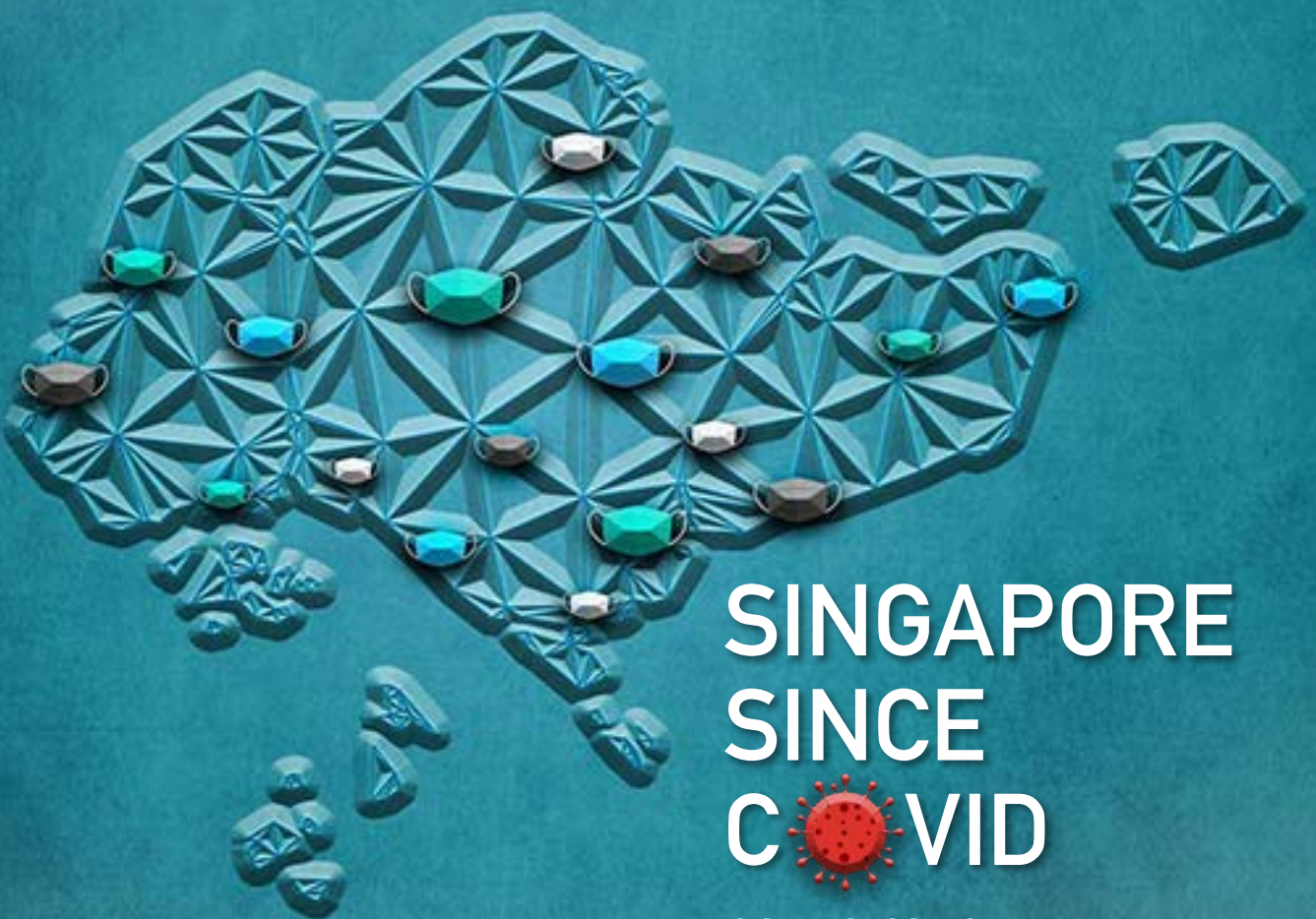




ETHOS

A PUBLICATION OF CIVIL SERVICE COLLEGE, SINGAPORE

DIGITAL 2021-SPECIAL EDITION



SINGAPORE SINCE COVID

March Update

Editorial

by **Dr Alvin Pang**
Editor-in-Chief, ETHOS

In our ongoing Special Edition of ETHOS, we bring you fresh views and perspectives on the COVID pandemic's far-reaching impact on Singapore's economy, society and prospects for the future. In this update, we present views that suggest the growing role that our home region might play in Singapore's post-COVID economic prospects, as world economies pivot and supply chains shift. Featuring: Senior Minister Tharman Shanmugaratnam, Dr Beh Swan Gin, Eleena Tan, Azfer A. Khan, Ang Kheng Kiat, Chua Jun Yan, Kevin Tan, and Esther Cheah.

For Singapore, as for most of the world, 2020 has been indelibly marked by the COVID-19 pandemic. Today—just over a year after the outbreak first came to light—there are some hopeful signs that we may be able to grips with the novel coronavirus, particularly with the prospect of effective vaccines on the horizon. But we should not make the mistake of thinking that the crisis will pass anytime soon, however much we wish it were so. The pandemic and its eventual aftermath will continue to have lingering and far-reaching effects on the economy and on society. In some cases, the crisis has accelerated trends—such as digitalisation or geopolitical

competition—that have already been underway for some time.

We are still some way from getting a full sense of what COVID-19 means for Singapore. Nevertheless, as 2020 draws to a close and a new year looms, ETHOS continues to document and reflect on the ongoing pandemic, and how Singapore has responded to its impact and implications. We have had to make significant changes to the way we live, work and play: some of these will stand us in good stead even after COVID-19 passes. We need to learn from and consolidate what progress we have made, and continue to help our fellow

Singaporeans cope with a changing world. More than ever, Singapore will need to actively build a more resilient society, continue to think long term and plan for the unexpected.

This Special Edition of ETHOS, building on [Digital Edition Issue 6](#) and [Digital Special Edition \(December 2020\)](#), will be an ongoing project. We will bring you regular updates with new views and perspectives to help record and make better sense of Singapore since COVID—so that we might better gird ourselves for the world that may follow in its wake.

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March 2021 Update:

In a conversation with Ethos, the Chairman of Singapore's Economic Development Board explains how Singapore could expand, diversify and deepen our economic opportunities by growing with

the region in the wake of the pandemic.

In our December update, we shared perspectives on how Singapore's future prospects could lie in nurturing deeper relations with Asia and Southeast Asia, which have weathered the COVID-19 storm relatively well. [As EDB Chairman Dr Beh Swan Gin puts it](#), the tailwinds are still with the region. Once the pandemic comes under control, Singapore has promising roles to play in contributing to our home region's recovery and resumption of its healthy growth trajectory.

But even as the crisis eases and we rebuild our prosperity, we must watch out for the longer term, systemic challenges that remain. [As Senior Minister Tharman Shanmugaratnam has cautioned](#), we must be mindful not to leave anyone behind, and we should seek to address the fractures, inequalities and tensions that the pandemic has accentuated in societies around the world.

We should not squander the lessons of this historical moment. Crises such as COVID are vivid reminders of how fundamentally vulnerable small states such as Singapore are, despite decades of growth and prosperity—and how much [we need to pull together as a nation](#), and take care of one another. To do so, we need to realise that we depend on one another, across society. We must find ways to connect with one another, gathering our different viewpoints and capacities [to become a stronger, more adaptable society](#). We will need to develop a more nuanced sense of what we can learn from [one another's pasts](#), present contexts and future aspirations and broaden our sense of who the Singaporean is and what Singapore can and should be together. Across different aspects of our lives, we can [find new ways to partner one another for the greater good](#). If a pandemic can teach us anything, it is that we sink or swim together: [resilience must be collective](#)

[if it is to be effective](#). If a social “herd immunity” exists, it is founded on the care and commitment we choose to have for one another.

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I would especially like to thank the young officers who have offered their views for this edition of ETHOS—their passion for public service and thoughtful ideas for a better Singapore are cause for optimism and hope.

ETHOS is a platform for anyone with thoughtful perspectives that may benefit Singapore and the broad work of public policy and governance. Please do get in touch if you have fresh insights or viewpoints to share with our readership of public sector practitioners and thought leaders in Singapore and beyond.

I wish you a stimulating read, wherever you might be. Take care and stay safe.