

**SPEECH BY MR DAVID CHUA, CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER,
NATIONAL YOUTH COUNCIL,
AT THE PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT SIGNING WITH SINGAPORE
POLYTECHNIC ON THE ASIA-READY EXPOSURE
PROGRAMME ON 18 APRIL 2023**

1 Good afternoon and thank you Mr Soh Wai Wah for the introduction and also the fantastic partnership, which is very important to give all of you the opportunity.

2 I was looking at my script and I decided to ask ChatGPT: “What is your take on opportunities in the ASEAN region?”. It replied: “As an AI Language model, I don't have personal opinions or take on things. However, I can provide you with information and opportunities in the ASEAN region.”

3 I am just going to list out the opportunities quickly:

- (i) ASEAN is a dynamic and diverse region, home to over 600 million people, in a rapidly growing economy. It offers a wealth of opportunities for businesses, investors, and entrepreneurs.

- (ii) One of the key advantages of ASEAN is its strategic location. ASEAN is increasingly becoming a hub for innovation and technology, with a thriving startup ecosystem. This presents opportunities for entrepreneurs and investors looking to tap into the region.

4 I thought the answer was very telling. ASEAN is going to become the fourth largest economy by 2030, according to estimates by *The Economist*. The Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is going to grow and double from today's 4 trillion USD to easily 8 trillion USD.

5 Those are the statistics that are coming in. The US is also sending signals, as they have just passed the Partner with ASEAN Act; it is a clear they value the region as a trading block. This Act gives ASEAN diplomatic rights, and new areas for

cooperation. It will be remiss to miss out on this opportunity. Mr Soh is right when he said: "seize the opportunity".

6 Seizing the opportunity for you may not be about launching a startup or going into the region. It simply starts by signing up for Lex, taking an AEP module, taking a Cert and a Minor in Asia Readiness.

7 Start by gaining and acquiring soft skills and networks through this programme because that will bode well for when you pivot into the workforce. For the guys that are going into NS, these are the things that stay. The knowledge here may be outdated after two years of NS, but the networks, experience and the cultural learnings will stay. That's important and will help you in today's age.

8 The Singapore government is highlighting the importance of continuous learning, reskilling, and upskilling. Upskilling also involves acquisition of soft skills. Those are harder to come by and are learnt beyond the classroom. When your school, an enlightened institution like Singapore Polytechnic, partners with us to build these opportunities, grab it and go out there to experience something different. Even if you don't acquire a skill immediately, you will acquire a war story, something that builds up your own resilience and helps you to confront future uncertainties.

9 Singapore Polytechnic is making sure that 76% of its graduating cohort from the class of 2025 onwards will have exposure to the region. That is an ambitious target, but it is a very progressive goal that aligns with the government's goals and priorities for all youth.

10 You are the ones who would lead our future and I would like to thank Singapore Polytechnic for supporting and backing you every step of the way through this partnership.

11 Thank you very much.

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