

Closing Dialogue Session with Minister Lawrence Wong

The closing dialogue of the Singapore Perspectives Conference, moderated by Mr Warren Fernandez, Editor-in-Chief for The Straits Times, featured Mr Lawrence Wong, Minister for Education and Second Minister for Finance.

In his opening statement, Minister Wong spoke about the uncertainties of how long the pandemic would last and the possibility of annual vaccinations. In spite of the challenges, he was hopeful that Singapore would be able to get through the pandemic well because of the three resets. The three 'resets' were: a social compact, environmental sustainability, and social solidarity.

He argued that the pandemic has made the playing field between the low- and high-income groups more unequal. The potential solutions highlighted were better support for disadvantaged students and changing perceptions towards merit, moving beyond a narrow definition of doing well academically.

On environmental sustainability, Minister Wong noted that carbon emissions dropped significantly when the world was in lockdown, indicating that it is possible to heal the earth. Solutions highlighted were to find new ways to generate clean energy, phase out engines with internal combustion, and make Singapore a carbon trading and services hub.

Finally, on social solidarity, Minister Wong observed that in an age of mass information and pandemics, there has been a lot of polarisation of views on social issues and policies. A possible solution he raised was better engagement with the public for the co-creation of policies.

During the Q&A section, Minister Wong responded to questions from the audience about keeping the economy open while controlling the number of imported COVID-19 cases, Singapore's education system, the value and perceptions of jobs, managing diversity in multi-racial and multi-religious Singapore, and effective policymaking.



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