

# 'Important to create enough good jobs'

**Iswaran: Govt, industries must help ensure economy remains competitive**

By **TOH YONG CHUAN**  
MANPOWER CORRESPONDENT

SINGAPORE will risk the employment problems currently plaguing Europe if it is unable to create good jobs.

This is why the Government and industries need to keep on their toes, said Minister in the Prime Minister's Office, Mr S. Iswaran, yesterday.

He was addressing around 250 university undergraduates and junior college students in a dialogue on the future of employment here at the Nanyang Technological University.

Singapore's youth unemployment rate is one of the lowest in the world at 6.7 per cent. But in Europe, about a quarter of youth under 25 are unemployed.

This problem of joblessness today "will have a very long tail", said the minister. He explained that unemployed youth miss out

on training and work experience, increasing the likelihood of lower pay later in life.

"Europe's situation is a cautionary tale of what might happen if we are not able to create enough of the right types of jobs for future generations of Singaporeans."

To keep creating good jobs for Singaporeans, Mr Iswaran, who is also the Second Minister for Home Affairs and Trade and Industry, pledged that the Government will continue to diversify the economy by expanding into new high-growth industries.

It will also beef up the sectors where Singapore enjoys a comparative advantage.

And he gave the assurance that lower-income Singaporeans will not be left out of the country's economic growth.

But the Government cannot do it alone.

"Business and entire industries must be willing to restructure,

make better use of technology and tap on new pathways to remain competitive," he said.

He cited the example of how retailers in South Korea transform train station posters into retail points with the use of barcodes, which customers can scan to order items for home delivery.

The minister urged workers to also tap Government programmes to pick up new skills and open up new job opportunities.

One of those at the dialogue was Singapore Management University (SMU) undergraduate Alex Loo, 21, who received a scholarship from the Ministry of Trade and Industry last night to study economics at SMU.

The aspiring economist said Mr Iswaran's assurance to lower-income workers struck a chord.

"In Singapore, our standard of living is high and we can make it better," he said. "But we have to take note of income and social inequality."

[tohy@spk.com.sg](mailto:tohy@spk.com.sg)