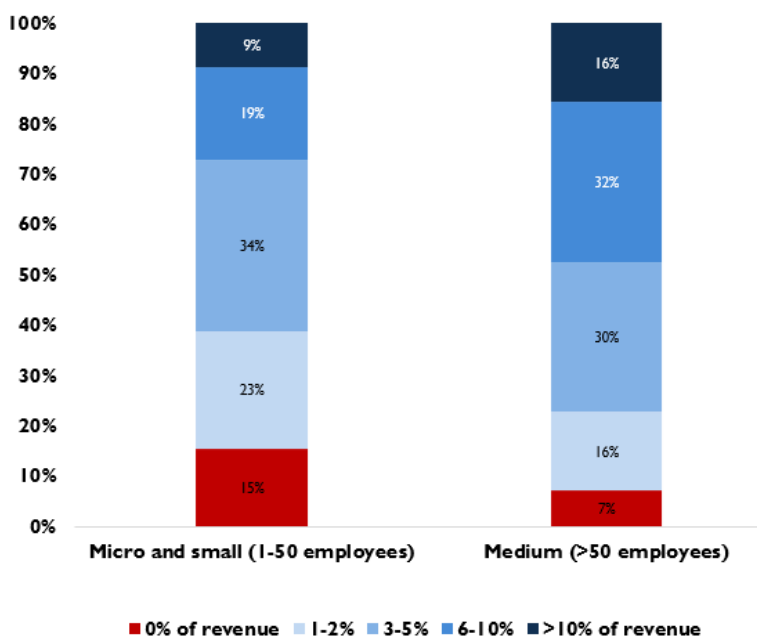


Fig. 5.7

Firms that invest more into AI appear to reap greater gains. Those investing more also reap greater gains. Firms investing three per cent or more of their revenue into AI report greater gains in productivity; harnessing greater power out of their

THE FORTY THIRD SINGAPORE ECONOMIC ROUNDTABLE

data; and improved capabilities in identifying new patterns and opportunities (Fig. 5.8).

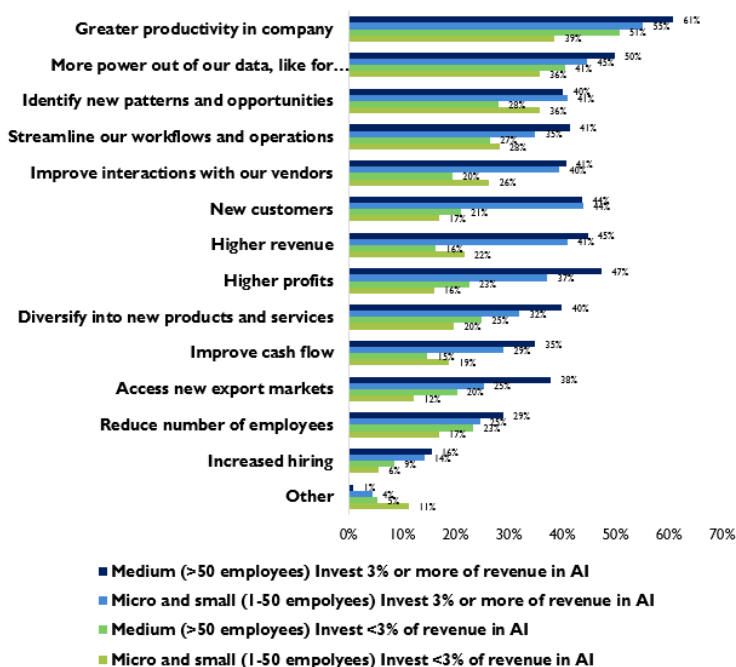


Fig. 5.8

Firms that invest more in AI are also more likely to be export-driven and derive more of their revenue from exports. (Fig. 5.9). Additionally, these firms are more likely to export to

THE FORTY THIRD SINGAPORE ECONOMIC ROUNDTABLE

more markets, and maintain better and more durable customer relationships. Compared to firms investing only 1 to 2 per cent of their revenue in AI, firms that invest 3 per cent or more of their revenue in AI are seven times more likely to export, six times more likely to export to at least three markets, and three times more likely to grow at least 10 per cent annually (Fig. 5.10).

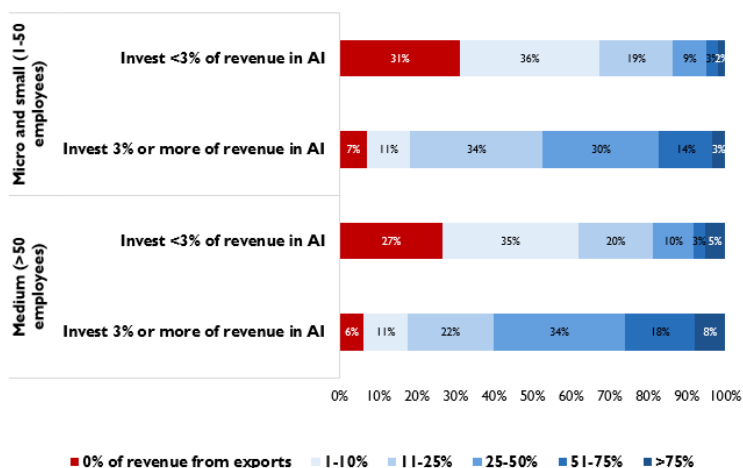


Fig. 5.9

THE FORTY THIRD SINGAPORE ECONOMIC ROUNDTABLE

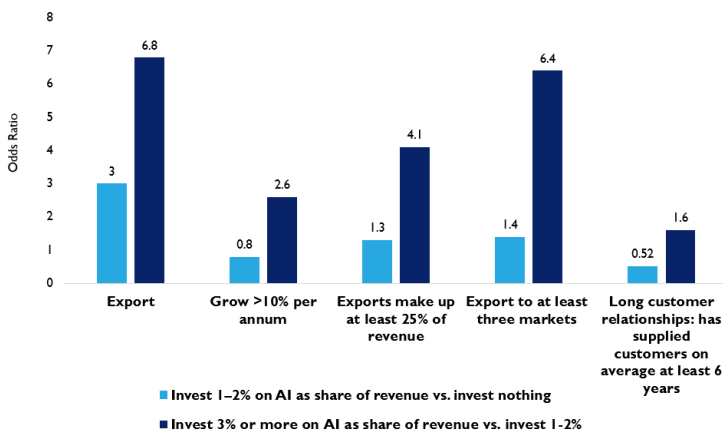


Fig. 5.10

State of AI and AI policy in ASEAN

Among ASEAN economies, Singapore currently leads in global indices for AI readiness. While Malaysia, Thailand and Indonesia also perform well on these indices, among ASEAN economies there are large disparities in digital infrastructure, innovation and AI-related human capital. Figures 5.11 and 5.12 feature the AI readiness of ASEAN economies on global indices and the readiness gaps among firms in ASEAN.

THE FORTY THIRD SINGAPORE ECONOMIC ROUNDTABLE

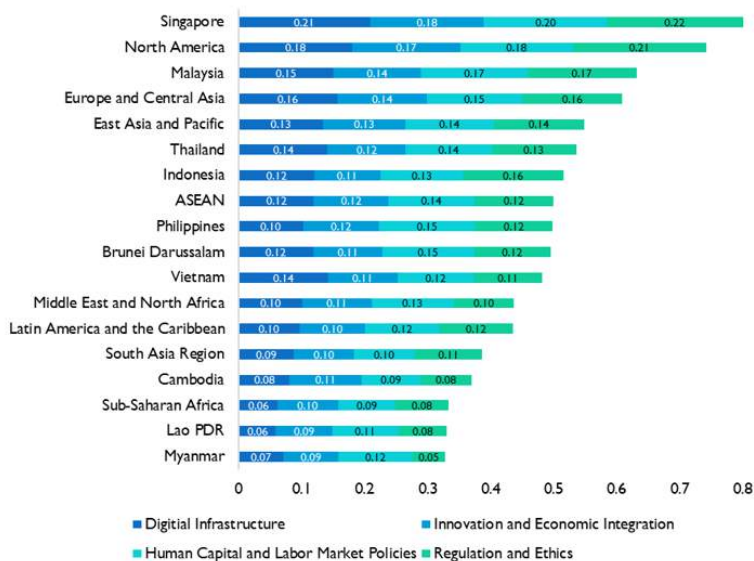


Fig. 5.11

THE FORTY THIRD SINGAPORE ECONOMIC ROUNDTABLE

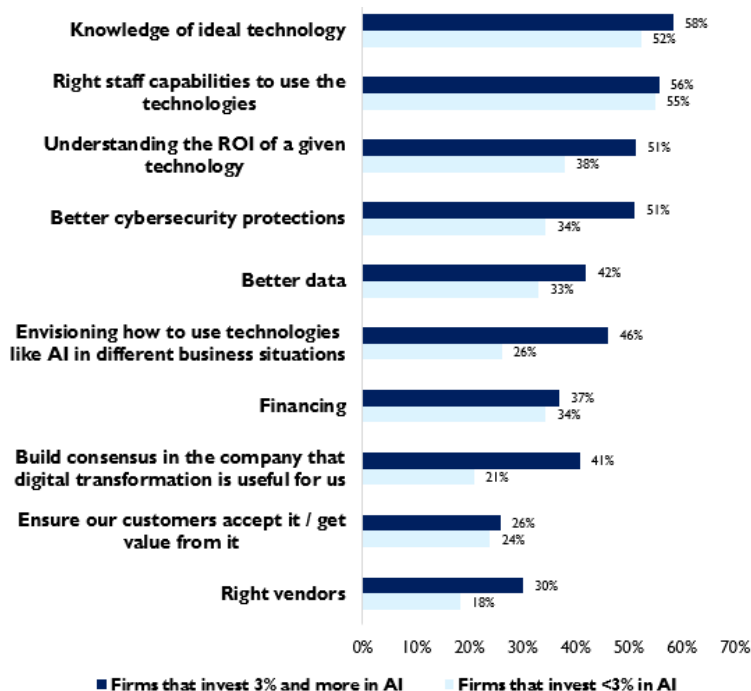


Fig. 5.12

AI development in ASEAN will require inputs such as information and communications technology (ICT) infrastructure, data services, capital, foreign direct investment and human capital. The ASEAN Digital Economy Framework Agreement (DEFA) can act as an enabler for these inputs and help move towards “trade in AI”. These enablers can be

THE FORTY THIRD SINGAPORE ECONOMIC ROUNDTABLE

embedded in trade frameworks. This could take the form of AI innovation sandboxes, text- and data-mining exceptions in copyright law, and regional AI sandboxes to promote development. To help bring AI-driven startups and companies to wider markets and help them operate better across ASEAN, DEFA can help to provide common standards, protections and AI skill frameworks, as well as cross-border data flows. Through these enablers, AI-skilled talent can move and operate easily with interoperable standards.

Finally, despite significant investment of more than US\$40 million into the ASEAN AI ecosystem, there is room for improvement in AI policies. Thus far, Singapore leads in all areas, but ASEAN economies vary in strength in certain areas. These include AI skill frameworks and data policies, and uneven adoption and policy frameworks that limit scalability. Gaps still exist in promoting AI innovation, research and business access to data (Fig. 5.13).

THE FORTY THIRD SINGAPORE ECONOMIC ROUNDTABLE

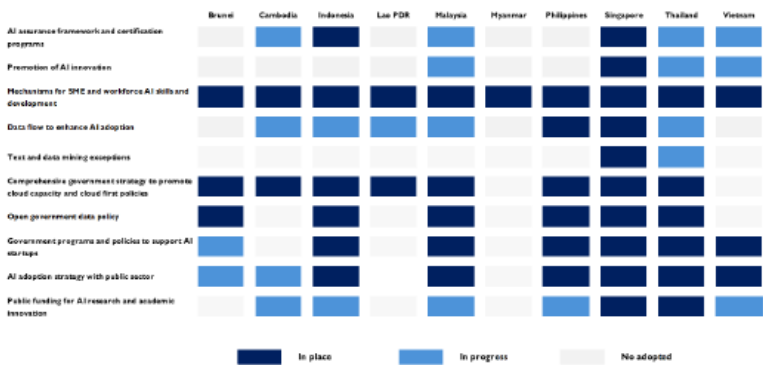


Fig. 5.13

Towards an interoperable AI future in ASEAN

Singapore’s 2027 ASEAN chairmanship provides an opportunity for a sort of ASEAN playbook for responsible AI use. In 2025, ASEAN released a Responsible AI Roadmap, reflecting the region’s emphasis on ethical and responsible AI use. These efforts can be further expanded through promoting adoption of international standards such as ISO/IEC 23894 (for AI risk management) and ISO/IEC 42001 (for AI management systems), endorsement of assurance mechanisms, and through promoting corporate AI governance.

THE FORTY THIRD SINGAPORE ECONOMIC ROUNDTABLE

On the innovation front, data and copyright rules can help to make data practices safer, flexible, and more open. National and regional AI and data privacy sandboxes can help to promote innovation. Text- and data-mining exemptions in copyright laws, exemptions to data privacy laws for AI development, and availability and cross-border sharing of data can help AI research and development.

To promote inclusion, common and mutually recognised AI skills and certifications can be adopted across ASEAN. This could enable greater and easier talent mobility.

Finally, a key focus for ASEAN will be to promote internationalisation through common and interoperable standards, regional data-sharing, more open markets, cross-border operations and greater enforcement on existing copyright, cybersecurity and data privacy.

THE FORTY THIRD SINGAPORE ECONOMIC ROUNDTABLE

6. Presentation by Mr Tancho Fingarov

Senior Vice President for Business & Market Insights

Mastercard Asia

This presentation covers the movement towards generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) — alongside risks and key adoption moves — in financial services.

The potential of GenAI as a transformative technology is vast, and firms will need to know how to harness its transformative powers. However, barriers such as energy, infrastructure and talent remain.

There are two types of artificial intelligence (AI) as we know it. AI 1.0 is traditional AI that has been in use for the past decade. This includes marketing analytics, credit risk analysis and pricing. AI 2.0 refers to GenAI.

Banks and corporations primarily aim to better understand their customers and to optimise experience and value for these customers. In the AI 1.0 era, banks and corporations

THE FORTY THIRD SINGAPORE ECONOMIC ROUNDTABLE

acted as product manufacturers, relying on tech titans like Google, Meta and Amazon to drive customer engagement. With their proprietary analytics models and an abundance of customer data, tech titans benefitted the most from this dynamic. In the AI 2.0 era, models no longer are proprietary and instead are becoming a commodity. With access to rich datasets and the ability to advantageously capture and monetise user data, tech titans have become highly competitive at the cost of customer trust.

In the AI 1.0 era, performance tends to plateau even with more data. In the AI 2.0 era, the strength of a model grows with availability of data (Fig. 6.1). With GenAI models exhausting publicly available data, banks now have a strong new potential edge due to their ability to tap into private transactional, demographic and behavioural data.

THE FORTY THIRD SINGAPORE ECONOMIC ROUNDTABLE

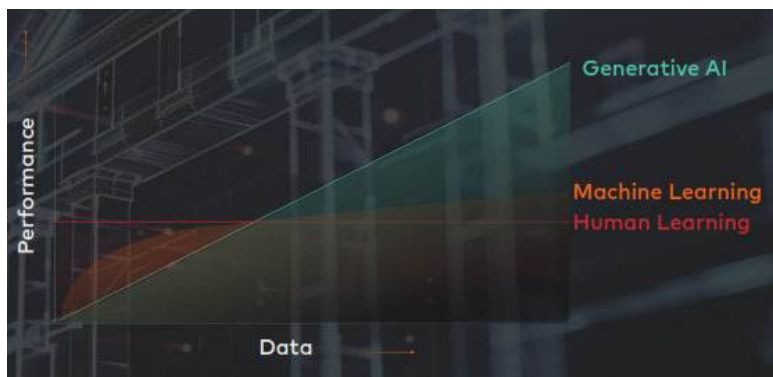


Fig. 6.1

Data has become the most important factor for competitiveness in the AI 2.0 era. However, 47 per cent of customer experience officers indicate that the biggest barrier to GenAI adoption in their firms is the lack of data readiness. To manage this lack of data readiness, firms will need to consider a new approach. The first step in this new approach will be for firms to organise their data with a clear data strategy. According to Accenture, firms with clear data strategies are 2.3 times more likely to succeed in AI adoption.

Another point of consideration in this new approach is infrastructure. Currently, other than in China, many firms are

THE FORTY THIRD SINGAPORE ECONOMIC ROUNDTABLE

shifting towards cloud infrastructure. It is likely that serious players will move towards on-premise infrastructure in the future, but this will take time due to heavy investments and the need for clear return on investment required.

According to Deloitte, 92 per cent of AI leaders invest in AI governance and responsibility. Adherence to laws, regulations, and ethical standards is key to AI adoption. Without regulatory clarity, however, compliance and risk departments struggle to proceed.

Firms can leverage existing data and expand data sets. Open banking will allow customers to share and safekeep data, thus promoting a virtuous cycle: better data improves models, better models improve engagement, and better engagement yields more data.

THE FORTY THIRD SINGAPORE ECONOMIC ROUNDTABLE



Fig 6.2

Banks should begin with practical use cases with proven operational benefits. Currently, banks are moving in two primary directions and experimenting with both back-office and front-office use cases. Most banks are focused on adopting AI for back-office processes as these processes are easier to analyse, are lower-risk, pose fewer regulator concerns and involve fewer issues with personally identifiable information. AI adoption for back-office processes also tends to be simpler to build for and do not require high levels of expertise.

THE FORTY THIRD SINGAPORE ECONOMIC ROUNDTABLE

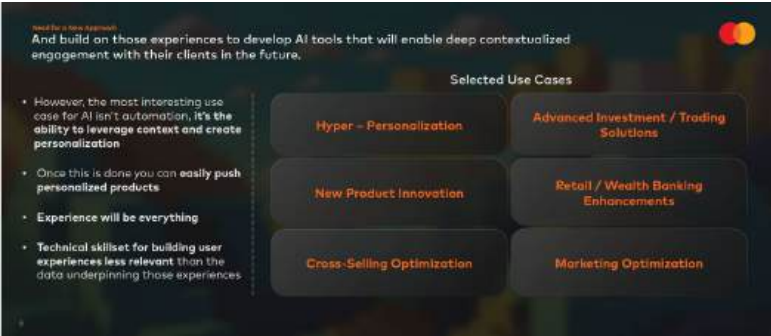


Fig 6.3



Fig 6.4

Many banks are treating AI not as a return on investment exercise, but as a capability-building process. GenAI is still in its infancy, and other than chipmakers like NVIDIA, it is unlikely that many players are profiting from it. For banks, the most valuable future use case of GenAI lies in personalisation, which will help to drive customer engagement through

THE FORTY THIRD SINGAPORE ECONOMIC ROUNDTABLE

targeted experiences. High-quality data will be vital for personalisation. On the other hand, expertise becomes less critical, since GenAI tools are generally easier to model than traditional AI, and cloud platforms offer relatively strong AI tooling out of the box that regular users can download and refine with reasonable results.

However, most emerging use cases of GenAI are bottlenecked at the quality control stage due to regulatory uncertainties and risks. Accuracy is a strong concern for banks for customer-facing applications. Banks currently can manage around 90 per cent accuracy, but this level of accuracy is still not safe enough for consumers. Yet, improving accuracy is an exponentially difficult undertaking. GenAI models are prone to hallucinations and may generate misinformation. This is a major compliance concern.

Intellectual property rights also pose an issue for organisations due to the unclear legality that foundational models are trained on. Currently, there are a few ongoing lawsuits regarding intellectual property rights in GenAI.

THE FORTY THIRD SINGAPORE ECONOMIC ROUNDTABLE

Privacy and confidentiality of training data add another layer of risk, particularly for models trained on personally identifiable information.

Other risks such as transparency and bias existed with traditional AI, but regulators took years to develop frameworks around these risks. GenAI is moving fast, and regulations are constantly behind its development (Fig 6.5, 6.6, 6.7).



Fig 6.5

THE FORTY THIRD SINGAPORE ECONOMIC ROUNDTABLE

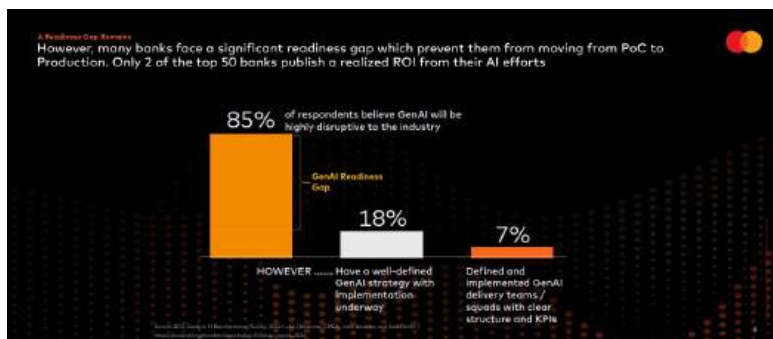


Fig 6.6

An AI readiness gap still remains. Eighty-five per cent of banks agree that GenAI has great transformative powers. However, only 18 per cent have a clear implementation strategy, and 7 per cent have delivery teams and measurable key productivity indicators. Currently, only two of the top 50 banks in Asia have demonstrated return on investment in AI.

THE FORTY THIRD SINGAPORE ECONOMIC ROUNDTABLE



Fig 6.7

In summary, five factors are key for AI adoption in financial services. First, data is the most important resource. Second, leadership is important, providing direction and ongoing monitoring. Third is talent, which is also one of the greatest current barriers as it can take up to a year or more just to hire the right people. Fourth, innovation is important — although difficult in banks due to weak experimentation culture outside of startups. Finally, transparency is key to building trust. This is important, as trust will underpin the new AI-driven economy. While banks have been able to build solid trust with their customers and with regulators, this trust has to be maintained through clear communication and responsible and ethical implementation.

THE FORTY THIRD SINGAPORE ECONOMIC ROUNDTABLE

7. Remarks by Dr Benjamin Mah

Councillor

SGTech

Introduction

SGTech has been working closely with SkillsFuture Singapore and Workforce Singapore to examine how to help businesses unlock the value proposition of AI. One of the vital areas examined is the issue of manpower.

I shall relate lunch meeting I had with a Shanghai Commissioner. The Commissioner was examining portfolio companies and seemed to take greater interest in companies moving into the Internet of Things, robotics, chips, and AI. For businesses in Singapore, the question is clear: what is the business objective of AI for companies?

From a financier's perspective, firms that are interested in growing their profits and businesses should also be fully invested in AI. This will mean investing effort, money and talent into AI adoption and implementation. Simply having AI

THE FORTY THIRD SINGAPORE ECONOMIC ROUNDTABLE

tools and adopting AI due to the availability of subsidies and grants will not be enough. It is also crucial that there is talent that can manage these AI tools to ensure that its potential is tapped into. The practical approach that I would suggest is that if the business objective of your firm is to unlock greater earning potential, then business alignment and data will become defining factors of success.

There are a few workstreams that ASEAN can work towards. The first would be a consistent standard in AI and digital governance and trust frameworks. In November 2025, the ISO 42000 committee launched the AI companies' global framework. The committee also had a series of talks with government policymakers to discuss ISO 42000. These discussions have led to Singapore standards like TR 42, which closely mirrors ISO 42001.

Another workstream that can potentially emerge is surrounding partnerships. The creation of a "ASEAN AI Business Directory" that indicates the top companies in various industries that have unlocked AI in their business can

THE FORTY THIRD SINGAPORE ECONOMIC ROUNDTABLE

help investors identify valuable partnerships. Additionally, such a directory can also help to push companies in ASEAN towards AI adoption, as companies will seek to compete and not be left in the dust. This can also help to encourage capital flow into these industries.

It is imperative that ASEAN comes together, especially on the issue of human capital. We have invested heavily in making AI certifications available, and industry-specific AI training from tech titans like Amazon, Microsoft, Google and others are also available. These certifications can be linked to business use cases and made relevant to specific industries.

THE FORTY THIRD SINGAPORE ECONOMIC ROUNDTABLE

8. Discussion Session 2

Based on the presentations, participants raised questions about AI skilling, interoperability between national and regional governance frameworks, the future of AI infrastructure, Singapore's future in the AI sphere, and concerns about AI readiness and the AI bubble.

Human Capital and AI Skilling

Participants asked panellists about what is required businesses and individuals so that approach skilling in the AI era. There was a consensus that AI skilling needs to be led by strong leadership that can advocate and communicate change. Leaders should also be able to foster a culture that agrees on change and the urgency of it. In the words of a participant, it is “mindset first, then skillset” — where discipline and rigor are important but bolstered by mindset in the leadership. The question of who will provide training for AI skills also emerged, with participants suggesting using tools from tech companies for AI skilling and certification.

THE FORTY THIRD SINGAPORE ECONOMIC ROUNDTABLE

Discussions turned towards usage of AI in business processes, with automating manual tasks and screening of applications for hiring being some of the processes where AI could be used.

National and Regional Governance

Participants discussed the balance between national and regional governance frameworks for AI in ASEAN. Discussions emphasised interoperability of regulatory environments. This is key for startups, so that firms do not have to work with a patchwork of regulations to operate within the region.

Participants also discussed the usage of international standards, such as ISO 42001, to ensure that certifications for AI compliance, skilling and frameworks are evenly translated throughout the region. This is pertinent as governments may still pursue national AI strategies that do not fit with regional-level framework discussions, and international standards can be a method to ensure interoperability of frameworks and standards throughout the region.

THE FORTY THIRD SINGAPORE ECONOMIC ROUNDTABLE

Move Towards On-premise Infrastructure

Participants asked about the idea that more players will move towards on-premise infrastructure. For governments and organisations looking to become major players, a long-term movement towards on-premise infrastructure may be likely as on-cloud services currently demand API costs for usage of the web engine.

The discussion also covered current gaps in infrastructure and compute. For instance, in many parts of the world including Asia and Europe, chips for AI compute are available, but there are fewer people than required to run them. This adds to the issue of investment needed to move back to on-premise infrastructure as well as the concerns surrounding sustainability.

Singapore's Strengths and 2027 ASEAN Chairmanship

Participants discussed the path of Singapore in an AI-driven world, especially in view of Singapore's ASEAN chairmanship in 2027.

THE FORTY THIRD SINGAPORE ECONOMIC ROUNDTABLE

Singapore can leverage its natural advantages to find its place in the ever-changing AI value chain. First, Singapore can take a translational position, building on current progress in AI deployment in traditional sectors. This can also help small and medium-sized enterprises in AI adoption as well as work away from a two-speed economy that may lead to a digital divide. Second, Singapore can become the base for testing. There is a market for the development of technical standards and accreditation that Singapore can move into. Finally, similar to Singapore's refining and chemicals sector, Singapore can help to refine data and become a data intermediary for the region. This can also open up potential for ASEAN to become an open and trusted AI ecosystem in the midst of geopolitical tensions.

Participants also discussed Singapore's role as a convenor as ASEAN chairman in 2027, and how this role can be used as a platform to create more open access to data. Currently, access to data can be a limiting factor for firms — especially for smaller businesses — and cross-border data flows is something that digital economy agreements such as the ASEAN Digital Economy Framework Agreement can unlock.

THE FORTY THIRD SINGAPORE ECONOMIC ROUNDTABLE

Continuing on this idea of regional organisation and cooperation, participants discussed the importance of regional cooperation in addressing scams and other cybersecurity issues. This is important as scams and cyberattacks tend to take place across borders in the region and will require regional coordination to tackle it.

Participants also discussed the need for a digital trade corridor in ASEAN that Singapore can help to lead, noting that parts of ASEAN have yet to move into the digital trade space and thus cannot viably move into the trade AI space.

AI Readiness and the AI Bubble

Concerns were raised about Singapore's seeming high ranking on AI readiness indices. Participants referred to points made earlier in the roundtable about SMEs struggling to adopt AI due to constraints in resource and difficulties in accessing assistance and posited that firms in Singapore may not be as AI-ready as indices may show. A sectoral examination may be required in Singapore to understand if the high level of readiness is primarily driven by bigger players. Similarly,

THE FORTY THIRD SINGAPORE ECONOMIC ROUNDTABLE

discussants pointed to a survey that indicated a confidence-skills gap among firms in Singapore for scams and noted that the same may also apply for digital and AI readiness.

Finally, participants asked panellists about concerns about the AI bubble and the forecast for AI. The panellists noted that the Singapore government has been measured in their investment into AI startups. Furthermore, with the scale and speed of the impact of AI, panellists stated that there is a need for cooperation in an open market.

THE FORTY THIRD SINGAPORE ECONOMIC ROUNDTABLE

Appendix 1: List of Participants

Chairperson

Mr Manu Bhaskaran
Adjunct Senior Research Fellow
Institute of Policy Studies

Moderator

Mr Christopher Gee
Deputy Director
Senior Research Fellow
Institute of Policy Studies

Speakers

Mr Aninda Mitra
Vice President
Head of Asia Macroeconomic and Investment Strategy
BNY Investments Singapore

THE FORTY THIRD SINGAPORE ECONOMIC ROUNDTABLE

Speakers

Mr Marcus Fum

Executive Director

Economic Analysis Department

Monetary Authority of Singapore

Dr Kati Suominen

Founder

Chief Executive Officer

Nextrade Group

Mr Tancho Fingarov

Senior Vice President

Business & Market Insights

Mastercard

Dr Benjamin Mah

Councillor

SGTech

THE FORTY THIRD SINGAPORE ECONOMIC ROUNDTABLE

Participants

Mr Jasper ANG
Deputy Head
Business Cooperation
Hyundai Motor Group Innovation Centre Singapore (HMGICS)

Mr ANG Yuit
President
Association of Small & Medium Enterprises

Ms ANUTHINDA Saelaow Qian
Policy Manager
Asia Tech Alliance

Ms Victoria BIRRELL
Economist
Economic Surveillance and Forecasting
Monetary Authority of Singapore

Mr Clarence CHAN
Chief Executive Officer of Singapore
Investment Management
BNY Investments

Dr CHUA Hak Bin
Economist
Research
Maybank IBG Holdings Limited

Mr Keith DETROS
Programme Lead

THE FORTY THIRD SINGAPORE ECONOMIC ROUNDTABLE

Tech for Good Institute

Mr Rolf GERBER
Senior Advisor
Board of Directors
LGT Bank (Singapore) Ltd

Mr Khoon GOH
Head
Asia Research
Australia and New Zealand Banking Group Limited (ANZ)

Mr Denzil GOMES
Economist
Macroeconomic Research
Centennial Asia Advisors

Mr HENG Koon How
Executive Director
Head of Markets Strategy, Global Economics & Market
Research
United Overseas Bank Limited

Ms Jessica HO
Director
SparksBM Investment Pte Ltd

Mr Damien HUANG
Deputy Director
Data Analytics and Research
Chandler Institute of Governance

THE FORTY THIRD SINGAPORE ECONOMIC ROUNDTABLE

Ms Celestyn KARUPPIAH
Lead
Strategic Communications and Planning
Association of Small & Medium Enterprises

Mr Terence KOK
Chief AI and Innovation Officer
Technology and Innovation
Meinhardt Group

Mr Patrick LAI
Managing Director
P C Properties LLP

Mr Rudi LANG
Partner
APAC Financial Services Industry Leader
Forvis Mazars LLP

Mr Trevor LAU
Managing Director, Strategy
Paragon Capital Management

Mr LAU Han Yang
Government Affairs Adviser
Corporate Relations
Shell Eastern Petroleum (Pte) Ltd

Mr Brian LEE
Economist
Macroeconomic Research
Maybank Singapore Limited

THE FORTY THIRD SINGAPORE ECONOMIC ROUNDTABLE

Ms Genevieve LEE
Public Relations Deputy Director
Business Environment
Huawei International Pte Ltd

Ms Rachel LEE
Head, Economic and AI Policy
Asia Pacific and Japan
Amazon Web Services

Dr LEI Hsein-Hsien
Chief Executive Officer
AmCham Singapore

Mr LIM Him Chuan
Group Executive, DBS Singapore Country Head
Strategy, Transformation, Analytics & Research
DBS Bank Ltd

Mr LIM Kim Cheong
Partner
Lim Kim Cheong Consultants

Ms LIM Mei Ling
Country Director
Dow Chemical Pacific (Singapore) Pte Ltd

Mr Jeston LIM
Economic Analyst
Global Markets
BNP Paribas

THE FORTY THIRD SINGAPORE ECONOMIC ROUNDTABLE

Dr LIM Wee Kiat
Adjunct Lecturer
Singapore Management University

Mr LIM Yew Heng
Group Managing Director
Public Affairs, Transformation Office & Post-Merger
Integration
Grab

Mr LOKESH Sharma
Senior Manager, Asia
Intelligence and Partnerships
The Economist Intelligence Unit Limited

Mr Victor MILLS
Board Director
ESSEC Asia Pacific

Mr Girija PANDE
Chairman
Advisory
Apex Avalon Consulting Pte Ltd

Mr Chris POH
Economist, Asia-Pacific
Global Markets
BNP Paribas

THE FORTY THIRD SINGAPORE ECONOMIC ROUNDTABLE

Ms PRAVEEN Randhawa
Senior Advisor
Corporate Affairs
Leon Communications Pte Ltd

Mrs Noor QUEK
Founder and Chief Executive Officer
NQ International Pte Ltd

Mr RAJAT Jain
Managing Director
Nestle Singapore (Pte) Ltd

Mr SAMIR Bedi
EY ASEAN People Consulting Leader
Singapore Government & Public Sector Leader
Ernst & Young Solutions LLP

Mr Nicola SCARPELLI
Commercial Manager
Schneider Electric

Ms Bitu SEOW
Chief Executive Officer
Singapore International Chamber of Commerce

Mr SOH Chong Kian
Representative
AI Action Group
Association of Small & Medium Enterprises

Ms Cade TAN

THE FORTY THIRD SINGAPORE ECONOMIC ROUNDTABLE

Chief of Staff, ASEAN
Salesforce.com Singapore Pte Ltd

Mr TAN Chee Chung
President
Trading and Supply
Shell International Eastern Trading Company

Mr Eric TAN
Chief Executive Officer
Ascellen Holding Pte Ltd

Mr Gareth TAN
Regional Lead (Asia-Pacific)
Digital Prosperity for Asia

MS TAN Kia Hian
Head, Global People Services & Solution
People Organisation
Micron Semiconductor Asia Operations Pte Ltd

Dr Ming TAN
Senior Fellow
Founding Executive Director
Tech for Good Institute

Mr Pulse TAN
Chair
AI Action Group
Association of Small & Medium Enterprises

THE FORTY THIRD SINGAPORE ECONOMIC ROUNDTABLE

Prof TILAK Abeysinghe
Adjunct Senior Research Fellow
Institute of South Asian Studies
National University of Singapore

Ms Zerlina TOH
Assistant Senior Manager
Enterprise Partnerships – Industry Engagement Unit
School of Continuing and Lifelong Education (SCALE)
National University of Singapore

Mr VISHNU Varathan
Executive Director
Head of Economics and Strategy
Mizuho Bank Ltd

Mr George WANG
Senior Vice President
Information Technology
Singapore Airlines Ltd

Mr Harry WONG
Managing Director
Nebulas Tree Pte Ltd

Mr WONG Joo Seng
Executive Director
Chief Executive Officer
Spark Systems Pte Ltd

THE FORTY THIRD SINGAPORE ECONOMIC
ROUNDTABLE

Mr Andrew WOO
Director, Corporate Affairs
Marina Bay Sands Pte Ltd

THE FORTY THIRD SINGAPORE ECONOMIC ROUNDTABLE

Institute of Policy Studies

Dr FAIZAL Bin Yahya
Senior Research Fellow

Ms LIANG Kaixin
Associate Director
Communications and Public Affairs

Mr Joshua SIM
Associate Director
Strategic Planning

Mr Leonard LIM
Adjunct Research Fellow
Social Lab

Ms SHARANYA Shanmugam
Research Assistant
Governance and Economy

Ms Cassandra HO
Research Assistant
Governance and Economy

Ms Harleen KAUR
Research Assistant
Society and Culture

THE FORTY THIRD SINGAPORE ECONOMIC ROUNDTABLE

Appendix 2: Curricula Vitae of Chairperson, Moderator and Speakers

Chairperson

Manu BHASKARAN is Adjunct Senior Research Fellow at the Institute of Policy Studies. He is concurrently Partner and Member of the Board, Centennial Group Inc, a policy advisory group based in Washington DC, where he heads the group's economic research practice. Mr Bhaskaran co-leads the institute's work in the area of economics. His major area of research interest is the Singapore economy, and the policy options it faces. Prior to his current positions, he worked for 13 years at the investment banking arm of Societe Generale as its Chief Economist for Asia. He began his professional career at Singapore's Ministry of Defence, focusing on regional security and strategic issues. Mr Bhaskaran graduated from the University of Cambridge with a Master of Arts and also has a Masters in Public Administration from Harvard University.

THE FORTY THIRD SINGAPORE ECONOMIC ROUNDTABLE

Moderator

Christopher GEE is Deputy Director (Research) and Senior Research Fellow at the Institute of Policy Studies, National University of Singapore. His core research interests are the policy implications and outcomes from Singapore's demographic trends, with a specific emphasis on housing, healthcare and retirement adequacy, based on research on the generational economy through National Transfer Accounts and National Time Transfer Accounts frameworks. Mr Gee is also part of a team at the institute embarking on a social impact and eco-system capacity building initiative in Singapore. This initiative aims to catalyse outcomes based social programming through the establishment of connecting infrastructure to gather, distil and share evidence and insights of the changes resulting in desired social outcomes.

Speakers

ANINDA Mitra is a Senior Vice-President and the Head of Asia Macroeconomics and Investment Strategy at the Bank of New York (BNY) Investment Institute. He is based in Singapore and is the primary contact for the firm's clients and prospects in

THE FORTY THIRD SINGAPORE ECONOMIC ROUNDTABLE

the Asia-Pacific (APAC) region for providing ongoing global macroeconomic updates and analyses as well as implications for key regional economies and asset classes. Mr Aninda has more than 25 years of experience in the financial services industry. Prior to his current role, he was a Senior Sovereign Strategist at Standish Mellon for eight years. Before that, he was employed on the sell-side as Head of Southeast Asia Economics at Australia and New Zealand (ANZ) Bank, and prior to that as a Senior Sovereign Analyst at Moody's where he managed the ratings of a diverse portfolio of APAC sovereign credits. Mr Aninda holds a Master of Arts Economics from, and was a Bryan Fellow at, the University of North Carolina at Greensboro and a Bachelor of Science in Economics (Magna Cum Laude) from Bridgewater College.

Marcus FUM is the Executive Director of the Economic Analysis Department at the Monetary Authority of Singapore (MAS). As part of the broader Economic Policy Group, he leads the divisions responsible for macroeconomic modelling, economic research and monetary policy formulation in MAS. Mr Fum has spent over 15 years working on a range of

THE FORTY THIRD SINGAPORE ECONOMIC ROUNDTABLE

Singapore centric and international macroeconomic issues, including housing and labour market analysis to external balance of payments and exchange rate policies. He has been a visiting economist at the Bank for International Settlements in Basel, and has degrees from the University of Melbourne and the London School of Economics and Political Science.

Kati SUOMINEN is the Founder and Chief Executive Officer of Nexttrade Group that helps governments, leading technology companies and multilateral development banks enable trade and private sector development through technology. Author of 140 articles and 10 peer-reviewed books, she works on trade in goods and services, digital trade, digital payments, digital competition and artificial intelligence policy. She also serves as Adjunct Fellow at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) and Adjunct Professor at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) Anderson School of Management.

Tancho FINGAROV is a Senior Vice-President leading the Business and Market Insights business in Asia Pacific. That

THE FORTY THIRD SINGAPORE ECONOMIC ROUNDTABLE

includes consulting, data, analytics and artificial intelligence verticals within Mastercard. Mr Fingarov joined Mastercard from Standard Chartered where he was part of the digital asset team in the consumer bank. Prior to Standard Chartered, Mr Fingarov spent almost 10 years in consulting, first heading the Asia-Pacific quantitative advisory team of Moody's Analytics and then as an Associate Partner in Oliver Wyman, covering strategy, analytics and public policy. Before moving into consulting, Mr Fingarov spent seven years with IBM in the United States, starting with IBM Labs and moving through different leadership roles in the United States and Asia Pacific. Mr Fingarov has a Master of Business Administration from Cornell University, a Master in Computer Science from City University in New York and a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science and Business Administration from the American University in Bulgaria.

Benjamin MAH has over 30 years of distinguished professional experience. Dr Mah is a chairperson, board member, corporate entrepreneur, investor and business community leader. Renowned for his transformative

THE FORTY THIRD SINGAPORE ECONOMIC ROUNDTABLE

influence, he has made significant contributions across a diverse range of industries, including Artificial Intelligence (AI), cyber and digital security, business applications, digital banking, financial technology (fintech), real estate, Environmental and Social Governance (ESG), digital and financial transformation, physical security and cloud technologies. Dr Mah is currently Managing Partner of SparkBM Investments. Prior he built Oracle's Private Equity, ESG and AI Practice that accelerate business agility and cloud transformation. He co-founded and invested in V-Key, inventor of the Software Virtual Secure Element used by governments and tier one banks for strong digital identity and mobile payments. Earlier, he led ISO 27001 certified global Security Operations Centres (SOCs) at e-Cop, a subsidiary of Certis, and drove post-acquisition integration at IBM. A contributor to ISO/IEC 42001:2023 on AI Management Systems, he advocates practical, risk-based AI adoption. Dr Mah holds a Doctorate in Business Administration (European Institute of Management and Technology, EIMT) and a Bachelor of Computing (Monash University).

THE FORTY THIRD SINGAPORE ECONOMIC ROUNDTABLE

Appendix 3: Addenda

Addendum: Remarks by Mr Aninda Mitra

Conflict with Iran raises “unthinkable” tail risks

We came into 2026 with a constructive macro view notwithstanding the diffusion of AI and the disruption it wrought on the information technology and software industry.

However, the oil price shock from the Iran conflict raises much fatter tail risks to the global and, especially, the APAC outlook. To place things in perspective, APAC economies are sizable energy importers — the median net energy import position of APAC economies is around 3.5 per cent of GDP; and the median weight of energy in the consumer price basket of APAC economies is around 7 per cent.

What’s more, food price weights in the consumer price baskets are also quite high. For developing countries in Asia these range from 30 to 40 per cent — raising the prospect of higher inflation from a jump in fertilizer price and transportation cost increases.

THE FORTY THIRD SINGAPORE ECONOMIC ROUNDTABLE

Additionally, almost 60 per cent of Asian economies' energy imports are sourced from the Persian Gulf region — with most of it passing through the Straits of Hormuz. An energy price shock will thus raise fuel and food prices, reduce disposable incomes and, if the shock is prolonged, it could drive a pullback in consumption and investment.

Several advanced economies across APAC have inventories and strategic reserves which could provide some buffer (100–200 days) against high-cost imports. But developing nations in region lack such a cushion and remain highly susceptible.

That said, our base case remains for the conflict to not become prolonged. This is because most of the protagonists do not have an interest in an extended or indefinite closure of the straits. For instance, the US will likely not seek to engage in foreign entanglements which risk raising inflation — ahead of mid-term elections in November or even its 250th anniversary on July 4th.

THE FORTY THIRD SINGAPORE ECONOMIC ROUNDTABLE

At most, lingering tensions could embed a risk-premia in the price of energy. But it remains difficult to foresee an extended (beyond three month) and substantial (near 90 per cent) closure of the Hormuz Straits.