

Singapore Human Resources Institute (SHRI)

Singapore

1. Current economic and political situation in the country

Economy and labour market situation

SkillsFuture is a national movement to provide Singaporeans with the opportunities to develop their fullest potential throughout life, regardless of their starting points. Through this movement, the skills, passion and contributions of every individual will drive Singapore's next phase of development towards an advanced economy and inclusive society.

<http://www.skillsfuture.sg/what-is-skillsfuture.html>

The labour market is, and will remain, tight as our local labour force growth slows down towards the end of this decade. At the same time, we will continue to keep the foreign workforce growth sustainable and allow it to grow at the current pace. These trends point towards a future which demands that we grow our economy with fewer workers and higher productivity.

Together with the tripartite partners, the Government remains firmly committed to creating better jobs, higher incomes and a more secure retirement for all Singaporeans. Through the SkillsFuture initiative, we will help workers upgrade and upskill to stay relevant and capitalise on career opportunities in the new-age economy.

The government is looking at ways to help older workers stay actively employed and to build up their retirement nests. The Government is giving employers incentives such as the additional Special Employment Credit (SEC) to retain or hire older workers aged 65 and above.

<http://www.mom.gov.sg/newsroom/press-releases/2015/may-day-message-by-mr-tan-chuan-jin-minister-for-manpower>

The Government has accepted the recommendations of the National Wages Council (NWC) for 2015/2016. The Government supports the NWC's recommendation that real wage increases should be in line with productivity growth over the long term, and that employers should share productivity gains fairly with workers and in a sustainable manner. The Government has adopted a multi-pronged approach to help low-wage workers improve their wages. This includes strong funding for skills upgrading through the Workfare Training Support (WTS) Scheme.

<http://www.mom.gov.sg/newsroom/press-releases/2015/0529-government-accepts-nwc-recommendations-2015-2016>

Singapore's total workforce growth is projected to slow going forward. As Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) collectively are a major source of employment for our workers, it is important to help them adapt to this new business environment.

The Ministry of Manpower (MOM) today announced the Lean Enterprise Development (LED) Scheme to help progressive SMEs transform and grow in the new manpower-lean landscape. Our objective is to help SMEs to be more productive, more innovative, and more manpower-lean. This will help create stronger business growth, and offer better jobs and careers to Singaporeans.

<http://www.mom.gov.sg/newsroom/press-releases/2015/0819-leds>

Against a moderation of GDP growth in the second quarter of 2015, employment grew at a moderate pace. The unemployment rate edged up after trending downwards for the past four quarters, but remained low. Layoffs continued to fall for the second consecutive quarter.

Preliminary estimates showed that the overall seasonally adjusted unemployment rate edged up from 1.8% in March 2015 to 2.0% in June 2015. After contracting last quarter (-6,100), overall employment grew by 15,700 in the second quarter of 2015, supported by increases in construction and services. Layoffs declined for the second consecutive quarter. Some 3,100 workers were laid off, down from 3,500 in the preceding quarter.

<http://www.mom.gov.sg/newsroom/press-releases/2015/0730-employment-situation-q2-2015>

(Source: Ministry of Manpower 2015)

Political situation

Singapore is a sovereign republic. When it became an independent and sovereign nation in 1965, it inherited a legal system that is based on the English law. The legal system has since evolved to meet the needs of Singapore and to reflect the political system within which it operates. In November 1993, the Application of English Law Act came into force. This Act clarifies the application of English law and statutes in Singapore.

The organs of government are provided for by a written constitution which forms the supreme law of Singapore. The Constitution lays down the fundamental principles and basic framework for the three organs of state, namely, the Executive, the Legislative and the Judiciary.

The Head of State of Singapore is a President who is directly elected by the people, following fundamental constitutional changes in 1991. The President possesses certain veto powers over the government which he can exercise with discretion in certain circumstances. Outside of those areas where the Constitution permits him discretionary powers, the President must act according to Cabinet advice.

The Executive comprises the Cabinet, which is responsible for the general direction of the Government and accountable to Parliament.

The Legislature comprises the Parliament and is the legislative authority responsible for enacting legislation. More information on the history of Parliament, Parliament House and activities of the House can be obtained from its web site.

The Judiciary's function is to independently administer justice. The Judiciary is safeguarded by the Constitution.

The Prime Minister of Singapore is appointed by the President of Singapore under Article 25 of the Constitution. The President, acting on the advice of the Prime Minister, also appoints other Ministers from among the Members of Parliament.

The Prime Minister is the effective head of the executive branch of government. He chairs the Cabinet, which is constituted under Article 24 of the Constitution. The Cabinet is the central decision-making body of the executive government. It is an organ of state and central to Singapore's system of government. In practice, all significant decisions or actions taken by the Executive are first discussed and collectively agreed by Cabinet. (<http://www.parliament.gov.sg>)

The Parliamentary Elections include the General Elections and By-elections. The Parliament has a term of 5 years but may be dissolved at any time before the expiry of its 5-year term by the President on the advice of the Prime Minister. The General Election must be held within 3 months of the dissolution of the Parliament. Legislations governing the conduct of the Parliamentary Elections comprise:

- The Constitution of the Republic of Singapore (The Legislature - Part VI);
- The Parliamentary Elections Act (Chapter 218);
- The Political Donations Act (Chapter 236); and
- Related Subsidiary Legislations.

The Singapore Parliament is single house and has three types of Members of Parliament (MPs). They are:

- Elected MPs;

- Non-Constituency MPs; and
- Nominated MPs.

Elected MPs form the bulk and are elected at an election on a one-man-one-vote system based on simple majority (popularly known as first-pass-the-post system).

Elected MPs could be returned from Single Member Constituencies (SMC) and Group Representation Constituencies (GRC). Each SMC returns 1 MP while each GRC returns 3, 4, 5 or 6 MPs, one of whom must be from the Malay Community or the Indian or Other Minority Communities. This is to ensure that the minority groups are represented in Parliament.

Non-constituency MPs (NCMPs) are chosen from candidates of a political party or parties not forming the Government. The Constitution and the Parliamentary Elections Act provide that for the next and subsequent Parliaments, the number of NCMPs shall be 9 less the total number of elected Opposition MPs in Parliament. The number of NCMPs coming from any one GRC shall be capped at 2, and the number from any SMC shall not be more than one.

The non-constituency MPs to be declared elected shall be determined from amongst the candidates of the Opposition parties contesting the General Election on the basis of the percentage of votes polled by such candidates. (Details are spelt out in Section 52 of the Act.)

Nominated MPs (NMPs) are Singapore Citizens nominated by a Special Select Committee of Parliament for appointment by the President. NMP does not stand for election. The Constitution provides for 9 NMPs.

The NCMPs and NMPs shall not vote on Bills pertaining to financial and constitutional matters.

(Source: Elections Department, Singapore 2013)

2. HR challenges

The main challenge facing the HR profession in Singapore at present are:

- **Increase in population and job competition from foreign talents**

The population has increased dramatically in recent decades due to an influx of foreigners, who now make up around two out of five residents. This has put a growing strain on jobs, housing and infrastructure.

Singapore's stellar growth in the past few decades has seen it hailed as one of the world's great economic success stories. However, this growth has been achieved predominantly by importing foreign workers, rather than increasing the underlying productivity of home-grown workers.

<http://thediplomat.com/2014/02/singapores-foreigner-problem/>

The Government initiated Fair Consideration Framework (FCF) which details fair hiring requirements for companies in Singapore, including advertising in the Jobs Bank and scrutiny for companies with suspect hiring practices. The FCF is part of the Government's overall effort to strengthen the Singaporean core in the workforce and sets out clear expectations for companies to consider Singaporeans fairly for job opportunities.

<http://www.mom.gov.sg/employment-practices/fair-consideration-framework>

3. SHRI projects and initiatives

Major areas of SHRI's activity includes the following:

- **Singapore HR Awards**

Organised yearly by Singapore Human Resources Institute (SHRI), The Singapore HR Awards celebrates leading organisations and HR practitioners in their drive for impactful human capital strategies. As one of SHRI's signature events, it serves as an excellent platform to promote and recognise excellence within the HR profession in Singapore by highlighting leading organisational HR practices and HR individuals (CEOs, HR Leaders, HR Entrepreneurs, HR Professionals and HR Executives).

Through The Singapore HR Awards, leading HR trailblazers and people management practices are honoured. New benchmarks and standards for the HR profession are also developed. Each leading Singapore HR Award is a distinctive recognition by Singapore's HR Professional body to mark the successes and accomplishments of people managers, thus further emphasising the importance of Singapore in putting human capital as a key business outcome.

In 2014, SHRI worked with Vietnam's TalentNet and was its Knowledge Partner to create the inaugural Vietnam HR Awards 2014.

- **Singapore HR Accreditation**

HR has been an established profession and a long time. The past few years have seen significant changes in the perception and outlook of HR by corporate leaders. Today, HR is viewed as a key player in driving corporate success and customer satisfaction, and no longer just a support function. It is becoming an increasingly vital function in many organisations and businesses, playing a critical role in the sourcing, allocation and application of personnel, expertise and human resources for efficient and productive endeavours.

SHRI recognises and acknowledges the significant contributions the HR profession has made, and continues to make, to many organisations and businesses. With the increasingly competitive and complex business environment, the way forward for HR professionals is to acknowledge and respond to such challenges by sustaining and improving their own competitive advantages.

The HR profession needs to establish itself as a credible brand – through accreditation so as to raise its recognition, standing and reputation. To do precisely that, SHRI has taken the initiative to establish HR as a brand through accrediting HR practitioners in Singapore so as to raise the profession to meet avowed standards and practice.

In December 2003, SHRI commenced a comprehensive study on the accreditation of the HR profession in Singapore. SHRI reviewed the practices of accreditation bodies in Japan, Australia, New Zealand, Germany and the United States. We analysed the HR accreditation and certification schemes in various jurisdictions. We also looked into the Body of Knowledge Framework as promulgated after World Federation of Personnel Management Associations (WFPMA). This Body of Knowledge Framework presents a broad overview of the various competencies needed and expected of HR practitioners.

From this comprehensive study, SHRI developed a Singapore model of accrediting HR practitioners. This Singapore model adopts the best worldwide HR practices and takes into account local needs. The model was presented to senior practitioners in Singapore in several dialogue sessions to iron out the kinks in the model. This has resulted in the Singapore HR Accreditation Framework, which SHRI proudly presents to the HR profession in Singapore.

In 2014, a review done by the HR Accreditation Board - that comprises senior practitioners from various industries and sectors – took into consideration the competencies reflected in the Workforce Development Agency's (WDA) HR Work Skill Qualification (WSQ) Framework. These competencies were classified into their respective levels, and mapped into the HR Accreditation Framework to refresh and keep the framework relevant to today's HR landscape.

The Framework was revised to act as an umbrella framework that encompasses various functional and technical competency based standards in Singapore and across the globe. Aside from functional and technical HR areas, this framework includes an assessment of personal core attributes and people management skills that aids in upholding a higher ethical standard and values which go beyond competencies alone.

- **Singapore HR Congress & Business-Connect Exposition**

The Singapore HR Congress and Business-Connect Exposition is a platform for global exchange, learning and sharing among business leaders, people managers and HR

professionals. An annual signature conference of SHRI, this event sees about 500 HR Professionals and People Managers attending and benefiting from the discussions.

- **Singapore HR Challenge**

Into its 8th year, the Singapore HR Challenge 2015 serves to engage future leaders, people managers, critical thinkers, and contributors of the new workforce. The Challenge is a platform to showcase innovation and creativity as well as promote progressive HR to students.

- **SME HR Award**

The Association of Small and Medium Enterprises (ASME) and the Singapore Human Resources Institute (SHRI) have partnered to establish a new accolade - the *SME HR Award*. The Award seeks to acknowledge small and medium enterprises (SMEs) that have implemented relevant and productive strategies, thus enhancing their HR practices and overall work environment. Winners will be selected according to a holistic assessment of the local enterprises' human resource processes and initiative in introducing such policies in their workplace.

- **SHRI SME Charter**

Through this charter, the SHRI Council will address the HR needs of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs). SMEs require guidance and knowledge to strengthen their HR policies and practices. SME owners can benefit from cross-learning and best practices sharing from other members in the charter

- **Collaboration with Professional Bodies in Singapore / Tripartism**

SHRI has signed Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with various organisations such as the National Trades Union Congress (NTUC), Singapore Computer Society (SCS), Singapore Institute of Building Limited (SIBL), Institute of Estates Agents (IEA), Association of Small and Medium Enterprises and have also become a member of the Chinese Chamber of Commerce, Malay Chamber of Commerce as well as the Indian Chamber of Commerce.

- **To build overseas connections & engage in HR regional development work**

SHRI aims to engage HR associations and other professional bodies overseas especially in the region such as China, Vietnam, Hong Kong, Myanmar and US. This is also to gather HR practices from expert organisations in the region. SHRI wishes to participate in study tours in the region as well.

4. Events and Conferences in 2016

- SHRI Outlook 2016
- Singapore HR Challenge 2016
- HR Day

- SME HR Award Presentation Gala
- Leading HR Leaders/Entrepreneurs' Dialogue
- Leading CEOs' Dialogue
- Singapore HR Awards Presentation Gala
- Singapore HR Congress & Business-Connect Exposition
- SHRI HRD Conference 2016
- SHRI Engage Sessions and Breakfast Talks (on - going)

Kao Beng Lee, *MSHRI*

Executive Director

Singapore Human Resources Institute (SHRI)