

**SPEECH BY ER LEE BEE WAH, MP FOR ANG MO KIO GRC, IN
RESPONSE TO FINANCE MINISTER'S BUDGET STATEMENT IN
PARLIAMENT**

Mr Speaker Sir,

Please allow me to speak in Malay

Belanjawan tahun ini adalah suatu pendedahan yang mengejutkan rakyat Singapura. Ia merangkumi banyak komponen yang berfaedah, di luar jangkauan pemikiran kita. Belanjawan ini sememangnya pro-rakyat. Kebanyakan komponen komponen belanjawan kali ini adalah khusus bagi rakyat agar mendapat satu kelebihan. Maka, saya memuji Menteri Kewangan Encik Tharman Shamugaratnam yang mempunyai pandangan jauh dan bercita-cita tinggi untuk Belanjawan tahun ini.

Sudah beberapa tahun, belanjawan sering tertumpu kepada mereka yang berpendapatan rendah. Pada tahun ini, kita telah pergi jauh untuk merangkumi mereka yang berpendapatan sederhana.

Golongan sederhana ini akan menerima beberapa bonus seperti rebat cukai pendapatan sebanyak 20 peratus, bursari pengajian tinggi, akaun pendidikan pos-menengah dan dividen pertumbuhan, untuk mengatasi inflasi.

Pemerintah telah menunjukkan kemurahan hati dengan kenaikan yang melebihi 10 peratus kepada penerima bantuan awam. Saya tidak ragu bahwa bantuan ini akan dapat meningkatkan kualiti kehidupan mereka.

Mr. Speaker Sir,

Many Singaporeans are happy that estate duty has now been put to rest. I applaud the government for having the courage to take this long-awaited step. It represents yet another stride in our departure from tradition.

Having estate duty in our economic climate is not conducive to free-flowing business. Now that it has been removed, more individuals – especially those who have high personal net worth – will be encouraged to live and invest in Singapore.

Another particularly good news, is the increase in amounts for both tertiary education bursaries and also Post Secondary Education Accounts. I strongly believe that education is the best long-term investment strategy as it helps to put together a solid and enterprising workforce, which is integral to the success of any country. Education is also the best solution for children from lower-income families to escape the cycle of poverty and create a better future for themselves and their loved-ones.

Other developments that will breed achievements are the tax deduction and allowances on research and developmental activities. I am optimistic that such a move will drive more local companies to channel more resources on R & D.

It is a wise move as Singapore is a country that thrives on advancement through brain power, be it in technology or other areas. Thus, we are helping to stimulate further growth for our country by instituting this move.

With that said, this year's budget has accomplished many great feats. Yet, as always, I am looking forward to some adjustments so that it can be even more effective.

Fine-tuning income tax returns

The government could, for example, consider making the income-tax rebate a continual feature of the annual budget. It could be better perhaps to institute a cut in the income tax rates. I feel that this is a better permanent solution as it will help Singaporeans cope with the rising cost of living. A cut in personal income tax rates will give them a more direct dosage of medicine to deal with inflation and this can in turn help to stimulate the economy further. Lower income tax rates will also attract individuals to work here, rather than in other places like Hong Kong, where the top marginal personal tax rate is 15 per cent, compared to ours at 20 per cent.

Mr Speaker Sir, please allow me to continue my speech in Mandarin

年长妇女的挑战

一项由社会发展, 青年及体育部的调查显示, 我国的妇女一般会比他们的伴侣来得长寿。当我在社区走动时, 经常会看到从来没踏入社会工作的妇女, 一旦她们的伴侣去世后, 她们往往都无法维持晚年的生活。这些妇女, 幸运的话, 能依靠子女们在经济上的一些补助。她们的公积金户口就像她们一样一孤零零的!

虽然我们一直在提倡再训练, 但由于没有受过基本教育, 再加上体力不胜负荷 (Hè), 许多年长妇女都无法从事任何全职或甚至兼职的工作。这些妇女超过大半辈子的时间, 都花在照顾父母, 家人, 丈夫和孩子。

她们为家庭作出了牺牲，到头来，却没有任何公积金储蓄，也不符合申请公积金终身入息计划的条件。我想会有多少丈夫或孩子，会为他们填补公积金户头。妇女的寿命比较长，因此也更需要公积金终身入息计划的辅助来安度晚年，然而，她们却无法从中受惠。

目前政府的政策没有特别关照这一群妇女，希望政府能看看有没有什么办法能帮助这一群妇女们参加公积金终身入息计划。

对中小型企业的支持

在最近一项由新加坡中华总商会, 向76家中小型企业所做的调查显示¹, 有百分之85的受访企业, 对不明朗的市场展望及营业成本上涨感到担忧。其中百分之40的受访企业, 更是希望政府能在公司税务, 劳工税及各种营运收费上做出调整, 以减轻由于租金, 薪金, 油价上涨, 对营业成本带来的直接冲击。

和大型的跨国企业相比, 中小企业和新加坡的经济表现有着更密切的关系。

¹ http://www.straitstimes.com/Latest%2BNews/Singapore/STIStory_206065.html

根据统计报告²，在我国，百分之99的经济体由中小型企业组成，中小型企业也雇佣了百分之62的劳动队伍，以及贡献了百分之46的全国生产总值。因此，我认为政府应该为土生土长的中小型企业，提供更多的协助，以让他们发展与成长。我有以下三个协助中小型企业的建议：

(一) 办公楼以及厂房租金：

据一些企业界的老板告诉我，他们的租金，JTC一口气调高了42%！这意味着商家需面对外来因素所在造成的更高营业成本，也还要应付JTC的高昂租金。有这个必要吗？JTC 是否急着要在下一次的常年报告书，交出更漂亮的业绩？

² Speech by Mr Lee Yi Shyan, Minister of State (Trade & Industry) at the 21st Annual (2007) Singapore 1000 and Singapore SME 500 Awards on 18th Jan 2008.
<http://app.mti.gov.sg/default.asp?id=148&articleID=12101>
IStory_206065.html

"羊毛出在羊身上"，商家为了提高竞争力及继续营业，也许会采取一些消极措施，如裁员；或干脆把营运总部撤离我国，这将直接冲击我国的就业市场。正如美国前国防部长，Ronald Rumsfeld所说³，"处理事务必需要三思而后行，不能让日常的琐事所打乱了我们的计划。"，有关当局应以宏观的角度，及灵活的方式来处理这事件。

(二) 政府部门的政策与要求

昨天 Inderjit 议员说有一些政府条例增加运作成本，今天我要给你一些例子。

³ Donald Henry Rumsfeld is a businessman, a U.S. Republican politician, the 13th Secretary of Defense under President Gerald Ford from 1975 to 1977, and the 21st Secretary of Defense under President George W. Bush from 2001 to 2006.

身为一位在职的专业共程师，首先让我先声明我的利益。自尼诺大道坍塌之后，建设局BCA在业者的反对声中，推行了一系列具争议性的措施。比如有关措施规定，任何超过30层建筑物的地基工程设计，原本由土木工程师来负责的都必须改由BCA新创造的所谓专业土质工程师负责，承包商也告诉我，每一层的地下挖掘工作，也需要申请个别的准证。每一张准证，都要有五个人签名，承包商，陆路交通管理局工程经理，承包商负责监督的专业工程师，工程品质监督员及陆路交通管理局工程主任，五方面的批准。请想想该措施是否复杂，是否耗损了大量的人力，物力及时间。这是否必要？

我希望政府在实施任何新条例前，有诚意的，广泛的听取及参考各方意见才不至於搞到条例修正法令已在国会通过了，BCA 工作人员逼不己，必须一味的强行推展。

(三) 工人短缺问题

最近有不少企业家，商家告诉我，他们面对工人短缺问题。我吁（Yù）请人力部，能检讨及放宽雇佣外国工人顶限的条规。目前，我国有超过一半的劳动队伍，年龄在40岁以上⁴。随着人口逐渐老化，这问题也越来越严重。因此，重新检讨外国工人顶限这一课题至关重要。

⁴ <http://www.kpmg.com/NR/exeres/EC5931FC-261B-4D7D-80DF-9E5C49C6F2F8.htm>

如果我们现在不正视这问题，那些面对劳工短缺的行业，将会以各种手法来吸引其他同行的工友。这必将引起骨牌效应，造成恶性竞争。到时，也会影响相关行业的服务素质，在综合娱乐城开始招聘员工的时候，这情况可能会更恶化。或许有些人会质疑，这些外国工人是否会抢走新加坡人的饭碗？当然我们必须照顾新加坡人，只有在找不到新加坡人的情形下，企业才可申请较多的外国工人。

**** (Comment on any other speakers, if any)**

Conclusion

Mr. Speaker Sir,

In closing, I congratulate Finance Minister once more on his insight and pragmatism in rolling out this bountiful budget. Indeed, the drawn up plan is both timely and relevant.

In reflection, allow me to share with you a thought-inspiring quote from Antoine de Saint-Exupery, the famed author of “The Little Prince”. He said: “As for the future, your task is not to foresee it, but to enable it.”

I think, we are well on our way to abling that.

Thank you.

⁹ Ong Ye Kung, Chief Executive of Singapore Workforce Development Agency, Today Newspaper, 4th Feb