

‘Spot-on advice’ for Singapore in new Chan Heng Chee book: Vivian

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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 that collected veteran diplomat Chan Heng Chee’s lectures on Singapore’s place in a rapidly changing world.

Launched yesterday at the National University of Singapore’s (NUS) Bukit Timah campus, the book, *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 in June and July last year by IPS, a research centre at NUS’ 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 that technology would be

a longer-term disruption compared with the Covid-19 pandemic, which is just a catalyst.

He also highlighted Prof Chan’s hypothesis that while democracy has floundered 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 two-and-a-half poles,” Dr Balakrishnan added, referring to Prof Chan’s suggestion in her first lecture of a new global order led by the United States, China and Europe as a “half” pole.

In her book, Prof Chan also lays 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 lec-



Professor Chan Heng Chee (left) at the launch of her book, *World In Transition: Singapore’s Future*, yesterday. The book, written in the diplomat’s capacity as the Institute of Policy Studies’ seventh S R Nathan Fellow for the Study of Singapore, collects her lectures last year on the Republic’s place in a rapidly changing world. PHOTO: INSTITUTE OF POLICY STUDIES

tures last year spanned her observations of global and local events and trends.

She talked about the communi-

tarian culture of Asian countries – one that puts the common good ahead of individual freedoms – as one reason for their greater suc-

cess in tackling Covid-19.

In the light of the pandemic, Prof Chan also urged Singapore to re-examine how fast it can shift its para-

digm 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.

Speaking at the launch, Prof Chan said that at this particular time in the world, the late 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: “We have to hope against hope, 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.”

Prof Chan’s book is available at major bookstores and on the World Scientific website at \$28.

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