



BIZ LATEST

Obama's pick

US President Barack Obama plans to announce today his pick to oversee the US\$787-billion economic stimulus plan. **Page B1**

NEWS LATEST

It did not work out

India and Pakistan came close to devising a framework for settling their long conflict over Kashmir in secret negotiations but it was put on hold by the fall of President Pervez Musharraf, an American magazine has reported. **Page 17**

SPORTS LATEST



Benitez defiant

Liverpool manager Rafael Benitez refuses to write off his side following their 1-1 draw with Manchester City yesterday. **Page 30**

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SINGAPORE TRIPARTISM FORUM

Brace for tough times: PM

Resilience Package will prevent damage but cure must be global

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DESCRIBING it as a global sickness Singapore cannot cure, Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong said Singaporeans must fasten their seatbelts and prepare for a "very tough year ahead".

In fact, business is so slow, Mr Lee said containers are being shipped from China to Europe for free; and in the United States, parents are asking toy companies not to advertise because they cannot afford presents for their children.

"The whole (Resilience) Package will prevent damage to our economy during the downturn, but we cannot cure the problem because fundamentally, the sickness is not our sickness. It is a global sickness and you have to wait until the US picks up, and Asia picks up with it, and that's going to take some time," Mr Lee told unionists and employers yesterday.

As he braced Singaporeans for the next two quarters which he said will be especially tough, the Prime Minister added that Singaporeans must be "psychologically ready to think in terms of several slow years after that". "Not going back to 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007 — where things were just blooming away and effortlessly, every year 7 to 8 per cent growth," Mr Lee cautioned, "but over the next four to five years, if we can get 2 or 3 per cent growth, I think that's not bad, 3 or 4 per cent growth, I would say we're lucky."

For two hours, the Prime Minister and other Ministers met with 550 unionists and employers at the Singapore Tripartism Forum, the first since the recession hit. Mr Lee assured them the Government

WINNING INVESTMENTS DESPITE THE DOWNTURN

ROLLS-ROYCE will move its marine business headquarters from London to Singapore.

ABBOTT LABORATORIES will open a US\$300-million (\$450-million) nutritionals manufacturing facility in a few days' time.

NESTE OIL begins construction in March of a plant to produce clean renewable diesel.



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will do more as the downturn bites deeper.

So far, the Skills Programme for Upgrading and Resilience (Spur) has seen commitments from 350 companies and 22,000 workers. Some firms are using the Jobs Credit scheme to upgrade their workers or defer retrenchments, while some local branches of multinational companies are using it to persuade their headquarters to continue doing business here.

Mr Lee said MNCs believe in Asia's long-term growth, and see Singapore playing a part in it. As such, investments are still coming in (see box.) So, if Singapore can identify niche areas where there are still opportunities, we can start to recover earlier.

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Maintenance payments: Help needed

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WHEN a former spouse, usually the ex-husband, refuses to keep up with his maintenance payments, chasing after him for the money can be a physically and emotionally draining affair for the other half.

That is why countries such as Australia and the United Kingdom have an official Child Support Agency that not only calculates the amount of child maintenance but also, upon request, collects the payments and transfers them to the parent taking care of the children.

Some law experts suggest that a similar agency could be set up here to help divorcees when former spouses refuse to pay maintenance.

Last year, 3,200 applications for enforcement of maintenance orders were filed by 1,700 people, mainly women.

Minister for Community Development, Youth and Sports (MCYS) Vivian Balakrishnan said recently that Singapore

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The guru says:
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