

How the Pandemic has shaped the Singapore of today and will continue to forge the Singapore of tomorrow.

COVID-19 as a pandemic had its impact on Singapore and at global level, as millions of people continue to be affected by the virus. It has impacted our economy, stretched medical resources to their limits, and has disrupted our daily lives. Nevertheless, our Lion City and its residents have coped remarkably well with this formidable, invisible enemy, with people from all walks of lives uniting in the effort to defeat the virus. Singapore's handling of the pandemic is praiseworthy and won accolades across the globe and been treated a role model for many countries and duly acknowledged by World Health Organization(WHO). Singapore has handled the virus exceptionally well for a bustling city, but through the lessons learnt through this process and experience, we can certainly improve on certain aspects if a challenging situation like this ever arises again.

This pandemic has raised the big question, "How do we protect our lives and in parallel keep the economy afloat in a long-term pandemic?" which was never thought of due to our lack of knowledge. Therefore, the most critical lesson this pandemic taught us is the essential need to be always prepared.

On top of the essential lesson to always be prepared, we also learnt some other crucial lessons and necessities which we would not have found out if the pandemic had not happened. Firstly, we found out that Telehealth must become the new normal and that Masks are very useful tools to keep our loved ones safe if we are sick, or if there is a pandemic like there is now. Other than that, Mental Health must be taken seriously and emergency cash savings for crisis situations are a must. Moreover, we learnt that Work and studies can be integrated online and can happen anywhere. Furthermore, we realised that pandemic control measures are only effective with quick action and a united community which has the utmost trust in the government. On top of this, we have learnt that change is the only constant, which is why frequent skill upgrades are essential for a flexible economy. Finally, the public and the government must be ever ready to battle a virus in the future by increasing virus detection and pandemic measures' awareness, while also adding pandemic viruses under insurance plans to supplement costs

As a country, we also need to develop continuous research, drills and processes to handle pandemic situations, just like the "Emergency Preparedness" or "Fire Drill" exercises conducted on a periodic basis. "Pandemic Readiness" should also be made a part and parcel of the periodic activity within our community.

Shutting down borders and rolling out vaccines is a right long-term strategy for the current situation. However, there still needs to be a revolution within global public health. We must enhance and increase the various medical equipment like testing kits, therapeutics, vaccines and PPE as well as our ability to rapidly approve, manufacture and distribute innovations across each area. The medical sector requires a fundamental upgrade to data infrastructure and health surveillance.

If a similar situation does occur in the future, in terms of measures needed to be implemented, the first thing I would expect our government to do is to lock the borders immediately, as well as make wearing masks mandatory as soon as news of an airborne virus similar to the Coronavirus is reported. Furthermore, we should seriously give a second thought on the current living condition of our dormitory workers and enhance their current living spaces to more spacious facilities to avoid the

spread of the virus. As we realized through this pandemic, the elderly population are more vulnerable and susceptible to the adverse effects of viruses, the best care facilities should be installed in old age homes and elderly centres. Finally, I foresee that the government would support those affected by the pandemic financially, just like the current one did, which prevented a total economic breakdown. On a personal note, I plan to always be prepared for similar situations due to my experience in a pandemic world, and will definitely help the future generation face the issue at hand to the best ability by being a role model in following the measures and staying calm.

In addition to these expectations and foresights, I feel that future generations will learn plenty from our experiences, regardless of how different their virus could be. First and foremost, I expect that they will learn to follow and be encouraged by the vast majority of Singaporeans who tirelessly and dedicatedly follow the safety measures and rules implemented by the government. Secondly, they would have learnt not to panic buy or spread false rumours online, which would only drain resources and cause more panic within the public. Moreover, I foresee that the Singaporeans of the future would be more hygienic and take sanitation very seriously due to our experiences and realisations from this pandemic. This will help in keeping our environment clean, and ourselves safe. I also think that future generations would be more prepared and willing to take vaccines, since they would be reassured by our ongoing, mostly successful vaccination drive against the coronavirus. Moreover, the public and the government would be more mentally prepared to battle any form of virus which they could face. Finally, the people of tomorrow will always remember that there is light at the end of the tunnel, which is what I and undoubtedly the whole of Singapore is looking forward to.

For my final paragraph, I will highlight how we Singaporeans have united to combat the emotional, physical and economic effects and restraints of the pandemic. The virus has strengthened the bond between neighbours and the general public, as we all looked out and continue to look out for one another. From providing meals to those who needed it, to the government providing massive financial support to those affected, our society has evolved to combat this unpredictable situation, and help those adversely affected. Moreover, neighbours assisted their elderly neighbours by helping them run errands to reduce their exposure to the virus. Our economy also evolved to adapt to these tough times, as e-commerce boomed, and small businesses survived through upgrading themselves to online platforms, government subsidies and raising awareness and funds. The upgrading of skills for those who were unfortunately laid off also became a reasonably popular movement. It also showed us how much we under-appreciated our secure and free lives we had before March 2020, as well as the relationships and friendships we had with those outside of our household. We also learnt the importance of mental well-being, as many felt stressed and frightened by such an unfamiliar virus. Finally, Singaporeans quickly learnt the nuances of video calling to keep in touch with friends and family, while students learnt to attend e-lessons and complete lessons on various e-platforms for Home Based Learning(HBL).

To conclude, despite this pandemic having devastating effects in Singapore and the rest of the world, it will serve as a reminder for the people of tomorrow of the need to be prepared for anything, hygiene's importance and nature's powers. Moreover, it taught us many lessons on how inadequately prepared we were for such situations, which will help us to improve our systems in order to prepare for future crises. This period has also made us grateful for our lives before the pandemic, when we were able to travel about freely and interact with others without the worry of catching a deadly virus. We were even able to upgrade ourselves to be more technologically advanced, in order to maintain relationships and be able to continue to progress in students' education through Home Based Learning. The pandemic will have an everlasting impression on Singapore's history, but future generations will hopefully remember this period as the period Singaporeans united to overcome the virus, and not as a period of doom and gloom.