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NTUC President K Thanajetchimi leading the recital of the May Day resolution at the annual May Day Rally in Downtown East. In his May Day Rally speech, Prime Minister Lawrence Wong said that "together, unions and employers can drive AI adoption for stronger growth and better jobs for our workers". ST PHOTO: SHINTARO TAY

Govt can't protect every job in AI shift, but will protect every worker: PM Wong

Company training committees to be scaled up across various sectors and firms

Ng Wei Kai
 Correspondent

As artificial intelligence disrupts entire industries, the Government may not be able to protect every job — but it will protect every worker, said Prime Minister Lawrence Wong.

To aid the AI transition, Singapore plans to scale up company training committees (CTCs) across various sectors and companies, he said at the annual May Day Rally on May 1.

An NTUC initiative first mooted in February 2019, these committees bring together a company's management and union representatives to figure out what skills employees need as businesses evolve, and to plan the training and job changes that follow. More than 3,800 have been formed.

CTCs can apply for funding through grants that support up to 70 per cent of the qualifying cost related to business transformation or training, and these grants have supported more than 900 projects as at 2026.

Because the CTC model has worked and delivered concrete results, the Government can take it further, said PM Wong. He noted that with AI, there is no one-size-fits-all solution as every sector is unique and companies face differ-

ent constraints. "But together, unions and employers can drive AI adoption for stronger growth and better jobs for our workers," he said.

That is also why the Government, the National Trades Union Congress and the Singapore National Employers Federation have set up the Tripartite Jobs Council, PM Wong said.

Announced the day before the rally, the council is meant to bring together resources, coordinate efforts and guide the AI transition. It will also ensure that the national push for AI "will always benefit workers", he said.

Describing AI as the "defining technology of our time", PM Wong said its impact on workplaces will be much greater than previous waves of technological transformation.

Jobs will change, some will disappear, and the pace of change will be faster than anything Singapore has seen before, he told more than 1,600 union leaders and attendees at the rally in Downtown East.

"I cannot promise that there will be no disruption," he said. "But this I can promise you: As our economy transforms, we will create new and better jobs. We may not be able to protect every job, but we will protect every worker."

PM Wong said the Government will provide the tools, pathways and support for workers to use AI.

"But we also need Singaporeans to step forward. Do not let anxiety or uncertainty hold you back from learning and using AI," he said, urging people to master the technology.

Companies that embrace AI will stay competitive, and workers who build AI skills will have better op-



PM Wong was moved to tears as he read out a letter published in The Straits Times, written by a Singaporean who was on a repatriation flight from the Middle East carried out by the Republic of Singapore Air Force. ST PHOTO: GAVIN FOO

BETTER OPPORTUNITIES

Our goal is clear: To build deep AI capabilities; to drive adoption across our economy; and to make Singapore a hub for AI innovation. But ultimately, our key objective is to ensure that AI benefits every worker — with better jobs and better opportunities.

PRIME MINISTER LAWRENCE WONG

portunities and prospects, he added. Singapore will take deliberate steps to ensure the benefits of AI are shared by all, said PM Wong as

he outlined several moves to strengthen support for workers.

One of them is combining two government agencies overseeing skills upgrading into a new agency known as the Skills and Workforce Development Agency, he said.

The Government is also strengthening the SkillsFuture movement, and has implemented a support scheme for those who are involuntarily unemployed, he added. PM Wong said many Singaporeans have told him they want to do more with AI, but they just do not know where to start.

That is why the Government is providing additional support, he added. "That is our commitment to Singaporeans. You make the effort, and we will be there for you — every step of the way."

He said that labour chief Ng Chee Meng will set out NTUC's plans to help workers when Parliament sits next week, and the Government "will support this important work".

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S'pore must brace itself for difficult times, but Govt will do more to help if needed: PM

Anjali Raguraman
 Correspondent

Prime Minister Lawrence Wong pledged on May 1 that his Government would do more to help if the present crisis worsened, but cautioned Singaporeans to brace themselves for a more difficult period ahead.

While the Government has moved quickly to put in place an initial response, it expects the situation arising from the conflict in the Middle East to become more challenging over the course of the year, he added.

"And if that happens, we will do more to help you," said PM Wong in his May Day Rally speech.

"Because in times like this, Singaporeans can count on one thing — your Government will act. We will do so decisively and we will stand with you, with every Singaporean, every step of the way."

At the same time, the Republic can look ahead with quiet confidence, he said.

"We do not face this crisis from a position of weakness," he said. "Singapore is better prepared and in a much stronger position today."

It is because of the efforts of workers, and the choices the country made decades ago, that Singapore can respond to the crisis from a position of strength, he told more than 1,600 union leaders and tripartite partners at the rally in Downtown East.

The conflict in the Middle East, which began on Feb 28 when the United States and Israel launched an attack on Iran, has forced the near-total closure of the Strait of Hormuz and crippled a large proportion of international trade flows.

Amid this crisis, Singapore is working closely with like-minded countries to strengthen supply chain resilience and provide mutual support, and is securing supply lines for energy and other essential goods, said PM Wong.

At the same time, the Government is stepping up support for Singaporeans and acted early in April to roll out a support package, he said.

Close to \$1 billion was set aside to cushion the impact of price increases for households and businesses, and provide broader support.

This includes help for businesses most affected by higher energy prices. It also includes U-Save rebates, higher cash payouts and the bringing forward of a CDC voucher disbursement.

PM Wong encouraged companies to do what they can to support workers and help ease the burden on Singaporeans.

This ability to operate from a position of strength was built up over time, he noted.

Hard choices were made early — Singapore managed its finances prudently and built up its reserves, he added.

It also worked to strengthen its energy resilience, such as by reclaiming land to build Jurong Island and developing its refining and petrochemical industries. Underground storage was also created in the Jurong Rock Caverns.

PM Wong said: "We had no oil, no natural gas and no guarantee

that any of this would work. But we pressed on and we built something that did not exist."

Today, Singapore is a key node in global energy flows, and this gives the country a significant advantage, he said.

With the world's leading energy companies refining, storing and trading oil here, Singapore is connected to diverse supply networks, which means that when one source is disrupted, others can be drawn on.

"That is the advantage we have built over decades — not by chance, but through deliberate choices, sustained effort and discipline," PM Wong said. "We made this happen together."

None of this runs on its own — behind all of it are the workers here, he said.

He reiterated that the Middle East crisis will not be over any time soon.

"We did well last year. But there is no time to rest. Unfortunately, the first storm has not passed fully. And already, another storm is upon us — and this one is more severe," he said.

Besides supply disruptions persisting and potentially worsening, as well as inflation on essentials like food and energy rising globally, he warned that some economies may well slip into recession.

"Singapore will feel the impact directly," he said, adding that growth in 2026 will slow and inflation will be higher. All this will put pressure on businesses, workers and households.

He also cautioned that even after the Strait of Hormuz returns, it will not be an immediate return to normal as ports and energy infrastructure have been damaged and shipping lanes will need to be cleared of mines.

Confidence that it is safe for ships to sail through must be restored, he said.

"These things do not recover overnight. It will take months at least before the situation stabilises."

As he concluded his speech, PM Wong said the road ahead with conflict, disruption and rapid technological change will not be easy.

"We are and will always be a small nation — exposed, vulnerable, with little margin for error. But what defines Singapore is this: We do not give up. We do not abandon one another," he said.

He was moved to tears as he read out a forum letter published in The Straits Times in March, written by a Singaporean who was on a repatriation flight from the Middle East carried out by the Republic of Singapore Air Force.

Mr Nisar Keshvani had recalled how, in a moment of solidarity, applause broke out when the plane lifted off and passengers joined in singing Majulah Singapura.

The words "welcome home" were a promise, he wrote in the letter. "That wherever Singaporeans may be in the world, our nation will look after its own. And that is a promise worth protecting — generation after generation."

PM Wong pledged that no Singaporean would be left behind: "Whether it is an energy crisis or the AI revolution — we will look after our own."

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