

## 'Spot-on advice' for S'pore in new Chan Heng Chee book: Vivian

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SINGAPORE - Singapore needs to find its niche, achieve relevance, stick together, and constantly implement policies with a human heart and human touch.

This was Foreign Minister Vivian Balakrishnan's takeaway from a book collecting veteran diplomat Chan Heng Chee's lectures on Singapore's place in a rapidly changing world.

Launched on Tuesday (March 9), the book - titled *World In Transition: Singapore's Future* - was written in Professor Chan's capacity as the Institute of Policy Studies' (IPS) seventh S R Nathan Fellow for the Study of Singapore.

Her three virtual lectures were held between June and July 2020 by IPS, a research centre at the National University of Singapore's Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy.

Dr Balakrishnan, who spoke at the launch event, said he agreed with Prof Chan's observation in her book of technology as a longer-term disruption compared with the Covid-19 pandemic - which will serve as a catalyst but not the primary, driving force.

He also highlighted Prof Chan's hypotheses that while democracy has faltered and capitalism has floundered, the former will survive and the latter has engendered the need to think more profoundly about the type of society to be created in a new future.

"You've reminded us that we are no longer in a unipolar world, and perhaps we're moving to a world order of 2½ poles," he added, referring to Prof Chan suggesting, in her first lecture, a new global order led by the United States and China, and Europe as a "half" pole.

In her book, Prof Chan also laid out the key security flashpoints between the two superpowers, along with the rise of techno-nationalism and the need for a global discussion on open standards and open data.

Dr Balakrishnan, who is also Minister-in-charge of the Smart Nation Initiative, said Prof Chan's advice was always spot on.

Prof Chan's wide-ranging lectures last year spanned her observations of global and local events and trends.

She talked about the communitarian culture of Asian countries - one that puts the common good ahead of individual freedoms - as one reason for their greater success tackling Covid-19.

In the light of the pandemic, Prof Chan also urged Singapore to re-examine how fast it can shift its paradigm of economic growth away from the current manpower-reliant model towards greater use of technology.

She also said Singapore's 2020 General Election had highlighted that a new culture of kinder and gentler politics was emerging here, in contrast to the "competitive, mean" forms suffusing some Western democracies.

peaking at the launch on Tuesday, Prof Chan said that at this particular time in the world, the late former Singapore president Devan Nair's refrain to have "hope, even against all hope" was good advice.

The Ambassador-at-Large with the Foreign Ministry said: "Because everything seems to be unravelling and heading towards a rocky path.

"My last lecture was called Optimism From The Jaws Of Gloom - and that was discussing Singapore's position. So, I do have some optimism."

**World In Transition: Singapore's Future is available at major bookstores and on the World Scientific website at \$28.**