



要闻

新加坡

中国

国际

挽词

万字票头奖 3837 刊17页

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对企业是祸是福? 财经特稿 28



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资媒局首份应用商店网安评估显示, 苹果、谷歌、华为、微软和三星应用商店基本防护到位, 但仍有改进空间。新闻 6

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# 早报 星期天

南洋·星洲 联合早报

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## 能源局：印尼天然气减供不到我国日需2%

我国有足够供应确保电力稳定

印尼从昨天起对我国每日削减310亿英热单位的天然气。能源局强调, 我国具备应对供应减少的机制, 例如近几个月因维护出现的减供, 都由其他气源填补, 没有对国人造成冲击。

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印度尼西亚以保障国内能源需求为由, 削减对我国的管道天然气供应。新加坡能源市场管理局指出, 削减幅度相当于本地每日天然气需求量不到2%, 并重申我国具备足够能源供应, 可确保全国供电稳定无虞。

印尼上游石油和天然气管道单位 (SKK Migas) 负责人乔科 (Djoko Siswanto) 星期五 (10月23日) 晚向媒体透露, 印尼从星期六 (24日) 起削减对新加坡的天然气供应, 削减量将每日310亿英热单位 (31 bbtud, 约87万7800立方米或636吨)。

其中, 纳土纳产区 (Natuna) 每日削减150亿英热单位, 苏门答腊产区每天减少160亿英热单位。削减的份额将输送至峇淡岛、民丹岛和苏门答腊岛用于当地发电。乔科指出, 只有出口新加坡的天然气受影响, 印尼没有削减对其他国家

的供应。

新加坡能源局星期六答复媒体询问时说, 根据新加坡天然气进口商通报, 来自印尼的管道天然气供应在未来18天将减少共170亿英热单位, 占新加坡每天约1万亿英热单位总需求量的不到2%。

当局透露, 本地进口商将根据合同, 就供应受干扰采取一切相关追索举措。

能源局强调, 我国具备应对供应减少的应急机制, 例如近几个月因定期或临时维护曾出现200亿至1000亿英热单位不等的减供, 但皆由其他气源填补, 没有造成冲击。

发言人说: “新加坡中央燃气机构 (Singapore GasCo) 已做好营运准备, 随时可进口更多液化天然气。”

能源局指出, 除了印尼, 新加坡也从其他国家进口天然气。电力公司必须为发电维持足够的柴油等燃料储备。 “我们因此有足够能源满足全国需求。”



印尼宣布减少纳土纳和苏门答腊两个产区对我国的管道天然气供应。图为纳土纳产区的钻井台。(互联网)

能源局强调, 将继续与业界及合作伙伴共同确保新加坡能源供应可靠和稳定。

### 新印天然气合约后年底到期

新加坡约95%电力靠天然气生产, 而印尼是主要天然气供应方之一。新加坡去年从印尼进口322万吨天然气。新印现有的天然气供应

合约2028年底到期。

随着印尼林火引发的跨境烟霾问题再度引起邻国关切, 雅加达在能源课题上的言论也日渐尖锐。下游产业与能源转型统筹部长巴赫里尔星期三 (21日) 表明, 地缘政治变数与能源安全形势促使政府考虑停止向邻国出口天然气, 以确保“生存并满足国内需求”。

巴赫里尔隔天点名警告, 对于不尊重印尼的国家, 他将“毫不犹豫考虑停止出口”能源。他考虑把目前占总产量30%的出口气源, 更多地留给国内石化与下游工业。

### 学者：含政治与烟霾角力

雅加达帕拿玛地拉大学高级经济学家维查扬托 (Wijayanto)

Samirin) 接受《联合早报》访问时说, 印尼虽面对液化天然气供应短缺, 但从时间点和语境来看, 减少出口的决定受政治考量驱动的成分大过单纯的经济和能源安全考量。

他说: “扩音器外交和随之而来的贸易报复措施对双方都没有好处。在日益脆弱和充满不确定性的全球环境中, 我们实在无法承受制造更多紧张情绪的后果。”

不过他认为, 新印经贸关系密切, 两国不太可能任由此次纠纷升级为一连串报复性措施。

独立智库能源转型研究院 (Energy Shift Institute) 总监普特拉 (Putra Adhiguna) 受访时指出, 印尼推动天然气内销已酝酿多年, 此次对新加坡减供在所难免, 但若减供违反合同条款, 将影响印尼在国际贸易的信誉。

“长远来看, 随着国内需求增加, 我不认为印尼会放宽对天然气出口的限制……考虑到邻国能源生产形势的变化, 新加坡继续维持天然气供应多元化和推动能源转型, 也符合新加坡的自身利益。”

专家：我国有能力  
维持能源供应稳定 刊第4页

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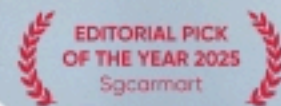


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新闻 NEWS

早报星期天 25.10.2026



傅丽云 pohlin@sph.com.sg

参与新加坡国家建设的尤素夫伊萨东南亚研究院资深顾问陈振忠，从军15年后，先后出任四个部门的常任秘书及巡回大使，一向低调处事。他去年出版新书，记录与已故前副总理吴庆瑞博士共事的经历，广受好评并再版，目前正撰写公务员生涯回忆录。今年是新加坡与日本建交60周年，曾任新加坡驻日大使逾七年的陈振忠，跟记者分享驻日本及公务员生涯的点滴。

这次采访，压力特别大。一来，陈振忠（82岁）是已故前副总理吴庆瑞博士的资深下属；二来，拜读了他的回忆录《使命所在：我在新加坡武装部队的岁月（1967—1982）》，又听了他三个多小时的口述历史档案，对他敬佩不已，担心自己的问题太肤浅，被博学的他反问。

没料到，见面后，他竟说从没接受过专访，对受访感到不自在，让我惊讶得差点从椅子上跌下。

就这样，我们像两个小学生似的，在窗明几净的办公室里正襟危坐，小心翼翼聊了约两个小时。

#### 巧听弦外音促天皇访新 为纳丹总统访日本铺路

2004年，陈振忠出任驻日大使。其实，陈振忠与日本的渊源，可追溯至1974年10月，当时他与另外五名新加坡武装部队军官赴日本，参加关于日本在第二次世界大战战役的特别培训。

上任前，陈振忠拜会时任总统纳丹，纳丹希望在陈振忠任职期间能够对日本进行国事访问。

日本一年只接受一两次国事访问，通常来自大国或以王室成员为国家元首的国家，因此像新加坡这样的小国，获邀进行国事访问的机会很小。

国事访问的安排包括让国宾下榻赤坂离宫，并由天皇和皇后设国宴款待；官方访问则只安排觐见天皇和皇后，以及由他们设午宴款待。

陈振忠在口述历史中提到，日本人原本把东南亚视为一个“沙拉碗”，而新加坡是一颗可以随意舍弃的“小辣椒”。

要日本外务省或官内厅改变既定的立场非常困难，陈振忠不选择硬碰硬，而是设法从别处寻找突破口。

一天，陈振忠的好友、时任日本皇室礼宾总管的川岛裕（Yutaka Kawashima）吃晚餐。川岛裕以日本式的含蓄方式透露，天皇即将访问泰国和马来西亚。

陈振忠听懂了弦外之音，便顺势提出，为什么不也包括新加坡？川岛裕听后点了点头。

意识到这是争取天皇访新的机会后，陈振忠隔天便致信日本外务省，转达新加坡政府的邀请，希望天皇在访问泰国和马来西亚期间，也访问新加坡。

后来，日本天皇在2006年顺利访新。这次访问为2009年我国总统回访铺路，纳丹因此成为首位到日本进行国事访问的新加坡总统。

这打破了日本官僚原本认为“新加坡太小，不值得给予国事访问规格”的心理障碍。

纳丹也接受陈振忠的建议访问了广岛和平纪念馆，成为当时首位到访这个纪念公园的外国国家元首。这个举动向日本传递一个微妙却重要的信息：新加坡能够把战争历史，与对日本平民遭受原子弹轰炸苦难的同情区分开来。这个姿态后来也得到日方重视。

## 从外交风波到酒店倒塌救援 预案与演练是危机应对关键

任职内政部11年，陈振忠曾面对一连串牵动国家安全和秩序秩序的棘手局面：让非法外劳自首的特赦计划演变成外交难题，以及新世界酒店倒塌后的人命救援。

1988年至1989年间，政府察觉新加坡有大量非法外劳，原本估计只有数千人。因无法逐一搜捕，当局决定提供特赦，鼓励违法外劳主动登记，再遣返回国。

结果，登记人数近1万人。人数之多，连民防部队的营地都被用来安置他们。

陈振忠回忆，当时泰国政府对新加坡把泰国公民“一网打尽并集中关押起来”，非常愤怒，甚至一度威胁派军舰前来；最终，泰方派船把这些工人接回国。

政府发现，单纯监禁对非法外劳的

威慑力不足，于是引入鞭刑，加上强力执法，遏制屡犯的非入境和逾期逗留者。

#### 推动消防局与民防团合并

此外，陈振忠在内政部的另一项重大任务，是推动消防局与民防团合并。当时消防局高度工会化，对合并强烈抗拒。陈振忠说，幸好时任内政部长贾古玛给予极大支持，他便放手推进。

民防改革也让他把军中的经验带进文官体系。他强调，应急部门最重要的是预案和训练，让每个人在危机发生时知道的角色。

1984年至1986年间，民防部队训练了一些准军事单位掌握基本救援技能，后来在1986年新世界酒店倒塌事故中派上用场。



早人物

## 硬实力是谈判王牌 外交素人悟出真谛 前常秘及驻日大使陈振忠



▲陈振忠（后排右二）排行老三，有两姐三妹一弟。父亲陈启方（前排右一）曾任警队副探长。这是一家九口的全家福。（受访者提供）

陈振忠指出，要赢得大国以及其他国家尊重，新加坡必须在经济和政治上都取得成功。

#### 福岛核灾期间使馆选择留守

他也观察到日本人对完美的追求和极致的细节关注。一次，时任总理李显龙出席官方晚宴，第一道菜上桌时，左撇子的他，把筷子移到左边。一名十分细心的女侍者，在第二道菜上桌时，已悄悄把餐具调整成左撇子规格。

李总理后来向陈振忠感叹：他们真的太观察入微！

陈振忠认为，日本人追求完美的精神值得人们学习，尤其是在汽车业和制造业等讲求精准、注重细节的领域。

2011年福岛核灾期间，他见识到日本社会在危机中的克制与自律：灾区

没有发生哄抢或盗窃，即使有人在受损房屋或床垫底下发现现金和贵重物品，也不会取走，反而有人上报。

“假设新加坡发生这种灾难性的危机，你认为，我们会拥有同样程度的公民温和性吗？他们不一样，完全不同。”

地震、海啸和核事故发生后，一些外国使馆撤离东京；在缺乏信息的情况下，新加坡使馆不能轻举妄动，因此选择留守。

#### 从军旅转战文官体系 先后出任多部门常秘

“我想，日本政府和人民非常感激那些跟他们一同留下的人，但同时，我们也做好撤离在日新加坡人的准备。”

陈振忠的父亲陈启方曾任警队副探长，负责管理约15名便衣探员。父

亲任职的年代社会治安混乱，也把一些生存技能教给七个孩子：他们住在牛车水，一听见街上有人大喊大叫，会马上跑进路边的中药铺或杂货铺躲起来，因为喊叫声意味随时会有私会党火拼。

1967年，陈振忠考获新加坡大学（新加坡国立大学前身）历史系一等荣誉学位，加入行政服务五个月后即被征召入伍，服役三年，1970年9月退役。随后，他应时任国防部长吴庆瑞邀请投身军旅，1982年以副总参谋长军阶退役。

此后，他从军队跨入文官体系，先后在财政、新闻及艺术和外交部担任常任秘书。2012年他同时受委为巡回大使和尤素夫伊萨东南亚研究院院长，2018年卸下这两个职务后，出任研究院资深顾问。

受批评，最大的政治批评则由时任部长杨荣文承担。

在媒体监管方面，批评主要来自西方媒体，因为他们从理念上反对任何对言论自由的监管。互联网出现后，监管更为复杂。

陈振忠说，新加坡作为全球和金融中心，对内容的管控仅限于象征性限制部分传播色情或伤风败俗内容的媒体，但西方媒体仍不满，认为审查违背互联网所倡导的自由信息流通原则。

中国则曾派团队研究新加坡的监管方式，之后决定审查许多媒体，“犹如筑起一道‘长城’作为防御”。

到了今天，社交媒体无处不在。他认为，保护社会价值观反而更加重要，监管须针对可能损害社会凝聚力、种族和谐及内部安全，以及推动宽松价值观的领域。

## 从新马水务谈判 看李光耀守原则

1997年调到外交部当常任秘书时，陈振忠听到一个传言：这个“外交素人”干不过一年。

没想到，这位毫无外交背景的“外来者”，不但在外交部任职至2004年，大刀阔斧完善制度，还一度临危受命，意外被推上新马水务谈判桌，近距离观察到建国总理李光耀处理国事的一面。

陈振忠在国家档案馆的口述历史中回忆，马凯硕当时原代表新方谈判，但因父亲去世无法赴吉隆坡，陈振忠临时接手。

“幸好，我们的团队非常强大。”他在口述历史中说。

这场谈判一点也不轻松。马来西亚把水价作为谈判筹码，要求大幅调高，甚至以中国卖水给香港的价格作为依据，每千加仑要价1.70元，甚至2元。

新加坡则坚持，水价是两国政府在1965年分家协定（也称1965年新加坡独立协议）的组成部分，必须依照协定及既定公式计算。水价原为3分，即使按公式调整到1997年，也应只是15分左右，而不是1.70元。

双方因此陷入拉锯。

陈振忠在口述历史中提到，谈判期间，时任总理吴作栋宣布新加坡已研发出“新生水”，在一次新马会议上，吴作栋率先示范饮用新生水，也邀请马国代表一起喝。

在陈振忠看来，这件事对谈判产生了“巨大的心理影响”。马来西亚意识到，在水的问题上，他们已经“不再握有王牌”。

“这让我深刻体会到，硬实力对打破谈判僵局有多么重要；否则，谈判根本没有出路。”

他受访时回忆，双方前后僵持了约三年；当马来西亚确定新加坡不会同意后，便停止继续推动涨价。

陈振忠也直言谈判背后的现实：“如果你经济不强大，如果没有强大的国防力量，人家就会欺负你。”在他看来，当时马来西亚之所以不敢继续逼迫，是因为担心把新加坡逼得太甚。“我们是做好了与他们对抗的准备”，而马方并不想让事态发展到这一步。

#### 治军经验有助跨部门任职

在外交部负责水务谈判时，他与李光耀的合作非常紧密，“你能亲眼看到，他对新加坡的安全、防务和福祉有着多么强烈的执着”。如果原则上不对，李光耀“绝不妥协”；当马来西亚想任意提高水价时，他会一直与对方硬碰，直到对方放弃。

水务谈判之外，陈振忠也把治军时的系统思想带入外交部，建立职业发展及培训体系。

陈振忠说，他在国防部和新加坡武装部队所接受的训练和积累的经验，对后来在内政部和外交部的工作都大有帮助。

“国防部就像一个‘小型政府’，内部涵盖许多其他政府部门的职能，因此到其他部门任职前很好的历练。”

“我所怀念、也觉得欠缺的，是像吴庆瑞博士这样的政治领袖所发挥的关键作用；当面对官僚体系的阻力时，这样的领导能加快事情进展。”

#### 优居家办公影响团队合作

谈到当年因应新兵语言差异成立福建话排的做法，新一代政治领袖是否仍须像建国一代那样贴近基层实际，陈振忠说，由于实行全民服役制度，武装部队无法决定哪些人会被征召接受军训，因此国防部和武装部队领导层一直必须根据不同类型的新兵，调整训练制度，以达到最有效的训练效果，而成立福建话排就说明这一点。

“从这个意义上说，新一代政治领袖也必须像建国一代那样务实。”

针对目前鼓励居家办公的趋势，他说，居家办公对家庭有好处，但他担心这对组织的长期影响，可能削弱情谊、学习和团队合作。

他说，如何减轻居家办公对组织的影响，要由各部门通过不同方式设法弥补。

## **Former Permanent Secretary and Ambassador to Japan Tan Chin Tiong Diplomatic Outsider Discovers the Core Truth: Hard Capabilities are the Trump Card in Negotiations**

### **【Introduction】**

Mr Tan Chin Tiong, Senior Adviser at the ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute, who has actively participated in Singapore's nation-building, served in the military for 15 years before consecutively serving as the Permanent Secretary of four ministries and as an Ambassador-at-Large. Known for keeping a low profile, he published a book last year documenting his experience working with the late former Deputy Prime Minister Dr Goh Keng Swee. The book was widely acclaimed and went into its second printing; he is currently writing his memoir of his civil service career. This year marks the 60th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Singapore and Japan. Mr Tan Chin Tiong, who served as Singapore's Ambassador to Japan for over seven years, shares stories of his diplomatic tenure in Japan and his civil service career with the reporter.

### **【Main Text】**

This interview came with immense pressure.

Firstly, Mr Tan Chin Tiong (aged 82) was a senior subordinate to the late former Deputy Prime Minister Dr Goh Keng Swee. Secondly, having read his memoir, *A Matter of Duty: A Memoir of My Time in the Singapore Armed Forces (1967–1982)*, and listened to over three hours of his oral history archives, I held him in deep admiration and was worried my questions might be too superficial, leaving me vulnerable to being questioned back by this highly knowledgeable gentleman.

To my surprise, upon meeting, he candidly admitted that he had never been interviewed before and was actually "uncomfortable with" interviews, leaving me so astonished that I almost fell off my chair.

And so, sitting upright like two schoolchildren in his bright, clean office, we cautiously and carefully conversed for about two hours.

### ■ **Astutely Catching the Subtle Hint to Facilitate the Emperor's Visit to Singapore, Paving the Way for President Nathan's Visit to Japan**

In 2004, Mr Tan Chin Tiong was appointed Singapore's Ambassador to Japan. However, Mr Tan's connection to Japan can be traced back further than that to October 1974, when five other SAF officers and he attended a special training session in Japan on the Japanese campaign in World War II.

Before taking up his post, Mr Tan paid a courtesy call on President Nathan who expressed a hope that a State Visit to Japan would take place during his tenure of posting.

Japan only accepted one or two State Visits a year, usually from big countries or those with royalty as Heads of State, which meant that a small country like Singapore stood little chance.

Whereas a State Visit accorded guests accommodation at the Akasaka Palace and a State Banquet hosted by the Emperor and Empress, an Official Visit only accorded a call on the Emperor and Empress and a lunch hosted by them.

Mr Tan mentioned in his oral history that the Japanese originally viewed Southeast Asia as a "salad bowl" and Singapore merely as a dispensable "chili padi."

Changing the established position of the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs or the Imperial Household Agency would be extremely difficult. Rather than going head-to-head, Mr Tan chose to look for a breakthrough elsewhere.

One day, Mr Tan invited his good friend, Yutaka Kawashima, who was then Grand Master of Ceremonies, to dinner. Mr Kawashima subtly hinted in a typically Japanese manner that the Emperor would soon visit Thailand and Malaysia. Noting the subtle hint by Kawashima, Mr Tan used the opportunity to suggest that Singapore be included on the visit list to Thailand and Malaysia. In response to Mr Tan's suggestion, Kawashima nodded his head.

Realising this was an opportunity to secure a visit by the Emperor to Singapore, Mr Tan wrote to the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs the next day conveying an invitation from the Government of Singapore for the Emperor to also visit Singapore during his visit to Thailand and Malaysia.

Subsequently, the Emperor of Japan did indeed visit Singapore in 2006, which paved the way for a reciprocal visit by Singapore's President in 2009, making President Nathan the first Singaporean President to pay a State Visit to Japan. This broke the psychological barrier among Japanese bureaucrats that "Singapore was too small to warrant State Visit status."

President Nathan also accepted his recommendation to visit the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park, becoming the first foreign head of state to visit the site at that time. This gesture conveyed a subtle yet important message to Japan: Singapore could separate the history of war from sympathy for the suffering of Japanese civilians in the atomic bombing. This stance was deeply appreciated by the Japanese side.

Mr Tan noted that to win the respect of major powers and other nations, Singapore must succeed both economically and politically.

He also observed the Japanese pursuit of perfection and extreme attention to detail. On one occasion, during an official banquet attended by then-Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong, PM Lee—being left-handed—moved his chopsticks to his left side after the first course was served. An attentive waitress quietly adjusted his cutlery to left-handed layout when the second course arrived. PM Lee later remarked to Mr Tan: They are truly so observant!

### ■ Singapore Embassy Chose to Stay Behind During the Fukushima Nuclear Crisis

Mr Tan believes that Japan's spirit of pursuing perfection is worthy of our emulation, especially in precision and detail-oriented fields such as the automotive and manufacturing industries.

During the 2011 Fukushima nuclear disaster, he witnessed the restraint and self-discipline of Japanese society during a crisis: no looting or theft occurred in the disaster zone. Even when cash or valuables were found under damaged houses or mattresses, no one took them, and people reported them instead. "If a catastrophic crisis like this were to hit Singapore today, do you think we would possess the same level of civic mindedness? They are different, completely different."

Following the earthquake, tsunami, and nuclear crisis, some foreign embassies evacuated Tokyo. In the absence of clear information, the Singapore embassy decided it should not act rashly and chose to stay behind.

"I think the Japanese government and people very much appreciated those who stayed behind with them, but at the same time, we were prepared to evacuate Singaporeans in Japan."

### ■ Transitioning from the Military to the Civil Service, Successively Serving as Permanent Secretary in Multiple Ministries

Mr Tan's father, Tan Khye Hong, served as a deputy sub-inspector (Deputy Detective Inspector) in the police force, supervising about 15 detective officers. During an era of social disorder, his father taught his seven children some basic survival skills: living in Chinatown, whenever they heard shouting on the streets, they would immediately run into nearby Chinese medical halls or sundry shops to hide, as shouting meant a clash between secret societies was imminent.

After graduating with a first-class honours degree in History from the University of Singapore (predecessor of the National University of Singapore) in 1967, he joined the Administrative Service. Five months later, he was conscripted into National Service, serving for three years before completing his full-time National Service in September 1970. Subsequently, at the invitation of then-Defence Minister Dr Goh Keng Swee, he embarked on a regular military career in the Singapore Armed Forces (SAF) and retired in 1982 with the rank of Deputy Chief of the General Staff (DCGS).

Thereafter, he transitioned from the military into the civil service, consecutively serving as Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), Ministry of Finance (MOF), Ministry of Information and the Arts (MITA), and Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA). In 2012, he was appointed Director of the ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute and concurrently Ministry of Foreign Affairs Ambassador-at-Large. He stepped down from both positions in 2018 to become Senior Adviser to the Institute.

## **【Sidebar 1】From Diplomatic Spats to Hotel Collapse Rescue: Contingency Plans and Drills are Crucial to Crisis Management**

During his 11-year tenure at the Ministry of Home Affairs, Mr Tan Chin Tiong faced a string of thorny situations that directly impacted national security and public order: an amnesty scheme for unregistered foreign workers that escalated into a diplomatic dilemma, and a life-and-death rescue operation following the collapse of the Hotel New World.

Between 1988 and 1989, the government detected a massive influx of unregistered foreign workers in Singapore, initially estimating the figure to be only a few thousand. Knowing it was impossible to track down and round up everyone individually, the authorities decided to offer an amnesty to encourage illegal workers to register voluntarily before being repatriated.

As it turned out, nearly 10,000 workers registered. The number was so overwhelming that Civil Defence Force camps had to be converted to accommodate them.

Mr Tan recalled that the Thai government was deeply incensed that Singapore had "rounded up and detained" Thai citizens en masse, even threatening at one point to send warships. In the end, the Thai side dispatched ships to collect and transport the workers home.

Realising that mere imprisonment was insufficient deterrence against illegal foreign workers, the government introduced caning alongside rigorous enforcement to curb repeat offences of illegal entry and overstaying.

In addition, another major undertaking for Mr Tan at MHA was driving the merger of the Fire Brigade and the Civil Defence Corps.

At the time, the Fire Brigade was heavily unionised and fiercely resisted the merger. Mr Tan noted that fortunately, then-Minister for Home Affairs S. Jayakumar provided immense backing, allowing him to forge ahead.

The Civil Defence reform also enabled him to bring military-style experience into the civil service. He emphasised that for operational ministries, the most vital element is contingency planning and training, ensuring everyone knows their exact role when a crisis strikes.

Between 1984 and 1986, the Civil Defence Force had trained several paramilitary units in basic rescue skills, which later proved useful during the 1986 Hotel New World collapse.

Back then, Singapore had virtually no precedent for handling structural collapses. Mr Tan swiftly mobilised foreign experts who were assisting the Civil Defence Force to take part in the rescue effort, while on-site rescue personnel also drew on the underground tunneling expertise of engineers building the Mass Rapid Transit (MRT) at the time to locate and clear rescue passages.

Reflecting on these experiences, Mr Tan believes that crisis management goes far beyond spontaneous reaction. While "grasping the situation and acting decisively" is important, what matters even more is preparing contingency plans in peacetime and conducting continuous drills, so that different agencies can coordinate rapidly when an actual crisis strikes.

## ■ Handled Censorship and Media Regulation

In 1993, Mr Tan was appointed Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Finance; when he was transferred to become Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of

Information and the Arts (MITA) in 1995, one of the sensitive issues he confronted was censorship and media regulation.

He explained that any measure to ease censorship had to take into account the sensitivities of different groups, including religious and civic organisations. At the time, officials from MITA and statutory boards were criticised for not fully explaining policy changes, while the brunt of the political criticism was borne by then-Minister George Yeo.

In terms of media regulation, criticism came mainly from Western media, which philosophically opposed any regulation over freedom of speech. With the advent of the Internet, regulation grew even more complicated.

Mr Tan explained that as a global and financial centre, Singapore's content control was limited to symbolically restricting a sampling of outlets which purveyed pornography or loose morals. Even then, Western media was unhappy because censorship went against the principle of free information flow which was the reason for the Internet.

China, on the other hand, had dispatched a team to study Singapore's regulatory model and subsequently decided to censor numerous media outlets, "effectively erecting a 'Great Wall' as a defense."

Today, with social media all-pervasive, he believes safeguarding societal values has become even more critical and needs to be targeted at areas which can hurt social cohesion, racial harmony and internal security, or against the promotion of loose values.

## **【Sidebar 2】From the Singapore-Malaysia Water Negotiations: Witnessing Lee Kuan Yew's Adherence to Principles**

When Mr Tan Chin Tiong was posted to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) as its Permanent Secretary in 1997, he heard a rumour circulating within the ministry: this "diplomatic novice" would not survive a year on the job.

To everyone's surprise, this "outsider" with absolutely no diplomatic background not only helmed the Permanent Secretary post at MFA until 2004—drastically revamping and professionalising its systems—but was also unexpectedly thrust into the hot seat during a crucial juncture of the Singapore-Malaysia water negotiations. This experience afforded him a front-row seat to observe how Lee Kuan Yew handled matters of state.

In his oral history interview with the National Archives of Singapore, Mr Tan recalled that Kishore Mahbubani was originally representing Singapore in the negotiations, but due to his father's passing, he was unable to travel to Kuala Lumpur, and Mr Tan took over at the eleventh hour.

"Fortunately, our team was extremely strong," he reflected in his oral history interview.

The negotiations were far from easy. Malaysia used the water supply as leverage, demanding a massive price increase. They cited the rates Hong Kong paid to China for its water as a benchmark, demanding \$1.70 or even \$2.00 per thousand gallons.

Singapore, however, remained steadfast that the water price was an integral part of the 1965 Separation Agreement (also known as Independence of Singapore Agreement 1965) and must be calculated strictly in accordance with the

agreement's established formulas. By Singapore's calculation, the raw water price was 3 cents, and even if adjusted up to 1997 using the formula, it should only be around 15 cents, not \$1.70.

The two sides locked horns in a protracted stalemate.

Mr Tan noted in his oral history interview that during the negotiations, then-Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong announced that Singapore had successfully developed "NEWater." During a meeting with the Malaysian delegation in Singapore, bottles of NEWater were produced. PM Goh drank it first to set an example and invited the Malaysian representatives to drink it too.

In Mr Tan's view, this episode had a "massive psychological impact" on the talks. The Malaysians realised they "did not hold a trump card" anymore on the water issue.

"This made me profoundly realise how crucial breakthroughs in hard capabilities are to breaking a negotiation deadlock; otherwise, the talks would go nowhere."

Recalling the episode during the interview, he noted that the stalemate dragged on for about three years; once Malaysia was certain Singapore would not agree, they stopped pushing for the price hike.

Mr Tan spoke candidly about the harsh realities underlying diplomacy: "If you are not economically strong, and if you do not have a strong military backup, people will bully you." In his view, what deterred the Malaysian authorities from pushing further was the underlying concern that if they pushed Singapore too far, "we were prepared to fight them," and they did not want to escalate things to that point.

## ■ Military Experience Proved Invaluable Across Ministries

During his water negotiations at MFA, he worked very closely with Lee Kuan Yew. "You could see first-hand how intense he was about Singapore's security, defence, and well-being." If something was unprincipled or wrong, Lee was "completely uncompromising." When the Malaysians tried to arbitrarily raise water prices, he fought them all the way until they stopped.

Apart from the water negotiations, Mr Tan brought the systemic thinking he developed in the military into MFA, establishing career development and training systems.

Mr Tan noted that the training and experience he acquired in MINDEF and the SAF were immensely helpful in his subsequent roles in MHA and other ministries.

"MINDEF was like a mini government with many elements of other ministries in it so a very good training ground for posting in another ministry. What I missed was the pivotal role of a political leader like Dr Goh which can be helpful in expediting things when you face bureaucratic hurdles."

## ■ Worried Work-from-Home May Erode Teamwork

Reflecting on the practice of creating Hokkien-speaking platoons in the early SAF days to address recruits' language barriers, and whether the new generation of political leaders still needs to stay as close to ground realities as the founding generation, Mr Tan said that under universal conscription, the SAF cannot decide who it will enlist for military training. Therefore, the MINDEF and SAF leadership have always had to adjust the training system to be most effective for the different types of recruits enlisted, as exemplified by the introduction of Hokkien-speaking platoons.

"In this sense, the newer generation political leaders will have to be practical like the pioneer generation."

Regarding the current trend of encouraging Work From Home (WFH), he noted that while WFH brings benefits to family life, he worries about its long-term impact on organisations, including comradeship, learning, and teamwork.

He added that how to mitigate the impact of WFH on an organisation is something each organisation must figure out how to compensate for through different means.

As the interview concluded, I, the primary school pupil, had glimpsed so much vivid history and gained immense insight from this "treasure mountain" standing right before me.

Suddenly, I felt as though I had just earned a degree in history — and found myself feeling rather pleased with myself.