

More support for wider group of local workers, not just the vulnerable

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A wider group of workers will get more government help as assistance policies shift from just uplifting vulnerable workers, said Manpower Minister Tan See Leng.

The move was one of three shifts in the Ministry of Manpower's (MOM) direction that Dr Tan set out at the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy on Sept 20.

There will also be initiatives to help businesses build workplaces that are both progressive and productive and for the MOM to be not just a regulator, but also an institu-

tion that enables growth for businesses and workers.

Dr Tan's remarks came at the closing session of the five-day Festival of Ideas event organised by the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy. The third edition of the biennial event comes as the school celebrates its 20th anniversary.

Dr Tan said the Government is now looking to expand the broad middle of the Singaporean workforce as well as nurture top talent, beyond the vulnerable workers it has been uplifting.

He noted that workers can find information on how to move forward in their careers through the artificial intelligence-powered Ca-

reersFinder tool or personalised career coaching services from Workforce Singapore (WSG).

The Overseas Market Immersion Programme will also be launched to help Singaporeans gain overseas experience that provides valuable exposure for career progression.

He also noted that the Government will help businesses adopt a skills-first approach to hiring, and support investment into developing skills in the workforce.

These moves would help allay concerns that workers hold amid rapid technological disruptions and external challenges like the inward, protectionist turn some other economies have taken, he said.

Dr Tan added that the Government now wants to help businesses build workplaces that are progressive, and not just productive.

"We want Singaporeans to achieve their career aspirations, even as our local population ages and the workforce profile changes," he added.

This means locals will need to raise their productivity via upskilling and reskilling, but Dr Tan noted that such training can be costly for businesses.

The Government will help employers defray costs by enhancing career conversion programmes from WSG, increasing the cap on salary support and monthly train-

ing allowances, among other moves.

However, he added: "We are also helping more locals stay in the workforce through progressive workplace practices."

These moves include raising the retirement and re-employment ages, launching the Tripartite Guidelines on Flexible Work Arrangement Requests and providing statutory protections for platform workers.

The third initiative involves the MOM transcending its role as a regulator to also enable growth for businesses and workers.

Dr Tan said there are two crucial ingredients for this shift: to contin-

ue to be a top global hub for talent and the continued three-way partnership between the Government, the labour movement and employers.

A suite of work passes to attract top talent who can create jobs here and a revamped assessment framework for Employment Pass candidates are among changes to ensure inclusive growth for Singaporeans, he added.

"Our strategy is to maximise the potential of every individual, and we allocate the manpower resources to the most productive firms."

Meanwhile, tripartism is needed to provide a stable industrial climate that promotes long-term investment, yet also assures workers' interests are safeguarded, said Dr Tan.

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