

that fixes quotas for units owned by each ethnic group in a block or precinct. They now have the option of asking the HDB to buy back their flats.

Employers long frustrated by the opaque nature of work pass approvals should welcome a new points-based system for higher-paid foreign professionals seeking a job here. The framework will evaluate factors such as their qualifications and the hiring firm's diversity of nationalities.

Another thread was support for the most vulnerable – from the low-income and migrant workers to former offenders and people with disabilities.

Under a Progressive Wage Mark accreditation scheme, employers must pay all local staff a salary of at least \$1,400, and fulfil training requirements for workers at different skill levels, among other things. From March next year, companies will need this accreditation to take on government contracts.

There were also decisive near-

and long-term moves in the drive towards sustainability, with hundreds of millions pumped into firms and industries to spur reduction of emissions, and into electric vehicle infrastructure to encourage adoption.

A hotly debated disposable bag charge will finally take effect, at minimally five cents a bag at most supermarket outlets here.

And as part of a wider healthcare strategy, 10 new polyclinics will be built by 2030, with their doctors plus general practitioners taking on a larger role in attending to the public. This will free up hospitals to focus on the demands of a rapidly ageing population.

Taken together, these themes provide some indication of the contours of a future society being shaped – one which Mr Wong envisioned, in his Budget round-up speech, as a fairer, greener and more inclusive one.

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10 upcoming changes to look out for

APRIL 2022: SkillsFuture Career Transition Programme for mid-career workers launches	BY END-2022: Digital and Intelligence Service set up as fourth branch of Singapore Armed Forces
JULY 2022: Smoking ban extended to more parks, gardens and beaches	MID-2023: Disposable bag charge kicks in at larger supermarkets
2ND HALF OF 2022: Progressive Wage Mark accreditation scheme takes effect	BY 2023: No more mid-year exams for primary and secondary students
END-2022: Higher medical insurance coverage required for helpers, migrant workers	SEPTEMBER 2023: Points system for Employment Pass applications implemented
BY END-2022: 2nd batch of assisted living HDB flats in Queenstown	FROM 2023: Each resident is invited to pair up with a general practitioner or polyclinic doctor of his choice



Building a secure country and sustainable economy

Budgets are also about concrete moves to meet immediate, pressing needs – and with the Russian invasion of Ukraine, it was not that the Ministry of Defence (Mindef) announced a major upgrade to deal with the looming spectre of digital threats.

Just as key is preserving Singapore's status and competitiveness as a global hub, and for the nation to become more sustainable through the Singapore Green Plan 2030. Here are significant steps taken in these directions.

A new branch of the military – the Digital and Intelligence Service (DIS) – will be set up to complement the army, navy and air force. It will integrate the Singapore Armed Forces' military intelligence services, cyber defences, electronic protection and C4I (command, control, communications,

computers and intelligence) systems. Mindef and Nanyang Technological University have also launched a programme to train selected full-time national servicemen to become digital specialists under the DIS.

- As part of efforts to stop scams, money mules will no longer be able to escape punishment and will instead face money laundering charges with lower culpability. It was previously difficult to prove their intent and hence prosecute such individuals who moved tainted funds for crime syndicates.
- A safety rating system for e-commerce platforms will be introduced, and telcos will be required to install enhanced safeguards to block scam calls, SMSes and websites.
- Support will be injected into all levels of the economy – from \$50 million to help heartland shops go digital, to the Singapore Global Enterprises programme that will help raise local talent and local firms into global players. These come under the Singapore Economy 2030 vision, which includes an overall target to grow exports to at least \$1 trillion by 2030, and plans and actions to address the key economic pillars of services, manufacturing, trade and enterprises.
- The aviation sector will get \$500 million to rebuild capacity

and reclaim Singapore's position as a global air hub. The sum will be used to support manpower, industry transformation and safe air travel and operational needs.

- A new research institute on Jurong Island will explore ways to reduce the industrial sector's carbon footprint, while manufacturing firms and building owners will get more funding and grants to adopt energy-efficient technologies and cut down on emissions. At least \$300 million will be invested to reduce emissions in the maritime industry as Singapore, a global cargo hub, gears up for a multi-fuel future.
- Singapore's food security goals will also get a leg-up with the introduction of leases for coastal fish farms, which will provide more certainty for farmers and encourage technological investments to improve yields and increase overall production.
- The number of places where smoking is banned will be extended to include all public parks, gardens and 10 recreational beaches, among others. When the ban kicks in on July 1, smokers will largely be able to light up only in designated smoking areas and open public spaces such as vacant land, uncovered walkways and uncovered areas on the top deck of multi-storey carparks.



Building for Singapore and Singaporeans of the future

At each Budget, the Government lays out its plans not just for the upcoming year but also for the future – sometimes decades away. Measures were introduced this year to address the issue of the fast-ageing population and its potential strain on the healthcare system, as well as the ever-pressing climate crisis.

As part of preparations for a green transition, every Housing Board town will be "EV-Ready" by 2025 – a commitment made by Transport Minister S. Iswaran to install at least three electric vehicle charging points at each of nearly 2,000 HDB carparks over the next three to four years. The Land Transport Authority also aims to have 60,000 charging points across the island by 2030. Consumers will, from mid-2023,

have to pay at least five cents for every disposable bag, regardless of material, they take at most supermarket outlets here, in a bid to encourage the public to be more judicious with their use of disposables. Excessive use of disposable bags has a negative impact on the environment and environmental groups here have been calling for a charge on disposable bags for years.

- Singapore is broadening its focus for local food production beyond leafy vegetables, eggs and food fish to other food types, such as tomatoes, mushrooms and shrimp. This is part of efforts to transform the agri-food industry here with climate-resilient and sustainable technologies to provide 30 per cent of the country's food needs locally by 2030.
- Major changes in how healthcare is delivered are afoot to better prepare for an ageing society. To shift the pressure from acute hospitals to more community settings such as general practitioner clinics or polyclinics, each resident here will from next year be invited to enrol with one general practitioner or polyclinic doctor, who will work with the resident to prevent or manage chronic conditions. Doing so would free up hospitals to focus on

emergencies and complex treatments as demand rises from a fast-ageing population.

- Ten new polyclinics are slated to open between this year and 2030, while existing ones in towns such as Pasir Ris and Clementi will be redeveloped. There are currently 23 polyclinics here. One of the newly announced polyclinics, in Taman Jurong, will have elderly-friendly and accessibility features for the convenience of patients and incorporate pandemic-ready infrastructure.
- Lifelong learning will also be reinforced as industries and careers are set to experience greater volatility in the coming years. A new SkillsFuture Career Transition Programme for mid-career workers will be launched next month to help Singaporeans looking to switch careers. They can take industry-oriented, modular training courses lasting from three to 12 months.
- From June 1, the Additional SkillsFuture Credit (Mid-Career Support) will be expanded to cover around 7,000 courses, up from about 350 courses now. This move comes after feedback from the ground that individuals not looking to switch careers would also like to use their free SkillsFuture credit for upskilling.

