

SPEECH BY MS INDRANEE RAJAH, SECOND MINISTER FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT, AT THE COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY DEBATE ON WEDNESDAY, 4 MARCH 2026, IN PARLIAMENT

Note: New info/announcements in *blue*

Introduction

1. Mr Chairman, I thank Members for their cuts.
2. My speech will cover three broad areas:
 - a. Transforming the Built Environment, or BE, Sector and Strengthening the Pipeline of BE Professionals;
 - b. Governance, Liveability, and Maintenance of Strata Developments; and
 - c. Improving Accessibility of Buildings.

Part 1: Transforming the BE Sector and Strengthening the Pipeline of BE Professionals

3. We have many exciting plans for our city. Last December, we gazetted our Master Plan, which lays out the blueprint for the development of Singapore over the next 10 to 15 years.
 - a. We will construct Changi Airport Terminal 5, redevelop Paya Lebar Air Base (PLAB) into a new-generation town, unlock the potential of the Greater Southern Waterfront (GSW), and create Long Island to build homes and enhance coastal protection along the East Coast.
 - b. We will build at least 80,000 new homes across more than 10 new housing areas islandwide over the next 10 to 15 years.
 - c. We will expand our rail network by over 100 km and lay out over 50 km of new park connectors by the 2030s, to create a more connected, sustainable, and liveable Singapore.

Strengthening the Pipeline of BE Professionals

4. To accomplish our ambitious development plans, we will need many more architects, engineers, quantity surveyors, project managers, builders, and other skilled professionals.
 - a. We estimate that over the next decade, we will need at least 1,000 new architects and engineers per year to join the sector and contribute towards Singapore's development.

- b. Hence, young people who are looking for future careers with strong growth prospects and rewarding career development pathways with meaning and purpose should consider the BE sector.
- c. Our distinctive city skyline, our iconic buildings like Jewel and MBS, every HDB flat housing a family, every MRT station connecting communities, every school nurturing the next generation – are all legacies of the BE professionals whose work has left a lasting impact on our people's lives.
- d. And in a time of climate change, it is the BE professionals who will be the vanguard in the battle for sustainability.

Taskforce for Architectural and Engineering Consultants

- 5. In 2024, we set up the Taskforce for Architectural and Engineering Consultants, co-chaired by Mr Chaly Mah, Chairman of the SJ Group and myself.
- 6. Last year, the Taskforce completed its work and launched a suite of 11 recommendations to strengthen the BE pipeline and its transformation.
- 7. Today, I am pleased to share the strong industry response and tangible progress achieved to date.

Progress in Making BE Careers the Careers of Choice

- 8. **To deepen on-the-job learning, improve mentorship, and enable higher starting salaries, we have launched an enhanced internship programme called “INSPIRE”.**
 - a. Its key features include Interactive Mentorship, Structured Learning, Purposeful Tasks, Innovative Solutions, and Rewarding Experience – hence “INSPIRE”.
 - b. Under INSPIRE, the internships will be extended to minimally 30 weeks and are structured to help interns develop key technical and soft skills. The internship can be done over multiple stints with the same firm, without delaying graduation timelines.
 - c. Dedicated mentors will guide interns and provide advice in areas such as career development and excelling in the workplace.
 - d. Firms will also offer a higher internship allowance of at least \$1,500, and a higher starting salary above market rate if the intern joins them after graduation.
 - e. The industry has responded positively. Firms like PH Consulting, DCA Architects, and Aedas, have committed to the programme.
- 9. SJ Group has onboarded six interns who have started their internships since January 2026.

- a. Among them is Charlotte Chan, a third-year Civil Engineering student from the Nanyang Technological University. She opted for the 30-week INSPIRE internship rather than the standard 20-week internship.
 - b. Charlotte was motivated by the opportunity to contribute more to projects and deepen her learning experience. She has expressed appreciation for her supervisor's dedicated mentorship and the higher allowance that INSPIRE interns receive.
10. The number of participating firms is expected to grow as more industry players recognise the value of nurturing interns with strong workforce readiness.
11. As the INSPIRE internship will deepen skills acquisition, the Professional Engineers Board (PEB) and the Board of Architects (BOA) will recognise this pre-graduation experience as qualifying practical experience towards professional registration.
12. Beyond fresh graduates, the PEB and the BOA will recognise relevant business and leadership related courses as part of the Continuing Professional Development framework, to encourage our practising professionals to strengthen business capabilities and acumen.

Early Indications of Outcomes of Branding Efforts

13. Industry branding efforts are also showing early results.
 - a. Through the BuildSG Marketing Campaign, we worked closely with industry leaders, Trade Associations and Chambers, working professionals, students, and the public to position the sector as a career of choice.
 - b. Over the past academic year, there has been an increase in students applying for and enrolling in architecture and civil engineering courses.
 - c. We will press on with efforts to attract our fair share of the best and the brightest to join the BE sector.

Next Phase of Work to Strengthen BE Professional Pipeline

14. For our next phase, we will work on uplifting the quantity surveying profession.
15. Quantity surveyors, or QSEs, sit at the intersection of engineering, finance, and law and they play critical roles in the smooth delivery of projects. Their expertise lies in managing contracts and project costs within the consultant team.
16. As QSEs' work will be increasingly automated with technology, the quantity surveying profession will need to redefine its role and provide more value-added services to stay relevant. This requires the quantity surveying profession to build new competencies, master new technologies, and strengthen the talent pipeline.

17. [New] We have established a workgroup to look into this, comprising QS representatives, service buyers, the Institutes of Higher Learning (IHL), and relevant agencies.
18. The QS workgroup will consult stakeholders widely and make recommendations to uplift and future-proof the QS profession. I encourage everyone to share your feedback and suggestions with us.

Continued Transformation of the BE Sector

19. Mr Henry Kwek asked about how we intend to increase productivity and be more pro-enterprise for the BE sector, and Ms Lee Hui Ying asked about our long-term plans to support the growth of the construction industry through infrastructure, manpower and talent. These are pertinent questions that highlight the need for the continued transformation of the BE sector.
20. The Members also raised valid concerns regarding growing cost pressures and supply chain volatility. We hear your concerns and are taking several steps to address them.
- a. First, we recognise that contractors need greater visibility of key cost drivers to plan effectively. The Government is working closely across agencies to improve forward projections and coordination for critical resources, including soil disposal capacity and dormitory supply.
 - b. Additionally, we will explore how to provide the industry with more regular updates on the timeline of major infrastructure projects to support more informed project planning decisions.
21. Minister Chee earlier shared about our plans to help the wider BE sector save time, cost, and manpower through the Action Team to improve BE productivity. Let me build on this with a few examples by various stakeholders that complement these initiatives.
22. First, we have enhanced our procurement and regulatory frameworks.
- a. Following the successful pilot of the “Reduced Fee Score”, or RFS, BCA has expanded the RFS to cover public sector projects up to \$100 million since December 2025, to discourage fee-diving and put greater emphasis on quality-based procurement.
 - b. The early results are promising – out of 11 tenders using the RFS since 2024, 10 were awarded to bids with the highest quality scores.
 - c. The Limitation of Liability clause is now a default provision in the Standard Consultancy Agreement between Government Procuring Entities and consultants. This enables fairer risk allocations and allows consultants to be better insured against professional liabilities.

- d. We hear Ms Lee Hui Ying's suggestion to review the liability framework for contractors, to ensure robust safety standards while allowing the industry to operate productively. BCA will continue to work closely with contractors and refresh our policies taking into consideration industry feedback.

Building a Culture of Appreciation, Respect and Empathy

- 23. **Second, we have launched the Built Environment Culture of Appreciation, Respect and Empathy (BE CARE) Charter.** The Charter outlines best practices to develop more collaborative relationships amongst project teams and strengthen workplace well-being. Over 50 firms and service buyers have committed to it since September 2025.
- 24. Arup Singapore is a good example of how the BE CARE spirit can be translated in practical actions.
 - a. Arup promotes a culture where employees feel safe to speak-up and raise concerns.
 - b. It has put in place frameworks for staff to escalate issues or seek support from the leadership and People team, including anonymous hotline and whistleblower channels.
 - c. For project meetings, Arup practises smart communication by planning clear meeting agendas and involving only relevant participants.
 - d. Staff also respect one another's rest periods by scheduling after-hours emails and having structured handovers before leave days.
 - e. These are simple practices but make a difference in creating a culture that supports staff wellbeing.
- 25. I encourage more firms to come onboard to collectively improve the BE workplace culture.

Leveraging technology

- 26. **Third, we are making progress in leveraging technology.** Architectural firms are embracing Artificial Intelligence (AI) to transform work processes.
 - a. DP Architects has founded a technology startup, Spatial Intelligence for Design (SID), which is developing AI solutions for the industry.
 - b. We encourage more firms to seize the new opportunities that arise as more technologies mature. Interested firms may tap on the Productivity Solutions Grant, or PSG, or the Built Environment Technology and Capability Grant for support.
 - c. The new PSG tranche will expand support to more solutions, including AI and advanced equipment, such as Robotics and Automation, including remote-

controlled machineries and inspection and imaging equipment, which have shown encouraging productivity gains.

Uplifting TACs' capabilities

27. **Fourth, Trade Associations and Chambers have ramped up efforts to support their member firms and drive industry transformation in various areas.**

- a. For example, the Singapore Institute of Architects (SIA) will be developing an employment resource guide, which includes structured courseware and practical workshops, for SIA member firms.
- b. This initiative equips Human Resource officers with the skills to better define job roles and chart career progression pathways across the firm.
- c. This will enable firms to attract suitable talent and better craft employment contracts, as well as support employees in their career development.

28. These are some of the efforts to implement the Taskforce's recommendations to transform the BE sector. Our work does not end here. Moving ahead, we look forward to higher participation by even more stakeholders and greater momentum. The Government will also continue to review our policies in partnership with the industry to further improve BE productivity.

Part 2: Governance, Liveability, and Maintenance of Strata Developments

29. Now let me turn to our plans to improve governance, liveability and maintenance in condominiums and other strata developments.

Strengthening management of strata developments

30. As strata developments age, Management Corporations Strata Title, or MCSTs, and unit owners have expressed concerns about rising maintenance costs, ageing facilities, and the challenges of collective decision-making to make improvements. We must address these to ensure that these developments continue to be liveable and meet residents' needs, especially for our seniors.

31. **[New] We are undertaking a comprehensive review to strengthen the Building (Strata Management) Act. We will focus on four key areas:**

- a. First, helping MCSTs work towards accumulating adequate sinking funds for essential maintenance, repairs, or upgrades;
- b. Second, reducing consent thresholds for essential works;
- c. Third, strengthening self-governance frameworks to promote fair and efficient management of estates; and

- d. Fourth, clarifying the responsibilities of strata-titled stakeholders.
32. **Let me elaborate on our proposed enhancements to steer MCSTs to maintain adequate sinking funds.**
- a. Today, many MCSTs only start collecting funds for lift replacement when the ageing lifts start to experience wear and tear and parts become obsolete. If the MCSTs do not have sufficient sinking funds, they will need to collect special levies from unit owners, which may not be an insignificant sum, and for which the owners may not be prepared. This can be avoided if the MCSTs start building up the funds earlier.
 - b. To have some oversight over MCSTs' financial planning, we are exploring requiring MCSTs to submit and publish key information about their budgets and finances in a standard format. This would make it easier for unit owners and prospective buyers to understand and track the financial health and sinking fund adequacy of the MCSTs.
33. **On strengthening governance, we are studying measures to prevent gaming of voting systems.**
- a. We have received feedback on situations where a small group collects many proxy votes and controls decisions in the development. This may not necessarily reflect the best interests of the majority of owners.
 - b. We are therefore considering limiting the percentage of total proxies which can be held by each household and ensuring that Council Members undergo proper training.
 - c. These changes aim to make estate management fairer and more efficient.
34. BCA has been engaging strata stakeholders on some of these proposed amendments since June 2025, through platforms such as focus group discussions. **[New] To build on this, we will conduct public consultations from 9 March to 8 April 2026.** We strongly encourage residents of strata developments to provide your feedback. This review will strengthen our strata management framework, to ensure that private residential developments remain well-maintained, accessible, and liveable.

Part 3: Improving Accessibility of Buildings

35. We are studying measures to improve the safety and accessibility of our buildings and infrastructure.

Enhancements to lift and escalator systems

36. **[New] One area that we are looking into is enhancing the safety of older lifts and escalators.**

37. We are reviewing measures to ensure that ageing lifts and escalators keep pace with modern safety standards, such as through the inclusion of features that regulate their speed and movement. We are also exploring providing co-funding support for select essential safety features to eligible private building owners and operators. We will share more details when ready.

Enhancements to the Accessibility Fund (AF)

38. As our population ages, our accessibility needs will increase. Many buildings were built in the earlier years when accessibility standards were less well developed.
39. Introduced in 2007, the Accessibility Fund, or AF, provides co-funding to encourage private building owners to upgrade their properties with accessibility and universal design features.
40. **[New] MND is reviewing potential enhancements to the AF to better support our seniors, persons with disabilities and families to navigate their living environment more safely, including in private developments.**
41. Currently, active ageing and dementia-friendly features are not eligible for funding under the AF.
 - a. Under the review, we will consider expanding AF funding to cover senior-related features, such as senior-friendly fitness stations and dementia-friendly signages.
 - b. These enhancements aim to create living spaces that enable seniors to stay mobile and physically active, and continue living comfortably in familiar surroundings as they age.
42. To encourage more buildings to pursue upgrades in line with the latest accessibility codes, we are also exploring expanding the AF eligibility to include more private buildings, beyond those built before the implementation of the 1990 and 2013 Code on Accessibility.
43. To boost participation and reduce the cost for private developments, we are also reviewing the amount of co-funding support. Details will be announced in due course.

Conclusion

44. The initiatives I have outlined today reflect our unwavering commitment to build a better Singapore for all generations, present and future.
45. As we build tomorrow's Singapore together, we do so with confidence that our investments today will create a built environment that is world-class in standards and deeply rooted in our values of inclusivity, safety, and excellence. This is how we ensure that Singapore remains a place every citizen will be proud to call home.

+++