

SPOR 2018: Progressing together amidst an uncertain global environment

The Ministry of Finance has published the fifth edition of the Singapore Public Sector Outcomes Review (SPOR). The report takes stock of how Singapore has fared amidst a rapidly evolving global environment, and domestic issues that concern Singaporeans.

Commenting on the SPOR report, Head of Civil Service, Leo Yip, said: “Looking back on the past two years, we have made progress across many fronts to deliver better policies and services to citizens. And one element that has been present across these efforts is ensuring we listen to and partner Singaporeans in these efforts – from transforming our economy to strengthening our society to ensure a better future for Singaporeans. For example, we have tried new ways of partnering citizens in designing solutions, such as MOH’s Citizens’ Jury. Across the work of the Public Service, we will continue to put citizens at the centre of what we do.”

Developing A Vibrant Economy

Our economy continues to grow. Singapore’s Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is expected to grow by between 3.0% and 3.5% in 2018. Singaporeans are also earning higher incomes. Households at the 20th percentile and median income levels saw monthly incomes increase by about 20% in real terms since 2013.

Singapore’s push for productivity has also seen results. Growth in real value-added per actual hour worked increased from 1.4% in 2013 to 4.5% in 2017, while growth in real value-added per worker picked up from 1.0% to 3.8% over the same period.

Singapore continues to push ahead with economic transformation. All 23 Industry Transformation Maps (ITMs) across six clusters have been launched to promote growth and competitiveness. The next phase of transformation will look at synergies within clusters of industries. The Government has also supported 45,000 companies and 450 projects in their overseas ventures in 2017.

Providing Opportunities for All

The report noted the Government’s efforts in supporting Singaporeans in mastering skills and lifelong learning.

Two out of three preschoolers will have a place in an affordable and quality Government or Government-supported preschool by 2023. This comes after a 60% increase in full-day preschool capacity since 2012 and another 40,000 preschool places to be added.

Young Singaporeans can look forward to initiatives that nurture the joy of learning and support their aspirations. More students can develop their strengths and interests through opportunities for applied learning (e.g. all primary schools to offer Applied Learning Programmes by 2023) and to participate in distinctive programmes in secondary schools (e.g. all secondary schools can now

admit up to 20% of their non-Integrated Programme Secondary 1 intake via the Direct School Admission Exercise). There are also more diverse higher education pathways. The Singapore University of Social Sciences was established in 2017 and four ITE Work-Learn Technical Diplomas were introduced for the first time in 2018.

Singaporeans have benefitted from government support to help them upskill, reskill, stay employable and secure jobs. Over 285,000 eligible Singaporeans have used their SkillsFuture Credit as at end-2017. More than 25,000 jobseekers have also successfully secured jobs through the Adapt and Grow initiative in 2017, about 20% more than in 2016. Almost 3,800 professionals, managers, executives and technicians (PMETs) received training and wage support to move into new occupations or sectors under the Professional Conversion Programmes.

Musa Fazal, Divisional Director of SkillsFuture Division at the Ministry of Education, said, “In order to seize the new opportunities that will arise and adapt to changes in the future economy, Singaporeans will need to embrace lifelong learning and ensure their skills and knowledge are continually refreshed. The Government is committed to providing multiple education and training pathways that support Singaporeans in developing to their fullest potential throughout life. We encourage employers and individuals to continue actively participating in SkillsFuture programmes, and to look beyond paper qualifications and strive for skills mastery.”

Helping Singaporeans with the Cost of Living and Progressing Together

Singaporeans are living longer. Healthcare demand is expected to increase with an ageing population. Government healthcare expenditure more than doubled from \$3.9 billion in FY2011 to an estimated \$10.2 billion in FY2018. A good part of this increase went towards enhancing healthcare subsidies to keep healthcare affordable for Singaporeans. In 2017, close to 90% of bills for inpatient treatments required less than \$500 out-of-pocket expenditure after subsidies, MediSave and MediShield Life. For outpatient treatments, about 750,000 and 650,000 individuals benefitted from MediSave and the Community Health Assist Scheme (CHAS) respectively.

With greater support from the Government, Singaporeans continue to have access to affordable homes. The Debt Servicing Ratio of new 4-room HDB flats in non-mature estates has remained low at 22% in 2017. As at December 2017, 8,100 first-timer families and singles buying resale flats have benefitted from the increased CPF Housing Grant implemented since February 2017. Since the launch of the Proximity Housing Grant in August 2015, 11,000 households have received a total of \$211 million. Today, first-timer applicants buying resale flats to live with or near their parents can receive up to \$120,000 in housing grants, a 50% increase from 2015.

Singaporeans continue to receive help with their transport needs. About 1.8 million concession cards have been issued. These give discounts of up to 50% off regular adult public transport fares. Persons with disabilities also enjoy subsidies of up to 80% under the enhanced Taxi Subsidy Scheme, which now covers private-hire cars.

Those in need continue to receive support from the Government. Households in the bottom 20% of the income distribution receive the largest share of transfers from the Government. In FY2017, about 79,000 beneficiaries received \$131 million in social assistance payouts under ComCare. The number of long-term assistance recipients aged 65 years and older increased from 2,844 in FY2013 to 3,500 in FY2017. Since 2007, the Government has paid \$5.5 billion to about 830,000 lower-wage Singaporeans under the Workfare Income Supplement Scheme.

Nalini Ramachandran, Social Assistance Manager at the Bukit Batok Social Service Office, said “My colleagues and I work closely with our government and community partners to coordinate various forms of support for families in need. These include help with living expenses, medical bills, employment, childcare or student care subsidies and help with family issues. In a way, all of us are advocates for those in need. There is nothing more motivating and satisfying than seeing these families doing better as a result of everyone’s efforts.”

Transforming Singapore through Innovation and Technology

Singaporeans can look forward to better delivery of public services and a higher quality of life through the Smart Nation Initiative. This is a nation-wide movement to transform Singapore through technology. The Government is laying the infrastructure for the pervasive adoption of digital and smart technologies, driven by six Strategic National Projects such as e-Payments, Moments of Life and Smart Urban Mobility.

Permanent Secretary, Smart Nation and Digital Government, Ng Chee Khern said, “We are using the immense power of technology to build a Singapore that would offer meaningful business and job opportunities; a digital government that would offer responsive services that fulfil the needs of our citizens and give citizens a better lived experience; and an inclusive society with a high quality of life. We have been making good progress with many such plans at all Ministries and government agencies, as well as with our Strategic National Projects.”

Businesses can now transact more easily with the Government. The LicenceOne portal simplifies the application process for 114 licences from 20 agencies. Businesses only need to fill in the application form once to apply for multiple licences. They can also directly apply for six grants from five agencies on the Business Grants Portal. More than 1,000 small and medium enterprises (SMEs) have also adopted digital solutions under the SMEs Go Digital initiative while 370 companies have adopted plug-and-play productivity solutions from the Tech Depot.

Singaporeans and businesses can also make payments safely, simply and seamlessly through e-Payments. As at September 2018, approximately 1.76 million users have registered for PayNow. The Government is tapping on PayNow to disburse payments such as Edusave awards, SG Bonus payments and Individual Physical Proficiency Test (IPPT) incentives more quickly. Members can receive their CPF@55 withdrawals immediately instead of waiting for five days.

Businesses can enjoy greater convenience through the PayNow Corporate service launched in August 2018. e-Payments have also been simplified for both merchants and individuals with the launch of a unified Singapore Quick Response Code (SGQR) in September 2018. This is a single QR code that combines up to 27 e-payment solutions into one.

The Government is driving deeper technology adoption in its operations. For example, radiographic imaging scanners deployed in July 2018 have helped the Immigration & Checkpoints Authority (ICA) enhance security clearance for buses. The scanners help ICA officers focus their checks on specific parts of a bus by highlighting anomalies. The Singapore Police Force (SPF) used unmanned aerial vehicles for greater situational awareness and presence during the Marina Bay Countdown 2017.

Background

SPOR is prepared by the Ministry of Finance with inputs from all ministries. Published every two years, SPOR provides a perspective on how the public sector and Singapore have fared in a broad range of areas of national interest. SPOR 2018 is available at <https://www.mof.gov.sg/Resources/Singapore-Public-Sector-Outcomes-Review-SPOR>.

Source: Ministry of Finance