

**\*Checked Against Delivery\***

Ladies and Gentlemen.

Welcome to the 14th IPS-Nathan Lecture series.

1. Our 14th S R Nathan Fellow is of course Mr Tan Chong Meng, former Group CEO of PSA International.
2. He is not our first S R Nathan Fellow from the commercial or corporate sector. I know many of you said that. But we had Mr Ho Kwon Ping as our first S R Nathan Fellow. But Kwon Ping made no or little reference to his business experience. He spoke about a great many things, but nothing related to business or the corporate sector.
3. In the case of Mr Tan, we asked him to give a series of IPS-Nathan Lectures precisely because of his corporate background in a crucial sector of the economy. Indeed, in our mind, he complements the previous S R Nathan Fellow, Professor Joseph Liow. Just as we asked Professor Liow to speak of how Singapore might position itself in an increasingly uncertain — fragile and uncertain — geo-political landscape; we asked Mr Tan to speak of how Singapore might position itself in an increasingly uncertain — fractious and uncertain — geo-economic landscape.
4. He is uniquely qualified to speak on this subject. Apart from his earlier corporate experience, he spent the last 13 years helming PSA International. Trade, from the beginning, has been Singapore's *sine qua non*. Singapore would not exist if it weren't for trade. It is not possible to imagine a Singapore that is not open to the world. No sector of our economy is likely to be more affected by geopolitical and geoeconomic shifts than trade.
5. PSA of course now exceeds Singapore. Its network now encompasses, I read, 160 locations in 42 countries, including 66 deep-sea, rail, and inland terminals, as well as affiliated businesses in supply chain management,

logistics, marine, and digital services. The PSA Group handles one in 10 global container movements annually — which is quite a remarkable figure, in other words, 10 percent — serving all major international shipping lines and key stakeholders in the global supply chain. It is without a doubt the most open, the most global, the most connected, the most networked, Singapore-based entity.

6. I should add that outside the PSA Group, Mr Tan drove the set-up of emergency health infrastructure during the COVID-19 pandemic. For his *“crucial contributions on so many fronts to Singapore’s pandemic response,”* he was awarded the Meritorious Service Medal or the *Pingat Jasa Gemilang* by the President of Singapore last year. The citation read in part:
  - a. *“He revamped PSA’s cargo operations so that supply chains remained open. He also led the set-up of several emergency health facilities at the beginning of the pandemic, including the Community Care Facility at Changi Expo and the floating accommodation vessels at Tanjong Pagar Terminal. And he led PSA to facilitate the safe inflow of migrant workers for critical sectors.”*
7. Covid-19 just happened recently, and already our memories of that crisis-of-a-generation seems to be fading. Lest we forget, I should emphasise, Mr Tan was among the group of key people who helped save the sum of things for Singapore and Singaporeans — not to mention hundreds of thousands of migrant workers — during the pandemic.
8. Mr Tan’s lecture series is titled: *Exploring Global Trade and Singapore’s Place as a World Connector*. In his first lecture today, he will delve into the drivers that shaped global trade in the past and how Singapore’s position as a key hub port has intersected with global trade developments. He told me that quite a lot of it will be history, but I think it will be interesting. In his second lecture on 12th April, he will examine how the shipping industry has been impacted by globalisation and geopolitical shifts, providing an insider’s perspective of the rapid changes in the world of shipping, and also how Singapore has

maintained its position as the world's top maritime centre. Finally, in his third lecture on 7th May, he will delve deeper into how recent developments are affecting global trade dynamics and examine strategies to future-proof our supply chains.

9. I would like to thank Mr Patrick Lee, Cluster CEO of Standard Chartered Bank, for moderating today's Q&A. His insights and wide regional expertise will undoubtedly enhance the quality of our discussions.
  
10. The S R Nathan Fellowship for the Study of Singapore was established in 2014 to pay tribute to our sixth and longest-serving President, S R Nathan. Held on campus, the IPS-Nathan Lectures seek to advance public understanding and stimulate discussion on national issues, and to engage the minds of Singaporeans.
  
11. Finally, like many other Singaporeans of the first order, Mr Tan Chong Meng was born in Malaysia — or rather, Malaya, as it was known when he was born. He shares this distinction with none other than Mr Nathan himself, not to mention other luminaries like Dr Goh Keng Swee, Dr Toh Chin Chye, Mr Ong Pang Boon, and many others. For some reason, the best Singaporeans often tended to be Malayan.
  
12. I believe I echo the sentiments of all present when I convey our eager anticipation for the insights this Malayan-become-Singaporean will impart in this lecture series.
  
13. Thank you.