

**SPEECH BY 2M INDRANEE RAJAH**  
**AT THE SINGAPORE INSTITUTE OF ARCHITECTS 59TH ANNUAL DINNER**

A very good evening to everyone. It is a great pleasure to be here this evening to celebrate the 59th anniversary of the Singapore Institute of Architects (SIA) with all of you.

We have all just come through a very difficult two years with the pandemic. COVID-19 was especially hard-hitting for the Built Environment sector, including architects. However, we have managed to come through because of our resilience as a people and as a nation, and because of the trust between people and government as well as our sense of looking out for each other.

We have emerged from the pandemic to face a changed world, one marked by new challenges, including: An increasing fraught geo-political global environment, precipitated by the Russian-Ukraine conflict, protracted supply chain disruptions, and inflationary pressures.

The task before us is how to bring Singapore forward, to tackle not just these immediate challenges but also to forge a strong future out of the crucible of these difficult times and ensure that there is a bright tomorrow for this and younger generations.

To this end, the 4G team, as you all know, has launched the Forward Singapore exercise. I just wanted to introduce it, because I think many of you would have heard about it, read about it in the newspapers, but what is it exactly. The aim of Forward Singapore is to refresh our social compact, to bridge gaps, to tackle longer term issues like an ageing population, a falling birth rate, inequality, climate change and to build a sustainable and resilient city that is inclusive. Above all, Forward Singapore is not just an exercise for government alone. It is something that the 4G team feels strongly must be done with Singaporeans. This future is something we must build together, with contributions and ideas from all.

With this in mind, Forward Singapore has 6 pillars. To equip and empower Singaporeans to take advantage of the opportunities ahead; to care for our Singaporeans' needs; build a better home; steward our shared resources; and foster a stronger, more united society.

I welcome the architectural community's participation in all the pillars of Forward Singapore. For tonight's purpose, however, let me touch on the "Build" pillar under Forward Singapore, because obviously that is the most relevant to your skillsets and expertise. The Build pillar will look at how we can transform our living environment and build a more liveable and inclusive home. Achieving this vision will be a collective effort, and your expertise is vital in reshaping Singapore's future landscape and Singaporeans' quality of life. Together, we can foster a new social compact with the Government, businesses, and individuals, and collectively build the future Singapore that we want to see. This is also a good chance for the Built Environment sector – including architects – to reinvent yourselves and prepare to capitalise on emerging opportunities.

## **A Future Brimming with Opportunities**

Architects will play a critical role in shaping our urban environment and there will be many opportunities for you to contribute your skills and expertise in large-scale redevelopment and urban rejuvenation. For example, the Long-Term Plan Review, URA partnered with SIA to come up with the concept plans for the Paya Lebar Airbase area. We also have a pipeline of developments over the next decade and beyond, such as Punggol Digital District and Greater Southern Waterfront. In the new towns which we will build from scratch, there are endless possibilities for you to dream, design and innovate.

The SG Green Plan is another area in which architects can make a significant contribution. Our buildings cause over 20% of Singapore's carbon emissions. Hence, greening our buildings is crucial to further decarbonise our built environment and support our climate ambition of achieving a low carbon Built Environment. Even as we build more, we need to build more sustainably.

You can help save the future by designing greener and more sustainable buildings, including incorporating passive design solutions like natural ventilation to reduce energy demand from air-conditioning systems, renewable energy technologies, such as rooftop solar panels, and greenery in high-rise developments to reduce urban heat and bring us closer to nature.

Sustainability is a key growth area for Singapore and for our professional service. Beyond the Built Environment sector, there is scope for closer collaboration between all Professional Services, to reap new synergies and capture opportunities together. As part of the Professional Services Industry Transformation Map, we will be initiating engagement with various professional services, including the architects, engineers and consultants. Through the engagement, we hope to better understand how the Government can facilitate capability development and knowledge sharing across disciplines and sectors, in this growth area.

The opportunities are not limited to Singapore. Even as we grow capabilities to meet our domestic needs, I encourage all of you to look beyond our shores. There is growing regional demand for professional services that support sustainability, given the region's infrastructure needs and complexity of projects that require stakeholders across different disciplines. We must seize these opportunities.

In this endeavour, you will not have to journey alone. The Government will support you in the drive to access overseas markets. There are existing resources and networks you can tap on. For instance, Infrastructure Asia's regional network offers the opportunity for Singapore-based urban solutions to be matched with regional infrastructure projects.

With imagination, tenacity and effort, I have every confidence that our local architectural industry can break new ground and distinguish itself from the competition, to grow Singapore's overseas presence.

## **Uplifting the Architectural Profession**

SIA has shared with us some of the challenges faced by the architectural community. We hear you. Rest assured that the Government will continue to partner you to address these.

First, one feedback was that architects should be equitably remunerated for their efforts and expertise. We agree. Tender awards should not be a race to the bottom. Today, our government consultancy tenders already focus more on quality than price, with a minimum “Quality” weightage of at least 70%. Majority of tenders are also not awarded to bids with the lowest fees, but to bids with the highest Quality scores. To ensure more equitable contracting practices and remuneration for public sector projects, we are also reviewing our standard consultancy agreements. Areas under review include providing clearer distinction between base and additional works that may arise unexpectedly during the project, as well as articulating a clearer definition of a payment schedule for consultants. SIA is also exploring a Value Articulation Framework, which aims to allow clients to better understand the expertise and value-add that architects bring to the table.

Second, the profession is facing difficulties in retaining architectural talents. This is a complex issue that requires us – not just the Government but also architectural firms and the Built Environment sector as a whole – to come together to address.

For a start, employers should continue to support employees. For instance, by reviewing the career progression frameworks within their firms to make these more structured and transparent, and supporting the professional growth and well-being of all employees through mentorship programmes or facilitating flexible work arrangements. Employers also play a key role in ensuring that your staff continue to maintain industry-relevant skills amidst industry transformation.

The Government will work in tandem to support you. BCA has developed a Skills Framework for the Built Environment sector that can guide firms in identifying skill gaps for workers. These can help companies as they chart out the career and training pathways for their employees. At the same time, BCA is working to identify areas for improvement in the Human Resources (HR) in Built Environment firms, to uplift their HR maturity.

If we work collectively and collaboratively to address the issues faced by your profession, I am confident that we will continue to have a strong pipeline of local architectural talent in the years to come.

## **Conclusion**

So, in conclusion, let me thank SIA for your invaluable contributions for the past 59 years.

Through those years, SIA has taken the lead to level up the architectural profession, by leading Singapore’s presentation at the 12th Venice Biennale International Architecture Exhibition, conducting courses to raise the standard of architecture, and partnering the Government in various urban design projects.

SIA has also promoted excellence and innovation in architectural design by conferring the SIA Architectural Design Awards, which will be given out later this evening.

The Government remains committed to work in close partnership with your architectural community so that we can tap on emerging opportunities.

To signal our partnership and commitment to work closely together, URA has joined SIA as an Allied Professional Member and signed a Memorandum of Understanding with SIA to promote a vibrant design culture and design conscious society, champion quality architecture and built environment, and to work together to develop design capabilities amongst Singapore architects.

BCA too will be signing an MOU with SIA in the coming weeks, which will build on our strong partnerships, to rebrand the sector and create a more progressive future for the architectural industry.

I look forward to our continued partnership and creating a Singapore that is even more beautiful, liveable and sustainable than it is today.

Thank you all very much.