

## BUSINESS

100

NUMBER OF TECHNOLOGY STAFF WHICH  
PROPERTY PORTAL I99 GROUP PLANS TO HIRE BY '21

President Halimah Yacob speaking at a dialogue with members of the Singapore Chinese Chamber of Commerce and Industry yesterday. She later said that based on discussions and feedback during the session, companies are exploring new opportunities, such as going online and reaching new markets, especially with government schemes that help them access digital tools and set up e-commerce platforms. PHOTO: MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION

## Businesses exploring new areas of growth during pandemic: Halimah

Sue-Ann Tan

Businesses are concerned about what happens when government support during the coronavirus pandemic tapers off, but they are also using this time to explore opportunities, said President Halimah Yacob yesterday.

She added that firms are also committed to creating an inclusive workforce that is balanced and has a Singaporean core.

Madam Halimah was speaking to reporters after a closed-door dialogue with about 20 members of the Singapore Chinese Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCCI).

The session, held during a business meeting for SCCCI council members, was moderated by SCCCI vice-president Charles Ho.

Madam Halimah said that based on discussions and feedback during the dialogue, companies are concerned about how long government support will continue, and "what happens after the support is

no longer there". "They're aware of the fact that this cannot go on forever, but they also are concerned about how that will impact them – whether there will be recovery in time for them to be able to continue with their business," she said.

But she added that they are also exploring new opportunities, such as going online and reaching new markets, especially with government schemes that help them access digital tools and set up e-commerce platforms.

"They're being connected to opportunities overseas without having a physical presence there, and that's important," she said.

Madam Halimah pointed to Merlin Goldsmith, a traditional jewellery shop that has seen its online sales grow during this period.

She said firms "want to explore new opportunities and areas of growth, like our biomedical sector, our digitalisation that provides opportunities, and also sustainability". "Our green economy, which deals with waste management and is a

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PRESIDENT HALIMAH YACOB on firms being concerned about what happens when government support tapers off.

very important thing... as well as fintech services, are growth areas which they know are very important and will create good jobs," she said.

The companies are also fully committed to creating an inclusive workforce, while supporting the initiative to have a Singaporean core, Madam Halimah noted.

"But at the same time, they also said that because of the nature of their businesses, a balance is important for them," she said.

"So I told them that getting the right balance is always not an easy thing to do and is something that has to continue to be looked at and reviewed. But they are committed to creating a Singaporean core, that I think is important. With reskilling and upskilling, they are also aware of the numerous initiatives that are ongoing and how they can make use of those."

SCCCI president Roland Ng agreed that balance in having both Singaporeans and foreign talent in the workforce is important.

He said companies would like to hire Singaporean staff, but workers should also do their part by upskilling themselves.

"Singaporeans can take this downtime to... upgrade their skills so that when businesses come back, they can employ them."

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## Businesses exploring new opportunities and growth areas, while striking balance in employment: President Halimah Yacob



President Halimah Yacob during a dialogue with members from the Singapore Chinese Chamber of Commerce & Industry on Sept 2, 2020. PHOTO: MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION

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Sue-Ann Tan ✉

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SINGAPORE - Businesses are concerned about what happens when government support tapers off, but they are also using this time to **explore opportunities such as digitalisation and in growth sectors**, said President Halimah Yacob on Wednesday (Sept 2).

She added that firms are also committed to creating an inclusive workforce that is balanced and with a Singaporean core.

Madam Halimah was speaking to reporters after a dialogue with members from the Singapore Chinese Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCCI) at the Trade Association Hub in Jurong. About 20 attendees participated in the dialogue.

The session was moderated by SCCCI vice-president Charles Ho. Based on discussions and feedback during the dialogue, Madam Halimah said companies are concerned about how long government support will continue, "and what happens after the support is no longer there".

"They're aware of the fact that this cannot go on forever, but they also are concerned about how that will impact them - whether there will be recovery in time for them to be able to continue with their business."

But she added that they are also exploring new opportunities, such as going online and reaching new markets, especially with government schemes that help them access digital tools and set up e-commerce platforms.

"They're being connected to opportunities overseas without having a physical presence there, and that's important," she said.

She pointed to Merlin Goldsmith, a traditional jewellery shop that has seen its online sales grow during this period.

"(Firms) want to explore new opportunities and areas of growth, (such as) our biomedical sector, our digitalisation (push) that provides opportunities, and also sustainability," she added.

"Our green economy, which deals with waste management and is a very important thing... as well as fintech services, are growth areas which they know are very important and will create good jobs."

The companies are also fully committed to creating an inclusive workforce, while supporting the initiative to have a Singaporean core, Madam Halimah noted.

This inclusiveness also includes employing people with disabilities, which is a key focus for the President's Challenge this year, she reiterated.

"But at the same time, they also said that because of the nature of their businesses, a balance is important for them," she said.

"So I told them that getting the right balance is always not an easy thing to do and is something that has to continue to be looked at and reviewed. "But they are committed to creating a Singaporean core, that I think is important. With reskilling and upskilling, they are also aware of the numerous initiatives that are ongoing and how they can make use of those."

SCCCI president Roland Ng agreed that the balance is important, in having both Singaporeans and foreign talent in the workforce. He added that companies would like to hire Singaporean staff, and that workers should also do their part by upskilling themselves.

"Singaporeans can take this downtime to... upgrade their skills so that when businesses come back, they can employ them."