

THE STRAITS TIMES

Asia report

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April - May 2018

INDEPENDENT • INSIDER • INSIGHTS ON ASIA

- Trade wars
- Inside the mind of Kim Jong Un
- Mahathir's unfinished business



ASIANS TO WATCH

They are the new stars in business, in public and social sectors and the arts and sports; they are changing lives for the better; they are making their presence felt on the world stage. And there's the promise of more to come. These are the 50 Asians to watch this year, and beyond.

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People who are redefining our lives

Dear Readers,

The world is changing, and so too are the people who are shaping it. Entrepreneurs, technopreneurs, and other young business leaders chasing that elusive first million have been disrupting industries across the world, and reshaping societies and lives in the process.

Many are new faces; some older ones have reinvented themselves. Similarly, in other spheres – from sports to the arts to politics – some new players are emerging, seeking to forge ahead and make a difference, for themselves, as well as their communities.

We asked our correspondents in our bureaus across Asia to identify and profile the 50 people in Asia that you need to know, those you should watch this year, and beyond. Read about them in our special report this issue, helmed by our Deputy Foreign Editor Tan Dawn Wei.

Meanwhile, the coming weeks could mark some of the most defining moments of the year. Pyongyang's game plan in agreeing to talks with South Korea, and thereafter with the United States, remains a bit of a mystery. Nor is it clear that its professed commitment to denuclearisation is more than a ploy.

In Seoul, ST South Korea Correspondent Chang May Choon has been following North Korean leader Kim Jong Un's moves since he began his peace overtures earlier this year. Through conversations with several observers, she tries to unravel what could be on his mind as he prepares for his summits with South Korean leader Moon Jae In, and later, possibly with US President Donald Trump, in her report.

In Malaysia, the long-awaited elections have been called on May 9. Ahead of the polls, our Executive Editor Sumiko Tan met Malaysia's former prime minister and current opposition chief Mahathir Mohamad over lunch. Read her interview on what drives him, and how he retains his youthful vigour, and follow our coverage of the upcoming elections on straitstimes.com.

Closer to home, one of the most significant developments has been regional company Grab taking over American rival Uber's South-east Asian business. ST Transport Correspondent Christopher Tan shares his view on the upcoming disruption.

Also, an eight-day public hearing by the Select Committee on deliberate online falsehoods drew to a close in Singapore, after hearing from around 70 speakers. Read our report on highlights of the discussions and likely recommendations that could emerge.

I hope you enjoy this issue of the ST Asia Report, which showcases some of the best work of our growing network of seasoned correspondents around Asia and the world. Our aim is to give you independent, insider insights into the news from Asia, which we have been covering from Singapore since 1845.

To enjoy more ST premium content, do sign up for a two-week free trial at readsph.com/starweekly.

Best regards



Warren Fernandez

Editor-in-Chief

The Straits Times

& SPH's English, Malay and Tamil Media Group





Asia Report
April - May 2018

Warren Fernandez

Editor-in-Chief, The Straits Times
& SPH's English, Malay and Tamil
Media (EMTM) Group

Sumiko Tan

Managing Editor, EMTM & Executive
Editor, The Straits Times

Tan Ooi Boon

Senior Vice-President
(Business Development), EMTM

Paul Jacob

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Irene Ngoo

Vice-President (Editorial Projects
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Zakir Hussain

Foreign Editor

Shafali Rekhi

Asia News Network Editor,
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Editor, ST Asia Report

Copy Desk

Jack Hee

Chief Sub-editor, The Straits Times

Design

Peter Williams

Head, Visual, EMTM &
Art Editor, The Straits Times

Chng Choon Hiong

Cover photo illustration

Marlone Rubio

Executive Artist

Anil Kumar

Graphic Artist

Circulation

Eric Ng

Head, Circulation Marketing

Tommy Ong

Senior Manager (Circulation)

Reach out to us:

For advertising enquiries:

Sharon Lim Ling

Senior Manager
(Business Development)
limls@sph.com.sg

Circulation & subscription:

Delia Gan

Executive
deliagan@sph.com.sg

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We welcome your feedback and views

Letters can be sent to
stasiareport@sph.com.sg

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Asia's rising stars

Tan Dawn Wei

Deputy Foreign
Editor



Across the continent, disruptors and entrepreneurs are redefining the way we live

The number set was 50, but arriving at this list of Asians to watch was no easy task.

Across the continent, there is certainly no shortage of disruptors and entrepreneurs redefining the way we pay, buy or travel; nor sportsmen and sportswomen defying pundits, gaining upset wins and setting records.

On the political scene, fresh faces have emerged on the world stage, as have old hands given greater power. Social activism thrives in the region despite iron-fisted authorities.

Innovation, derring-do and conviction are characteristics that streak across these 50 names, such as Yuki Kawauchi,

the Japanese government clerk who beat the rain, winds and defending champion Kenyan Geoffrey Kirui to win the Boston Marathon on April 16 this year.

With no sponsor and no coach to back him up, the 31-year-old amateur runner became the first Asian to win the coveted race since South Korea's Lee Bong Ju in 2001.

Disrupting order on this side of the world is Anthony Tan, the 34-year-old co-founder of Grab. The ride-hailing application company was the brainchild of this Malaysian scion of the Tan Chong motoring empire.

Acting on the complaints of a friend about the unpleasant experiences of riding taxis in Malaysia, Mr Tan decided to develop a taxi-booking mobile app as his Harvard Business School project.

In 2012, he launched the My Teksi app in Malaysia, which, in the six years since, has grown into a US\$6 billion (S\$7.8 billion) business renamed Grab, serving more than 150 cities in eight countries in the region.

In March, it took over Uber's South-east Asia operations, expanding into food delivery, mobile payments and other forms of transport.

At 15, Indonesian Faye Simanjuntak is already battling issues that many shudder to think about. When she was 11, she started a help group, Rumah

Faye, with the help of her parents to combat child trafficking and sexual exploitation.

In the last five years, the teen activist has grown her non-profit organisation, opening its first shelter for girls her age in 2016 and launching rehabilitation and vocational training programmes.

Her efforts earned her a spot in the top 3 of the International Children's Peace Prize final last November.

While all eyes will now be on what North Korean leader Kim Jong Un will do and say at the upcoming talks with US President Donald Trump, Mr Kim's younger sister Yo Jong should take some credit for getting the two foes to the negotiating table.

The elusive 30-year-old was dispatched as a crucial envoy by her brother to the Pyeongchang Winter Olympics, where she was warmly welcomed, bearing a message of reconciliation.

North Korean watchers say she is now the most powerful woman in the secretive state, and will no doubt shape the significant policies of her country in the critical days to come.

There's no question that the world will be hearing more of Ms Kim and the rest of the Asians on this list, as they take their endeavours to greater heights.

Watch this space.

BUSINESS

Anthony Tan, 36

He is the co-founder and CEO of Grab, and the grandson of the founder of Tan Chong Motor, one of Malaysia's largest automobile distributors.



He started a taxi-hailing app called MyTeksi in Kuala Lumpur which evolved into Grab. It moved to Singapore in 2014 after receiving US\$10 million (S\$13.2 million) in funding from Vertex Ventures. It also expanded to other countries such as the Philippines, Thailand, Indonesia and Vietnam.

Last year, he secured US\$2.5 billion from Softbank, Didi Chuxing and Toyota, the largest venture fund raising in South-east Asia. Grab is valued at over US\$6 billion, and has over 3.5 million daily rides.

Raja Hamzah Abidin, 31; Jo Jo Kong, 27; Rachel Lau, 32; and Lionel Leong, 31



The four Malaysian scions founded two-year-old venture capital firm RHL Ventures.

Ms Lau is the daughter of the late Lau Boon Ann, non-executive director of Top Glove, while Mr Leong is the son of the founder of real estate developer Mah Sing Group. Mr Raja Hamzah's father is prominent politician Raja Nong Chik Raja Zainal Abidin. Ms Kong is the daughter of Mr Kong Hon Kong, founder of bereavement care provider Nirvana Asia.

RHL Ventures has invested in big start-ups including popular dating app Coffee Meets Bagel, and has a partnership with South Korean conglomerate Hanwha Investment.

William Tanuwijaya, 36

After graduating from high school in North Sumatra in 1999, Mr Tanuwijaya moved to Jakarta to study. He travelled



four days by sea to Jakarta as he could not afford a plane ticket.

To cover the cost of his study, he worked long hours at an Internet cafe. He later worked as a game developer and software developer, before starting Tokopedia in 2009. The start-up was an online marketplace that allowed small retailers and large brands to sell to local consumers.

In 2014, it received a US\$100 million investment from Softbank and Sequoia Capital. Last year, it got a US\$1.1 billion injection from Alibaba, the first Indonesian start-up investment by Mr Jack Ma.

Nguyen Thi Phuong Thao, 47

She is South-east Asia's first self-made female billionaire.

She traded in commodities and invested in real estate before setting up Vietjet Air, the country's first budget airline, in 2011. It is known for its publicity stunts using bikini-clad flight attendants.



Vietjet, which went public in February last year, is venturing further across Asia and beyond. Its first flights to India will start in July and it plans to head to California to cater to the Vietnamese population there. She reportedly intends to turn 60 per cent of the carrier's flights into international routes.

Nadiem Makarim, 33

Mr Makarim's bane turned out to be a boon when he returned to Jakarta after graduating from Harvard Business School and found the city's motorcycle-taxi service somewhat haphazard.



He saw an opportunity to develop an app for the booking of two-wheeled cabs or "ojeks". The Go-Jek app was launched in January 2015. It later expanded into food delivery, and provided house-cleaning and massage services.

The money soon came in - US\$550 million in 2016; US\$1.2 billion from Tencent Holdings last year; US\$1.2 billion from Google, Temasek Holdings and China's Meituan-Dianping this year.

He aims to take his start-up public in the next few years.

Budi Gunadi Sadikin, 53

Indonesian President Joko Widodo recently appointed Mr Budi as chief executive of state mining holding company Inalum - which owns coal, nickel mines and aluminium mines - and set him on major acquisition drives.



The ex-banker has held various senior positions in foreign and domestic banks. He was CEO of Bank Mandiri, which was then the country's largest bank.

Mr Budi is now negotiating to acquire a majority stake in Freeport Indonesia, which operates the Grasberg mine, the world's largest gold mine. If he succeeds, his company will be South-east Asia's largest mining company.

Robbie Antonio, 41

In less than two years, Mr Antonio steered a company into becoming the Philippines' first "unicorn" - a term for start-ups valued at more than US\$1 billion.



He is CEO of Revolution Precrafted, a provider of prefabricated homes which was set up in December 2015. Today, it has US\$2.1 billion worth of projects in the pipeline.

It recently inked a US\$3.2 billion deal to provide Dubai-based property developer Seven Tides with high-end, prefabricated condominium apartments and hotel villas.

Revolution plans to open 20 offices, mostly in South-east Asia.

Sophie Kim, 35

She set up food delivery start-up Market Kurly, which has revolutionised the way organic produce is sold and delivered in South Korea - by 7am if ordered before 11pm the previous day.



The e-commerce platform raked in 50 billion won (S\$61.5 million) in sales last year - up from 17.3 billion won in 2016. Ms Kim, a Wellesley College graduate, had worked in the United States, Hong Kong and Singapore (Temasek Holdings) before returning to Seoul to start The Farmers in 2015.

The firm, which attracted 17 billion won in investments for Market Kurly in 2016, is seeking fresh funds to go public and expand overseas.

Kim Bom, 39

Mr Kim founded Coupang, South Korea's answer to Amazon, promising personalised service and 24-hour deliveries. The Harvard Business School dropout is also the youngest person on Forbes' South Korea's 50 Richest list, with a net worth of US\$950 million.

He started Coupang in 2010 and since then, it has become the fastest-growing e-commerce site in the country, with a valuation of more than US\$5 billion. Although still operating at a loss, it has managed to secure over US\$1.8 billion in investments from around the world, including Goldman Sachs and Japan's Softbank.



Lee Seung Gun, 36

Since Mr Lee introduced money-transfer app Toss in South Korea in 2015, it has become a hit for simplifying the tedious process of transferring money online from five passwords and 37 clicks to just three steps.

It now has 12 million users and hit US\$12 billion worth of transactions last year. Mr Lee, who was a dentist before founding fintech start-up Viva Republica, is now eyeing expansion into South-east Asia.

Last year, the company managed to raise US\$48 million from Paypal and other Silicon Valley venture capital firms.



Jean Liu, 40

Ms Liu, the daughter of Lenovo founder Liu Chuanzhi, joined China's largest ride-hailing platform Didi Chuxing in July 2014 after a 12-year career as an investment banker with Goldman Sachs.

By February 2015, she successfully engineered a takeover of one of its biggest rivals Kuaidi Dache and became president of the start-up.

The following year, she forced Uber out of the Chinese market and took over



its China operations.

After gaining a firm foothold in China, Ms Liu is taking aggressive steps to expand Didi's business globally. Last year, it joined hands with Softbank, a Japanese telecom and Internet conglomerate, to inject US\$2 billion into Grab.

Wang Wei, 47

Shunfeng, or favourable winds in English, has proven to be a talismanic name for the logistics firm started by Mr Wang.

From a one-van outfit started in 1993, SF Express has become China's largest private logistics firm.

Despite the industry's commodity nature and slim margins, Mr Wang's business smarts - such as identifying the country's e-commerce boom early - have kept SF Express ahead of the competition.

Today, it runs a cargo airline with 41 aircraft, and plans to build Asia's first freight airport in Hubei province. It is also China's first firm to receive a domestic drone operator licence, which allows it to conduct drone deliveries in pilot zones nationwide.



Steven Lam Hoi-Yuen, 31

Mr Lam founded Hong Kong-based start-up GoGoVan in 2013 with Mr Nick Tang and Mr Reeve Kwan, with an initial capital of HK\$20,000 (S\$3,300).

It is the first Hong Kong start-up to be valued at more than US\$1 billion. This follows a rare cross-border merger with 58 Suyun, the freight business of mainland Chinese online classifieds giant 58 Home. This created Asia's biggest online platform in the intra-city logistics and freight business.

GoGoVan operates in markets including Singapore, China, Taiwan, South Korea and India. It plans to expand further into China and South-east Asia, with a Hong Kong listing in the next one to two years.



Frank Wang Tao, 37

Inspired by a childhood comic book of a red helicopter that could trail its owner, Mr Wang enrolled in a helicopter flight control course in Hong Kong and later set-up Da-Jiang Innovations (DJI).

DJI is now the benchmark in both consumer and professional drones and has a 70 per cent share of the global market. It is credited with pushing drone-flying - once a complicated, DIY hobby - into the mainstream with machines that can be flown out of the box.

Mr Wang was No. 76 on Forbes' Richest People in Tech List last year with a net worth of about US\$3.2 billion. This also makes him Asia's youngest tech billionaire.



Vijay Shekhar Sharma, 39

Mr Sharma invested US\$2 million to launch mobile wallet Paytm in 2011.

When Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi demonetised high-value currency notes in 2016, Paytm was the biggest beneficiary. The lack of cash in the system saw people turning to digital payment methods. Paytm, with its full-page newspaper advertisements at the time, was the most visible.

The company, which has over 250 million electronic wallets, went from recording 2.5 million transactions a day before demonetisation, to over seven million transactions a day.

The company is now valued at US\$9.4 billion.



Ritesh Agarwal, 24

Mr Agarwal dropped out of college at 17 and travelled across India. He realised there was a dearth of affordable good-quality hotels.

The son of a businessman father and a housewife started Oyo Rooms in 2013 at 19, with a single hotel in Gurgaon, Delhi's satellite city. Oyo Rooms gives branding to budget hotels and provides amenities such as toiletries in exchange for a percentage of the revenue.

Within two years, Oyo Rooms had expanded to over 200 cities, offering 70,000 rooms in its network. It now has a booking value of US\$100 million in the quarter ended June 2017.



Bhavish Aggarwal, 32 and Ankit Bhati, 31

The college mates co-founded OlaCabs in India in December 2010.

Despite competition from Uber, Ola has built a presence in over 110 cities with one million driver partners. The Indian taxi aggregator offers a host of services, including Wi-Fi and music, and clocks as many as a billion rides annually.

In March this year, the two partners decided to launch Ola in Australia in their first overseas expansion. Speculation of a merger between Uber and Ola has been rife in the Indian media. Both have backing by investor SoftBank.



Tan Min-Liang, 40

As the chief executive and founder of Razer, Mr Tan heads one of the most successful gaming peripheral brands in the world. His products like mice, keyboards and headphones are used by everyday gamers and professionals with millions at stake.

In recent years, Razer has bought over famed audio-visual firm THX, and launched its first smartphone, the Razer Phone. It went public in Hong Kong last November, raising \$688 million.

He also wants to set up a unified e-payment system for Singapore. His next focus lies in growing the company within South-East Asia, after spending years expanding it in the United States and Europe.



PUBLIC AND SOCIAL SECTORS

Ganesh Muren, 26

The Malaysia based social entrepreneur's journey into his current work started on a visit to India, when he saw how people had no choice but to drink dirty water. He looked closer to home and found, to his surprise, a community of about 100 Orang Asli families with no proper water supply in their village, near Kuala Lumpur.

The mechanical engineering student



set about building a water purifier that uses solar energy, and later set up Saora Industries, which produces solar-powered water filtration devices. His innovation and social activism have won him awards and recognition, including from Prime Minister Najib Razak.

Faye Simanjuntak, 15

"Being a kid is my super power," Faye would often say, according to people who know her.

Indeed, she has never let her youth, nor her familial ties - she is the grand-daughter of senior Indonesian minister Luhut Pandjaitan - stop her from doing what she feels convicted to do.

Ms Faye started a non-profit organisation, Rumah Faye, in 2013, when she was just 11, to prevent, rescue and rehabilitate victims of trafficking. Last November, Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Desmond Tutu named Faye as one of the top three finalists for the International Children's Peace Prize for her efforts.



Leni Robredo, 52

As head of the main opposition party in the Philippines, Vice-President Leni Robredo is vying to replace President Rodrigo Duterte when he steps down in 2022.

But she must first overcome a challenge from her rival, former senator Ferdinand Marcos Jr, son and namesake of the late dictator, who is contesting her election as vice-president via a manual recount of votes. That will not be settled for another six months.

Mr Duterte has refused to appoint Ms Robredo to a Cabinet post, a courtesy traditionally accorded the vice-president. He has accused her of conniving with his critics to unseat him.



Cardinal Luis Tagle, 60

The lead contender from Asia for the papacy in 2013, Manila's social media-savvy and charismatic archbishop is considered a "rock star" in the College of Cardinals.

He delivers inspiring, light-hearted liturgies on Facebook, and preaches



and sings on TV and on stage. He rides his bicycle across Manila's streets and invites the homeless to his dinner table.

A native of Manila and a banker's son, with Chinese forebears on his mother's side, Cardinal Tagle initially planned a career in medicine before being recruited to religious vocation by a Jesuit friend.

His relative youth perhaps diminished his chances to become Pope.

Kris Aquino, 47, and Imee Marcos, 62



The Aquino and Marcos families have had a bitter political feud that spans decades in the Philippines. Their duel for political supremacy had cost former senator Benigno Aquino his life, and the late strongman Ferdinand Marcos the presidency. Now, their heirs are continuing that battle.

Ilocos Norte Governor Imee Marcos, 62, has said she will run for senator next year, to regain the seat vacated by her brother, Mr Ferdinand Marcos Jr.

Ms Kris Aquino, 47, Mr Aquino's youngest daughter, has eschewed politics, but the celebrity has used her fame to sway voters into supporting her family's political vehicle, the Liberal Party.

Min Min, 29

Tensions can run high around foreign journalists in Myanmar's Rakhine state. Mr Min Min, an ethnic Rakhine, has been targeted by such vitriol too. He co-founded



Root Investigative Agency, which has helped shine a light on local corruption, drug trafficking and religious bigotry. In 2016, a bomb exploded outside his home and office in Sittwe. Root, a donor-funded agency which runs a website and publishes a monthly magazine, now runs on a staff of about 10 headed by him. But the most difficult thing about his job, he tells The Straits Times, is recruiting good journalists.

Netiwit Chotipatpaisal, 21

A speaker at the upcoming Oslo Freedom Forum, Mr Netiwit Chotipatpaisal's path to activism stretches back

to his high school years when he first called for reform in Thai education. Last year, the 21-year-old caused a stir, by publicly denouncing an act of prostration during a university ceremony. As a result, he was discharged from the prestigious presidency of the student council at Chulalongkorn University, where he was studying political science. For his speech at the Oslo forum, an annual conference devoted to human rights advocacy, Mr Netiwit will touch on democracy, education and military conscription.



Parit Wacharasindhu, 25 and Thanathorn Juangroongruangkit, 39



This well-connected duo is considered to be among the freshest faces to emerge in Thai politics since the May 2014 coup. Both have political aspirations and come from wealthy and influential families. Mr Parit, the nephew of Thailand's former prime minister Abhisit Vejjajiva, went to the prestigious Eton College and Oxford University and graduated in Philosophy, Politics and Economics. Mr Thanathorn, heir to the auto-making giant Thai Summit Group, rallied over land rights during his university years. Now, both are pushing ahead with their liberal agendas of reform and look ready to stand in next year's general election.

Kang Kyung Wha, 62

South Korea's first woman foreign minister Kang Kyung Wha stands out as an alpha female in a male-dominated society, building an illustrious career carving out many firsts. The former broadcast journalist-turned-national assembly interpreter is one of a rare few deemed capable enough to enter the Foreign Ministry mid-career, working her way up to become the first South Korean woman to assume a senior position at the United Nations, dealing with human rights and humanitarian issues. There are hopes that the working mother of three can break new ground



for gender equality in the country, given her strong career track record.

Kim Yo Jong, 31

She was North Korean leader Kim Jong Un's secret weapon, unleashed upon the world at the Pyeongchang Winter Olympics in February, where she successfully softened the war-mongering posture of her country.



The younger sister of the Supreme Leader stole the limelight during her three-day charm offensive at the recent Games, as the media went into overdrive.

At home, Ms Kim runs the state propaganda machine.

Already considered one of the most powerful women in the reclusive state, she will help shape the upcoming crucial talks with South Korea and the United States.

Shinjiro Koizumi, 37

The son of former prime minister Junichiro Koizumi entered politics only in 2009, but has cast himself as a political reformer with interest in such bread-and-butter issues as childcare and agriculture.



He was the key flagbearer for the ruling Liberal Democratic Party in rallies for a snap election last year, receiving rock star treatment from Hokkaido to Okinawa.

He told the Sankei Shimbun last year: "I want to be a politician whom people can rely on and trust. I want people to want to participate in the creation of the future that I envision for this country."

Haruno Yoshida, 52

Ms Haruno Yoshida is a rarity in patriarchal Japan – a woman who has shattered glass ceilings.

The chief executive officer of British telecommunications giant BT Japan is also the first female executive to be appointed to the board of the powerful Keidanren business lobby in 2015, breaking a history of 70 years as an all-boys club.



Last year, she was the only Japanese to be named on Fortune Magazine's list of the World's 50 Greatest Leaders.

The single mother, who overcame a serious bout of illness in her 20s, climbed the corporate ladder by cutting her teeth at foreign firms.

Ms Yoshida is today outspoken about the challenges that women continue to face in the workplace.

She told a news conference last year: "The issues of maternity or sexual harassment, long hours of work, all these are not codified. It is the office culture that dictates what can or cannot be done. Empowerment must come from the heart of the leadership, the leaders must set the tone."

Liu He, 66

Economic mastermind Liu He is the architect of Chinese President Xi Jinping's supply-side structural reform to reduce industrial over-capacity and move from debt-driven investment and export-led growth to slower but better-quality, consumption-driven growth. He did this while just a member of the Chinese Communist Party's Central Committee and a vice-minister in the National Development and Reform Commission.



He joined the powerful 25-member Politburo and was made vice-premier.

Mr Liu will now drive China's economic reform from the front as the country tackles challenges like an ageing population and growing trade friction with the West.

Wang Qishan, 69

China's new Vice-President is best known for the effective anti-corruption campaign that he ran in the past five years.

But before that, as Vice-Premier, he had a strong role in the financial and economic policy-making of the world's second-largest economy.

Crucially, he has led China's trade talks with the United States under then President Hu Jintao.

A trusted ally with experience dealing with the US is what President Xi Jinping needs as he faces the threat of a trade war with the US.



Asad Raza, 24

Pakistani Asad Raza always knew he wanted to become a researcher one day and do something good for the world. For his final-year project at university, he decided to focus on Parkinson's disease, developing a



data-driven management system that would delay the onset of the crippling disease.

That endeavour eventually led him to create a healthcare start-up, Neurostic, which has since branched into creating low-cost prosthetics for amputees in his home country of Pakistan, as well as Afghanistan, Iran and Syria.

With healthcare under-resourced in South Asia, Mr Asad wants to be a market leader in providing wearable and implantable medical devices in the developing world, as well as provide sound diagnosis, monitoring and rehabilitation of those with Parkinson's Disease.

Rakitha Malewana, 22

When he was 15, Mr Malewana started getting into medical and molecular biology, and his research would later lead him to develop a revolutionary nano-vaccine for HIV in 2015.



The young Sri Lankan scientist first started working with people living with HIV or AIDS in 2011, when he began visiting slums to teach maths, science and English to the children of people who were HIV-positive.

In 2012, the young scientist started a non-profit organisation, Hamzter Ideanerd Sri Lanka, which aims to foster innovation among school children and encourage them to pursue scientific research.

ARTS, CULTURE AND SPORTS

Shila Amzah, 28

The singer-songwriter is the first Malaysian recording artist to break into the Chinese music market. She became an overnight sensation after winning a reality TV singing competition, Asian Wave, in China in 2012.



She moved to China and learnt both Mandarin and Cantonese in order to embrace her newfound popularity in the country.

She has since amassed more than 2.3 million fans on Weibo. As a Muslim woman, she also tries to promote religious inclusiveness in China.

Darren Teoh, 36

For someone who has travelled across continents to hone his craft, the decision to open a haute cuisine restaurant using only local produce is a surprising one.

The Malaysian chef has an impres-

sive CV, with stints in Singapore's Les Amis and Denmark's Noma, named World's Best Restaurant four times. Yet, he ended up settling in Kolej Damansara Utama, teaching molecular gastronomy.

So impressed were the college owners that they decided to give him his own restaurant, Dewakan, in 2015. Since then, the chef has subtly re-educated tastebuds and turned his fellow Malaysians into locavores.



Joey Alexander, 14

Born in Bali, Alexander was the youngest jazz musician to be nominated at the Grammy Awards when his 2015 debut album *My Favorite Things* garnered two nominations.



He was also a Grammy nominee last year, and is the first Indonesian musician to be listed on Billboard, the weekly chart of 200 top-selling albums in the United States.

At six, he learnt to play the piano with the help of a mini electronic keyboard given to him by his father.

Come June, he will be headlining the Rochester International Jazz Festival, one of the world's largest.

Brian Imanuel, 18

Better known by his rapper moniker Rich Brian, the Chinese-Indonesian from Jakarta has gone from rising YouTube personality to a singer-songwriter and record producer on the US music scene.



The teen, who learnt English from watching YouTube videos, was introduced to hip-hop in 2012. His 2016 debut single *Dat \$tick* propelled him onto the world stage and its official music video has been viewed more than 90 million times on YouTube.

His debut album *Amen*, released in February, has since reached No. 1 on Apple's iTunes hip-hop charts, making him the first Asian artist to achieve that.

Hun Chansan, 38

Phnom Penh is a rapidly developing capital city with both delightful and monstrous buildings.

"Any other city would go through the same phase, you have to have the good and the bad at the same time," says

Cambodian architect Hun Chansan.

But this is the beginning, he adds. "How it ends, depends on me, the new generation."

His seven-year-old firm, Re-Edge Architecture + Design, has been dotting the capital with notable landmarks like Noro Mall and Lumiere Hotel.

He was named Cambodia Real Estate Personality of the Year at the Cambodia Property Awards in March.



Mattie Do, 37

Horror films can also educate audiences about class and gender divides, something Ms Mattie Do has done as Laos' first woman feature film director.



Born in Los Angeles, she went to Vientiane in 2010 to take care of her retired father. While there, the former make-up artist produced two horror movies with strong female leads – a rarity in the local scene. She is working on her third, a science fiction thriller.

"I think the best thing about making films in Laos is that I get to define and create our very own Lao style," she says.

Jerwin Ancajas, 26

He has been hailed as "the next Manny Pacquiao", a comparison the International Boxing Federation junior bantamweight champion baulks at embracing.



"The next Manny Pacquiao has not been born yet," he said in his typical aw-shucks manner.

But it is hard not to draw a comparison. Both are southpaws, with a preternatural killer instinct inside the ring. Both were born into deep poverty in the war-torn southern island of Mindanao. Like Pacquiao, he was raised by a single parent.

In February, Ancajas knocked out Mexican challenger Israel Gonzalez in a rousing match. America was impressed.

Taopiphop "Tao" Limjittrakorn, 29

A year ago, he was arrested and fined 5,000 baht (\$210) for selling his home-brewed lager. Then the tour guide and



three friends turned to crowdfunding to keep their Taophiphop Bar Project alive, and now he sells his brew in a shabby-chic bar in Bangkok.

He has been relentless in calling out what he describes as unfair competition, high entry barriers and cronyism in Thailand's 180 billion baht beer industry.

He is planning, among other things, to campaign for an amendment to the 1950 Liquor Act to allow small manufacturers to enter the business.

Rasmee Wayrana, 34

The singer-songwriter is transforming the image of traditional Thai countryside music called Mor Lam by infusing it with blues, rock, pop and African influences.



"Traditionally, Mor Lam was a countryside style of music, so it was often looked down on by some urban people," says Rasmee, whose songs have won over urban audiences at home and in Europe.

In 2016, she won national-level awards for best female singer of the year, best album and best song.

"It is very rewarding to see that Mor Lam is appreciated as a part of the cultural heritage of Thailand."

Han Kwang Song, 19

The North Korean caused a stir during the football transfer season earlier this year, when big names like Juventus, Liverpool and Tottenham Hotspur tried to sign him.



He made history by being the first North Korean to play in top-tier Italian football, Serie A. While on loan to Serie B's Perugia, he scored seven goals in 19 games.

At 19, he is already a star striker with Italian club Cagliari, which has extended his contract until 2022.

Last year, he burst into tears after the North Korean authorities purportedly blocked him from giving an interview on Italian TV.

Yuki Kawauchi, 31

He beat defending champion Geoffrey Kirui of Kenya in 2hr 15min 54sec at the Boston Marathon this year, but it is no fluke. The seasoned marathoner holds a number of world records, such as the most sub 2hr 12min



marathons by one person – 25 of them.

Known as the "citizen runner", the government clerk has neither coach nor sponsor and practises in between his full-time job. He is aiming to clock 100 marathons under 2hr 20 min before the 2020 Tokyo Olympics. He has already done four this year, and won them all.

Sota Fujii, 15

He took Japan by storm last year when he won a record 29 consecutive professional wins in shogi, or Japanese chess.

Fujii started playing shogi at five after his grandmother bought him an introductory game set.

At 14, the Aichi Prefecture native became the youngest shogi player to turn pro.

The unassuming high school student is also the youngest to achieve the rank of sixth dan – pros are ranked between fourth and ninth dans, with ninth the highest.

Last year, he toppled one of the game's legendary masters Yoshiharu Habu, 47, in a showdown dubbed "God versus Genius".

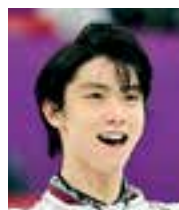


Yuzuru Hanyu, 23

Already seen as a living legend despite his young age, the Japanese figure skater has won legions of fans across the world with his spellbinding, emotional choreography on ice and boyish manga-worthy looks.

Dubbed the "Ice Prince", he has broken world record after world record, and at the recent Pyeongchang Games, became the first man to win back-to-back Winter Olympic gold medals in figure skating in 66 years.

The Sendai native has vowed to help lift the spirits of the disaster-stricken Tohoku region. He was skating at his hometown rink when the tremors hit in March 2011.



Jenn Lee, 34

By her own admission, she did not enjoy school and did poorly. She loved clothes but did not know one could make a career out of fashion until she found the London College of Fashion.

During her five years in London, she interned with designer Felicity Brown at Alexander McQueen and, after graduating in 2011, went to Berlin before



returning to Taiwan.

The 34-year-old, who draws her deconstructionist style from street culture, visual arts and tattoo art, is seen as one of the most exciting experimental fashion designers to emerge from Taiwan in recent years.

Mithali Raj, 35

India's women's cricket captain turned pro at 17, but it took another 17 years before she came to public attention when she led the women's team to the ICC World Cup final in Britain last year.

Her team lost to the British team, but her batting skills brought her to national attention. She is the highest run-scorer in women's international cricket with over 6,000 runs.

Born into a Tamil family, she started playing cricket at the age of 10 after her parents signed her up for a cricket camp in Hyderabad.



Martina Veloso, 18

Shooting stars are often described as short-lived trails of light, yet the Singapore Sports School alumna promises to be anything but.

Armed with a steely focus and cheery personality, she won two gold medals, in the 10m air rifle and the 50m rifle prone, and set a new Commonwealth Games record in both events this month.

Her upward trajectory began in 2014 when she won the ISSF World Cup in Germany by beating a 2008 Olympic champion and 2010 European champion.

She has set her sights on making history again by firing the Republic to its first Olympic shooting medal at the 2020 Tokyo Olympics. □



By Tan Dawn Wei, Claire Huang, David Lee and Lester Hio in Singapore, Shannon Teoh and Trinna Leong in Kuala Lumpur, Francis Chan and Wahyudi Soeriaatmadja in Jakarta, Raul Dancel in Manila, Tan Hui Yee and Jitsree Thongnoi in Bangkok, Chang May Choon in Seoul, Walter Sim in Tokyo, Goh Sui Noi and Lim Yan Liang in Beijing, Chong Koh Ping in Shanghai, and Nirmala Ganapathy in New Delhi

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Chang May Choon
South Korea Correspondent



Kim Jong Un – a master chess player in diplomacy?

The “mad” leader of North Korea shows his guile by steering the reclusive state into a series of meetings with world leaders, all designed to give his government legitimacy

With several deftly calculated moves, North Korean leader Kim Jong Un has got the major powers exactly where he wants them.

Since declaring his country's nuclear programme complete last November, he has launched a charm offensive.

To woo Seoul, he sent his sister to the Winter Olympics hosted by the South.

He also made his first trip out of the country and met Chinese President Xi Jinping. He even offered to denuclearise, to draw the United States into dialogue.

With each step, he is turning out to be more of the “shrewd and mature” politician praised by Russian President Vladimir Putin than the “madman on a suicide mission” described by US President Donald Trump. But what made the young leader confident his grand plan would work?

And what is his end goal in this round of high-stakes diplomacy?

Experts say Mr Kim is seeking to consolidate his power on the global stage and normalise ties with the US, North Korea's long-time foe.

He wants to gain concessions to give his regime some breathing space amid choking economic sanctions imposed by the United Nations over the past two years.

But the experts also warn that the denuclearisation card is likely a bluff. North Korea, they say, will never compromise its dual-track Byungjin



ST ILLUSTRATION

policy to pursue both nuclear and economic development, and that global security could be undermined if the world is cornered into accepting North Korea's status as a nuclear weapons state.

Dr Park Jee Kwang of the Sejong Institute think-tank believes Mr Kim has matured since assuming control in December 2011 to become a strong and powerful leader capable of negotiating with the US.

At age 34, the Swiss-educated Mr

Kim is one of the world's youngest leaders and the third in his family to rule North Korea with an iron fist. Said to be brutal and ruthless, he swiftly purged his father's loyalists and embarked on widespread economic reforms and nuclear development.

“Kim Jong Un is very confident about regime survival. His political foundation is strong domestically and no one can challenge him. Now he wants to deal with foreign affairs and normalise relations with the US,” Dr Park told The Straits Times.

Declaring the completion of North Korea's nuclear programme – even though experts say it is still missing some critical final-stage tests – is the first step towards a path of dialogue with the US and other members of the stalled six-party denuclearisation talks. They are South Korea, Japan, China and Russia.

“He needs to justify that he's stopping all these tests because the programme is complete and not because of external pressure,” said Dr Park.

Dr Graham Ong-Webb, research fellow at the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies in Singapore, told ST that Mr Kim is seeking to “achieve complete consolidation of his power” by becoming the first North Korean leader to meet a sitting US president.

He added: “Mr Kim Jong Un clearly understands the power of perception, and knows that optically, this will be seen as a meeting of equals in the eyes of his own people... (It is) extremely valuable because it affirms their identity as a sovereign nation.

“In meeting with the current leader of the world's incumbent superpower, Mr Kim achieves the double effect of strengthening his national authority and establishing North Korea as a ‘normal’ country.”

Dr Ong-Webb believes Mr Kim pushed hard on missile tests and then swung equally hard towards dialogue and denuclearisation to “entice the egotistical businessman in President Trump, in the run-up to the mid-term

elections, to take no chances in using his office to close the deal”.

But he warned that promises to denuclearise could be nothing but a bluff as Mr Kim “cannot run away from the Byungjin policy he has advanced”.

“He knows that the way the US-led military and security architecture of North-east Asia is set up, North Korea’s national security can be secured only by its nuclear weapons. Yet, at the same time, he must deliver on his country’s economic development... I venture that he is counting on leveraging China’s growing economic and military power to unlock the current grip of sanctions if the US will not give them (North Korea) any respite.”

In this context, Mr Kim’s visit to China late last month – ahead of his upcoming April 27 summit with South Korean President Moon Jae In and a May or June meeting with Mr Trump – is no coincidence.

China-North Korea ties have been rocky since Mr Kim assumed power. Beijing, despite being Pyongyang’s biggest ally and economic lifeline, disapproves of the regime’s missile and nuclear tests and joined in UN efforts to tighten sanctions on North Korea.

Dr Ong-Webb said Mr Kim “took a gamble” in proposing his first meeting with Mr Xi, and the “smart move” helped to consolidate his position as the “recognised and respected head of state”, and secure his country.

“Sovereign recognition only truly happens when a leader leaves his

territory to interact with other heads of state. Now that Mr Kim has cleared President Xi, he will clear President Moon before clearing President Trump. He is also likely to clear (Japanese) Prime Minister Shinzo Abe in June.

“This recognition, no matter how mild, makes regime change a difficult option, especially if Mr Kim conveys that he’s solely in charge of his country and holds all the cards on his side.”

Dr Ong-Webb sees Mr Kim as a “great chess player” who knows the weaknesses, impulses and constraints of his opponents, and is creating options for himself by playing up to both China and the US.

“He knows he must give up some ground to gain advantages elsewhere. The optics of his visit were clear – to pay respect and tribute to President Xi. He understands the Asian approach to international relationships is hierarchical.

“He has telegraphed that he puts China ahead of the US. Yet, he is no sentimentalist either. For the sake of long-term survival and even economic growth, we cannot rule out that he will go for the best of deals presented by either great power.”

Dr Balbina Hwang, visiting professor at Georgetown University, said Mr Kim has “taken full advantage” of the political developments in the region, including the timing of the Winter Olympics, to balance all his options with the member states of the six-party talks.

“Kim Jong Un is indeed very shrewd and competent, not at all ‘irrational’,

‘crazy’ or ‘unpredictable’ as the world portrays him, and certainly very mature. This is not a game, but a very well planned long-term strategy that he has been implementing since he took power,” she told ST, adding that it would not be a surprise if Mr Kim also meets Mr Putin.

But in this game of high-stakes chess, a checkmate move is nowhere in sight just yet. Mr Trump, who revels in keeping his opponents guessing, remains a wild card.

Uncertainty clouded the US-North Korea summit after Mr Trump’s sudden decision to replace his former secretary of state, the dovish Rex Tillerson, with the more hawkish Mike Pompeo.

Mr Trump said last Thursday that meetings were being set up between him and Mr Kim and that the US would approach the talks respectfully.

Dr Ong-Webb said Mr Kim “has taken the lead in this geopolitical dance”, but there is nothing to stop Mr Trump from changing his mind about the meeting.

Dr Hwang, however, said the challenge for the US is not Mr Trump’s unpredictability, but what it means for the world to accept what North Korea is seeking – not just regime survival, but recognition as a nuclear weapons state.

“That is the greatest global security threat, not North Korea’s nuclear arsenal, and what the world should really be concerned about,” she added.

changmc@sph.com.sg



Men to Watch

Here’s a look at some key officials who will have a say in talks between the US and North Korea

Return of the neocon

As Americans were turning against the US military intervention in Vietnam and President Lyndon B. Johnson’s handling of the war in South-east Asia, Eugene McCarthy, a lawmaker from Minnesota running on an anti-war platform, decided to challenge LBJ in the 1968 Democratic primaries.

Though he was initially given little chance of winning, the 1968 Tet Offensive galvanised opposition to the war and its chief architects, including then National

Security Adviser McGeorge Bundy, providing Mr McCarthy with political momentum to finish in second place in the New Hampshire primary.

He failed to win the Democratic presidential nomination, and Republican Richard Nixon ended up winning the race to the White House in 1968. But there is no doubt that if the anti-war McCarthy had been sitting in the Oval Office in 1969, one decision that he would not have made would be to nominate the pro-war Mr Bundy as his national security adviser.



JOHN BOLTON
US national security adviser

Fast forward 50 years, when the presidential candidate, who during the Republican primaries and the general election had blasted former president George W. Bush and all the other architects of another disastrous US military intervention, this time in Iraq,

is now sitting in the Oval Office. That is the same Candidate Trump who pledged to bring to an end the costly American interventions in the Middle East, and in particular, not to experiment anymore with “regime change” and “nation building” in the Middle East.

It was not surprising, therefore, that most of the former policymakers and conservative intellectuals (commonly known as the neoconservatives, or “neocons” for short) who played a central role in the planning and the execution of the Iraq War and the strategy of remaking Iraq into a liberal and democratic entity, stood up in firm opposition to Candidate Trump when he was running for president and after he entered the White House.

But it was a bit surprising that President Trump announced recently that he was nominating to serve as his new national security adviser one of the leading neocons, an ardent supporter of and cheerleader for the Iraq War, who has been calling for bombing rogue regimes and doing regime change in the Middle East and elsewhere, and advocating a more interventionist US military policy in that region.

Indeed, President Trump nominating John Bolton as national security adviser – the man who had made the case at home and abroad that then Iraqi President Saddam Hussein possessed weapons of mass destruction and who predicted that the US role in the aftermath of regime change in Iraq would be “fairly minimal” – would be akin to President McCarthy nominating

Mr Bundy to that post in 1969.

It is true that Mr Bolton was one of the few neocons who refrained from bashing Candidate Trump during the presidential campaign while praising him non-stop on Fox News, which is apparently one of President Trump’s main sources of information when it comes to global affairs (forget those lone and boring intelligence briefs).

In fact, the President has noted several times that he was “eyeing” the moustached and toupee-wearing commentator for a job in his administration although he also told aides that Mr Bolton did not look the way presidential national security advisers look in the movies.

Nevertheless, the announcement that President Trump would replace Mr H.R. McMaster with Mr Bolton – coming only a few days after the President replaced Secretary of State Rex Tillerson with CIA director Mike Pompeo – has left diplomats in Washington and other world capitals puzzled: how will the White House now handle most of the major foreign policy issues, especially when the new national security adviser seems to disagree with his boss on some of these issues.

Most recently in an op-ed in *The Wall Street Journal*, Mr Bolton described North Korea as an “imminent threat” and advocated a pre-emptive strike against Pyongyang. And he proposed that “ending” the regime was the only kind of diplomacy the Trump administration should employ in dealing with Mr Kim Jong Un.

Mr Kim happens to be the same North Korean leader that President Trump is scheduled to meet in the coming weeks and with whom he is supposedly expected to fashion a peaceful diplomatic resolution to the current nuclear crisis. That would seem to be quite difficult if Mr Trump seriously considers the ideas that his new national security adviser has proposed about bombing and “ending” Pyongyang ASAP.

A lawyer by profession and a regular commentator on Fox News cable television who has been active for several decades in Republican politics, and at some point even planned to run for the party’s presidential nomination, Mr Bolton has been considered a “superhawk”. He has been inclined to favour military solutions, preferably through unilateral American action, over the pursuit of diplomacy and multilateral strategy, when dealing with national security challenges.

Mr Bolton – who served as ambassador to the United Nations under President Bush, saying in 1994 that “if the UN building in New York lost 10 storeys, it wouldn’t make a bit of difference” – insists that Washington should take a tough and uncompromising stand when confronting global adversaries such as China and Russia, and rogue regimes like North Korea and Iran, very much in the same way that it had dealt with the now-deceased Saddam and the late Libyan dictator Muammar Gaddafi. □

– Leon Hadar, *The Business Times*

Pyongyang’s peace negotiator

North Korea’s announcement of its willingness to revive an inter-Korean hotline earlier this year was delivered by a man viewed as one of the regime’s key military negotiators.

On Jan 3, Mr Ri Son Gwon, chairman of North Korea’s Committee for Peaceful Reunification, spoke on behalf of leader Kim Jong Un, saying that North Korea would reopen its communication channel at the truce village of Panmunjom, in response to Seoul’s proposal for high-level talks.

The Committee for Peaceful Reunification is a North Korean organisation handling inter-Korean affairs.

“(Kim) gave instructions to open the Panmunjom liaison channel between the North and the South from 3 pm (North Korean time) on Jan 3, so that the issues related to the opening of talks,

including the dispatch of the delegation to Pyeongchang Olympic Games, would be timely communicated to the South,” Mr Ri said on North Korea’s state-run broadcaster Korean Central Television.

The senior colonel of the North Korean military has often represented his country, having participated in inter-Korean military talks during the liberal Roh Moo Hyun administration and when tensions gradually escalated in the following years. He has been sighted at 27 meetings held between the two Koreas since 2004.

After Mr Kim rose to power in 2011, Mr Ri was appointed director of the policy department of North Korea’s now-defunct National Defence Commission (NDC). The NDC was later replaced by the State Affairs Commission, which is chaired by Mr Kim.



RI SON GWON,
Chairman of North Korea’s
Committee for Peaceful
Reunification

Mr Ri is known as the right-hand man of Mr Kim Jong Chul, another top North Korean military official who is allegedly responsible for the sinking of the South Korean naval ship Cheonan in 2010 and the bombing of a South Korean island near a disputed maritime border that followed.

Media reports in the past have underlined Mr Ri’s fiery temper displayed at inter-Korean meetings. Within the first 10 minutes of a South-North meeting in February 2011, Mr Ri reportedly shouted, “We are completely irrelevant with the Cheonan warship incident”, before bolting out of the meeting room. □

– *The Korea Herald/Asia News Network*

Christopher Tan
Senior Transport Correspondent



Grab-Uber:

A deal which will disrupt more than the ride-hailing industry

American ride-hailing company Uber's sale of its South-east Asian business to arch rival Grab should not come as a complete surprise.

In a world which has seen a proliferation of ride-hailing providers

in the last five years, Uber needs to retreat to focus on markets where it enjoys dominance.

In South-east Asia, it is evident that Uber does not have that sturdy foothold. Grab does. In fact, Uber has openly admitted to incurring "hefty losses" in the region.

Its sale of the regional business to Grab - which neither party has officially confirmed - is similar to its pull-out from China in 2016, and Russia last year.

In the fast-evolving ride-hailing market, players not only have to contend with competition from each other, they have to continue to claw market share away from traditional ride providers - namely, taxis. This is a money-draining exercise.

Hence companies have to target resources at markets where they have a fighting chance. It is better to flourish in say, 50 markets, than continue to be an also ran in 100.

It is not dissimilar to American car companies' apparent disinterest in the South-east Asian region - even if it is a very sizeable market. They prefer to concentrate in markets where they already have reasonable penetration. Or which are too big to ignore, like China.

Uber's sale will of course strengthen Grab's position in the ride-hailing arena. It will allow Grab - a Malaysian company co-founded by Anthony Tan, a scion of the motor-and-property Tan Chong family - to compete with other ride-hailing giants.

The biggest of them is currently

REGIONAL PROBE

The Philippines, Vietnam and Malaysia have said that they will look into whether Uber Technologies' move to sell its South-east Asian business to ride-hailing rival Grab hinders competition, days after Singapore began a probe into the deal on similar concerns.

The expanded scrutiny of the deal in South-east Asia could pose a major hurdle to the US firm's attempt to improve profitability by exiting its loss-making regional operation.

In a rare move, Singapore proposed in March interim measures to require Uber and Grab to maintain their pre-transaction independent pricing until it completes a review of the deal, saying it had "reasonable grounds" to suspect that competition had been infringed.

"The Grab-Uber acquisition is likely to have a far-reaching impact on the riding public and the transportation services. As such, the PCC is looking at the deal closely," the Philippine Competition Commission (PCC) said in a statement.

Malaysia has also said that it will monitor Grab for possible anti-competitive behaviour.

- Reuters



China's Didi Chuxing, which has already surpassed Uber in market value. It will only be a matter of time before Didi - which bought out Uber's China business two years ago, and which is currently a substantial shareholder in Grab - moves southwards in its quest for growth.

India's Ola is also a hefty player which is at Grab's doorstep.

Meanwhile, the Uber-Grab deal has a few implications for Singapore's taxi industry. Grab already has allied itself with all cab operators except ComfortDelGro. The leading taxi player had chosen to go to bed with Uber instead.

ComfortDelGro now appears to have picked the wrong horse. Uber, in this case, is akin to a suitor who was wooing two parties at the same time. And it has succeeded on both fronts.

For commuters and drivers in Singapore, the deal paves the way for two well-matched rivals who will now compete - on more or less equal footing - for their patronage. It would be the first time too, as ComfortDelGro's sheer size had for the longest time given it a stranglehold of the market.

That is, if ComfortDelGro does not pull out of its deal to buy a majority stake in Uber's Lion City Rentals.

It would be interesting how the Competition Commission of Singapore - which had been deliberating on the ComfortDelGro-Uber deal - now views the Uber-Grab deal.

The next several months will be interesting indeed, as Grab - with an enlarged regional footprint - redraws its battle plans. If this start-up can elbow out Uber, it can do bigger things.

Besides the Competition Commission, the Land Transport Authority is also watching the development closely, to ensure that commuters and drivers are not worse off.

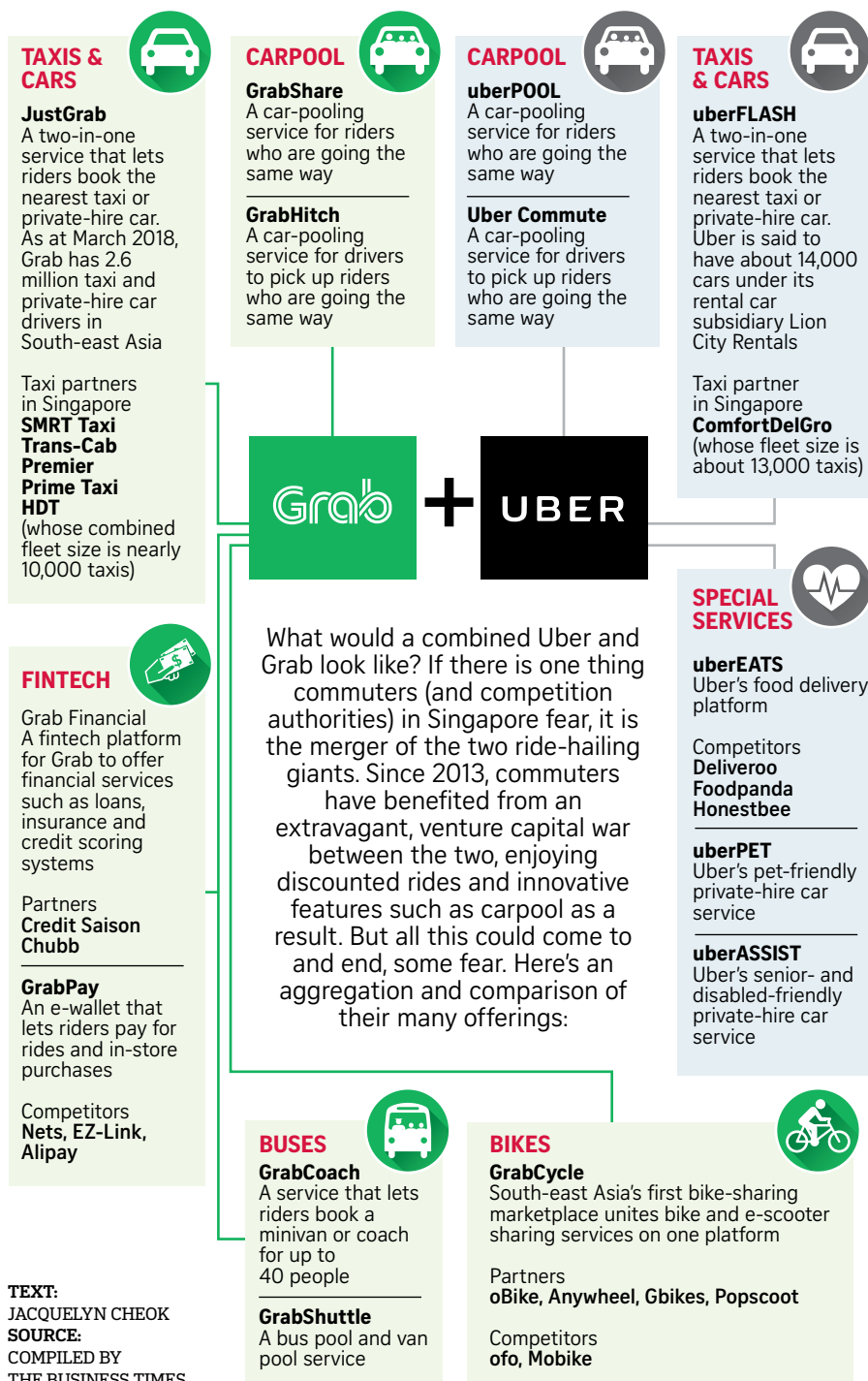
The implications extend beyond the point-to-point transport industry. Card companies such as EZ Link and Nets should also be worried, as Grab's GrabPay mobile payment platform grows in coverage.

Ditto food delivery players. As well as the emerging fintech industry, which Grab has already dipped its toes into.

Armed with powerful data garnered in the five years it has been a ride-hailing rival to Uber, Grab is poised to be a serious contender in the financial services arena. Its two-week-old venture with Japan's Credit Saison to provide micro loans is just a start.

In the words of a Grab insider, "our new businesses will be 100 times larger than ride-hailing".

Financial institutions should keep an



eye on this ambitious disruptor, indeed.

For a start, it would be prudent for EZ Link and Nets to consider an alliance of their own. After all, there is far too much duplication in what they both currently offer.

Whichever way the cards fall, there is one clear winner in an Uber-Grab transaction: Softbank. The Japanese group is a sizeable backer of both Grab and Uber. It also has stakes in Didi and Ola.

As a financial backer, it will naturally prefer a consolidated state rather than a fragmented one. Hence Grab's purchase of Uber's South-east Asian business

makes sense.

Looking ahead, there will be more consolidation in the ride-hailing sphere. There will be more mergers, acquisitions and alliances ahead. And they may not necessarily be confined to deals between ride-hailing firms.

In the end, there will likely be far fewer players than there are today. Those remaining will of course, see their fortunes improve. For despite all the penetration that these apps companies have thus far, there is little sign that they are making serious money, if at all.

christan@sph.com.sg

Vikram Khanna
Associate Editor



Stage set for prolonged US-China battle on trade

What US trade hawks are effectively seeking is an overhaul of China's state-led economic model

The tit-for-tat tariffs that we are witnessing between the United States and China are not merely unpleasant trade measures. They are the early salvos in the battle for industrial dominance that could play out for a long time.

After imposing two rounds of tariffs – first on steel and aluminium and then on US\$50 billion (S\$66 billion) worth of Chinese goods, US President Donald Trump has raised the ante by proposing tariffs on another US\$100 billion of Chinese exports.

To see where the US is coming from, it's instructive to read the report of the US Trade Representative (USTR) on China's World Trade Organisation (WTO) compliance, which was released in January. The report has all the fingerprints of the China hawks in the Trump administration who are masterminding the evolving hardline policies towards China, namely USTR Representative Robert Lighthizer and Mr Trump's top trade adviser Peter Navarro, who wrote a book entitled *Death By China*.

Running to 161 pages, the USTR report is a sweeping indictment of China's trade and industrial policies. It claims that while these policies were never particularly fair for the 17 years that China has been a member of the WTO, since the change in China's leadership in 2013, they have gotten worse.

"The state's role in the economy has increased, as the Chinese government has continued to pursue and expand industrial policies that promote, guide and support domestic industries while simultaneously and actively seeking to impede, disadvantage and harm their foreign counterparts," the report points out.

In addition, the report elaborates on a long list of other malpractices, including "massive subsidies; severe excess capacity; investment restrictions; 'secure and controllable' ICT (infocomm technology) policies; overly broad and discriminatory cyber-security restrictions; data transfer restrictions; serious problems with intellectual property rights enforcement; export restraints; unique national standards; troubling agricultural policies that block US market access; restrictions on services market access and inadequate transparency".



ST ILLUSTRATION: MANUEL A FRANCISCO

TRADE: IN NUMBERS



US\$462.6b

Value of goods bought by US from China

US\$115.6b

Value of goods bought by China from US

US\$347b

US trade deficit with China

US\$129b

Value of China-made electrical machinery bought by US

US\$14b

Value of soya beans China buys from US

NOTE: 2016 figures

REASONS FOR UNILATERAL ACTION

It takes particular aim at China's grand strategy for industrial upgrading that was announced in 2015, called "Made in China 2025", which targets 10 advanced manufacturing industries with the aim of making them occupy the highest parts of global production chains.

These industries are: information technology; numerical control tools and robotics; aerospace equipment; ocean engineering and high-tech ships; railway equipment, energy-saving and new energy vehicles; power equipment, new materials; medicine and medical devices and agricultural machinery.

The report says these industries are to be built "at the expense of, and to the detriment of, foreign industries and their technologies through a multistep process over 10 years". The eventual goal, it suggests, is "to replace foreign products with Chinese companies' products in the China market through a variety of fair and unfair means, including through the extraction of foreign technologies".

Winners and losers

A US-China trade war would affect not just businesses in the two countries but also many others. A look at some of the winners and losers.

LOSERS



U.S. CARMAKERS

- China announced plans to impose tariffs on most passenger vehicles.
- That would have a significant impact on America's car industry – including major car manufacturers General Motors (right) and Ford Motor, and electric carmaker Tesla, which depends on China for 17 per cent of its revenue.



WHISKEY

Whiskey accounted for nearly 70 per cent of the total US spirits exported to China last year and is the only spirit on which China plans to impose more tariffs.



U.S. AGRICULTURE AND CHEMICALS

- DowDuPont's agriculture unit could be affected by China's move to impose tariffs on US soya beans.
- Same goes for grain traders Archer Daniels Midland and Bunge, and seeds and agrochemical firm Monsanto.

CHINESE PIG FARMERS

Soya beans are mostly crushed and fed to pigs in China. The soya tariffs could ultimately drive up costs for pig farmers and meat prices for 1.3 billion Chinese.

BOEING AND U.S. AIRCRAFT MANUFACTURING

- The Chinese list of goods that will be hit with a 25 per cent tariff also includes aircraft up to 45 tonnes in weight – a move that would affect some older Boeing narrow-body models.
- The company already saw its shares fall as a result, along with fellow manufacturing company 3M.

U.S. GENERIC DRUGMAKERS

Though the US tariffs target Chinese drug makers, American pharmaceutical companies that make generics such as Mylan NV (right) would have to pay more for raw ingredients, such as insulin used by diabetics and the anti-allergic-reaction drug epinephrine.



JAPANESE COMPANIES

- Many have sourced production in China, and many Chinese-made tech exports, such as smartphones, contain Japanese parts.
- Panasonic, the key battery supplier to Tesla, has seen its share price fall in tandem with the US carmaker's.
- Beijing's retaliatory tariffs could also hurt Japanese trading houses such as Marubeni Corp that export grain to China through their American subsidiaries.

TAIWANESE COMPANIES

- Many Taiwanese tech hardware firms, a pillar of the island's economy, manufacture in China and export to the US. The prime example is Hon Hai Precision Industry, also known as Foxconn, which assembles iPhones for Apple.
- Taiwanese firms also sell precision parts to Chinese electronics developers, whose products are bound for the US.

U.S. TECH MAJORS

- China's position as an assembly hub for electronic devices makes it the biggest consumer of semiconductors. US chipmakers such as Intel Corp and Nvidia Corp in particular have seen their shares tumble.
- Tech giant Apple and Lenovo would also face higher supply costs.



WINNERS



U.S. MEAT COMPANIES

The prospect of a drop in prices of soya beans – a key feedstock – following higher Chinese tariffs is a boost for meat companies such as processor Tyson Foods and meat exporter Hormel Foods Corp.

PALM OIL COMPANIES

Rising soya oil prices in China, which relies heavily on soya bean imports, will make palm oil a cheaper, more attractive option.

SOUTH AMERICAN FARMERS

Brazil and Argentina are the main competitors to US growers in the market for soya beans and corn.

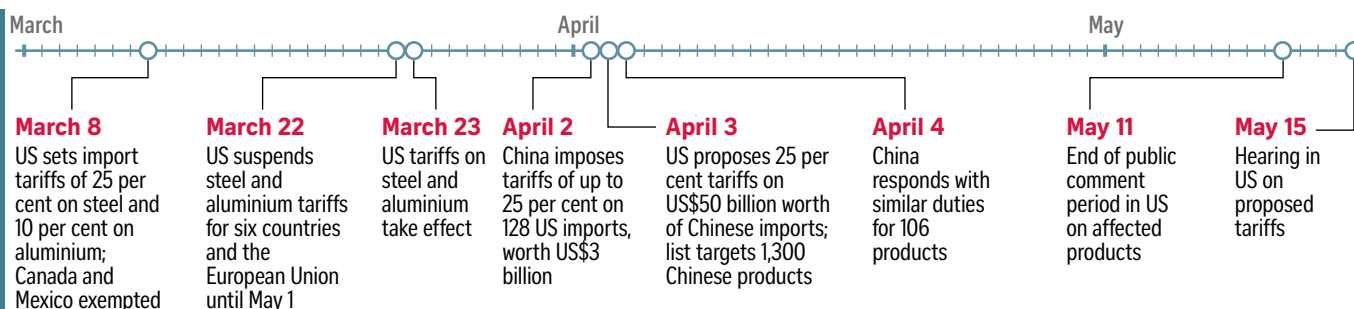
U.S. METALWORKS

The latest round of proposed US tariffs target several specific categories of steel and aluminum made in China. That is on top of duties announced last month, meaning that some forms of those products will face a 50 per cent fee to reach the US.



Sources: REUTERS, BLOOMBERG, AFP, VOICE OF AMERICA, JAPAN TIMES PHOTOS: REUTERS, BLOOMBERG, AFP STRAITS TIMES GRAPHICS

TIMELINE



Elaborating on the weaknesses of the WTO dispute settlement mechanism, the report strongly hints at the need for unilateral action against China.

It claims that the WTO rules “were not formulated with a state-led economy in mind”, and can deal only with “good faith disputes”. It adds that the problem is complicated by China’s “incomplete rule of law”, including through government officials’ “abuse of administrative processes” – suggesting that even if China were to commit to abide by WTO rules, administrators get away with ignoring these commitments.

Thus, it says that besides taking its disputes with China to the WTO, the US will also use “other needed mechanisms, including mechanisms available under US trade law”.

“The United States is determined to use every tool available to address harmful Chinese policies and practices, regardless of whether they are directly disciplined by WTO rules,” it says.

And so it is that the US has invoked Section 301 of its 1974 Trade Act to unilaterally impose tariffs on China.

The latest rounds of US tariffs are targeted at 1,300 categories of US\$50 billion worth of mostly high-end Chinese goods, including flat screen TVs, medical devices, aircraft parts, batteries, machinery and high-tech components and uranium. The US also plans to restrict Chinese investments in technology and has lodged a complaint at the WTO on China’s technology licensing policies. China has also dragged the US to the WTO over the Section 301 tariffs.

While Chinese-made consumer goods such as clothing, toys and shoes have, so far, been excluded from the tariffs, this does not mean US consumers won’t be affected.

SUPPLY CHAIN IMPACT

As Mr Rod Hunter, partner of law firm Baker & McKenzie, pointed out in an e-mail: “US manufacturers handle the processes they are efficient at and buy from those making components more efficiently. If you put taxes on inputs for US manufacturers, then it will ultimately make US products more expensive. A lot of US manufacturers will look at this list and see input costs going up. If the administration imposes

25 per cent taxes on US\$50 billion in goods... it’s very hard not to affect US consumers and workers.”

Companies outside the US and China will also feel the impact. Many of the products targeted by the US are made in production chains.

While the final products are shipped out of China, they often contain components from other countries. All the companies involved in these chains would be hit by the tariffs – including American companies.

So while the US tariffs aim to hit higher-end areas of Chinese industry, they will cause collateral damage to American companies and consumers as well – and to companies elsewhere.

However, some economists speculate that countries such as Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand could also benefit as some supply chains from China migrate to South-east Asia.

China’s retaliation over the US tariffs has been stronger than most observers expected.

It started cautiously. In response to the March 23 tariffs on steel and aluminium, it imposed tariffs on US\$3 billion worth of imports from 128 categories of US goods, including pork, wine, nuts, fruit

and stainless steel pipes. But then, on Wednesday, in response to the Section 301 tariffs, it hit harder. In a barbed quip, China’s government pointed out “it’s only polite to reciprocate” and then promptly targeted US\$50 billion worth of 106 categories of US goods, including soya beans, cars, chemicals, beef, cigars and whisky.

Many of China’s tariffs will hit US states with big concentrations of Republican supporters, including farm states, as well as the Midwest and parts of the south. California – a big wine and fruit producer – and Washington state (where Boeing is based) will also be hit.

China is taking a risk. As the country with the trade surplus, it has more to lose if there is a trade war – but it is likely counting on a negotiated truce, with the US forced to soften its position, in part, by domestic political pressure.

This is a fair bet. The Section 301 US tariffs will not go into effect until at least June. Meanwhile, there will be a public consultation period; companies have until May 22 to file objections.

There will likely be a flood of them.

While US business groups are broadly in agreement that some of China’s trade practices are unfair, they have problems with the Trump administration’s use of tariffs as a remedy.

LONG AND DIFFICULT TALKS

Several have already complained about the potential unintended consequences in terms of the impact on costs and jobs. They include the US Chamber of Commerce, the US-China Business Council, the National Association of Manufacturers, the Information Technology Industry Council, the National Retail Federation and the agricultural lobby group, Farmers for Free Trade.

Republicans in Congress, whose constituents will be among the victims of the tariffs and of China’s retaliation, may also join the protests.

China does not face political or business opposition. First of all, it is more the victim than the perpetrator of the tariff battle. Nor are Chinese Communist Party leaders or Chinese companies likely to protest against the defensive actions China is taking.

While the tariff brinkmanship continues, both the Trump administration and Chinese officials have indicated a willingness to negotiate. The negotiations are likely to be drawn out and difficult.

If the USTR report is any guide, the US is seeking no less than an overhaul of China’s state-led economic model. This is unlikely to happen. It is also too late to check China’s strength in several areas, such as artificial intelligence, robotics, railway technologies and supply chain coordination.

However, the pressure on Beijing to make concessions will be intense, especially on issues such as state subsidies, government procurement and policies on technology transfer – about which some of China’s trade partners other than the US have also raised objections.

In the end, the chances are that we will not see a trade war.

What we will more likely see is prolonged tension in the trade and broader economic relationship between the US and China that will only gradually ease as China moves closer to a market economy.

vikram@sph.com.sg

Lim Yan Liang
China Correspondent



All the President's men

The close of China's annual political season saw a major reorganisation of the central government that will assist President Xi Jinping in the next five years. Here's a look at all the important faces to know:

TOP TIER

Wang Qishan, 69, Vice-President

- The man behind Mr Xi's thumping anti-graft campaign which has claimed countless high-profile scalps – like former security chief Zhou Yongkang – Mr Wang's appointment as Vice-President will likely reshape a previously ceremonial office. His experience in fixing commerce problems, which he accrued when he was vice-premier, means the Xi confidant is likely to play a lead role in managing United States-China relations, especially as the threat of a trade war looms.



Li Keqiang, 62, Premier

- A one-time rival to Mr Xi, the former Henan and Liaoning party boss who rose up through the Communist Youth League (CYL) has seen the responsibilities of the premiership shrink on his watch. An economist by training, Mr Li is still nominal head of government and exerts influence over economic policy, but the appointment of Mr Wang and top economic aide Liu He means he enters his second term with less direct power over government affairs.



Li Zhanshu, 67, chairman of National People's Congress

- Mr Xi's chief of staff and key adviser, the No. 3 in China's leadership hierarchy has been a fixture at important meetings with foreign leaders, such as at the Xi-Trump summit, and has also served as Mr Xi's personal emissary to Russia. A long-time ally of Mr Xi, their friendship stretches back three decades to when the two men were party secretaries of neighbouring counties in the industrial province of Hebei.



VICE-PREMIERS



Newly elected Vice-Premiers (from left) Hu Chunhua, Han Zheng, Sun Chunlan and Liu He taking an oath to the Constitution at the seventh plenary session of the National People's Congress on March 19.

Hu Chunhua, 54, Vice-Premier

- Once seen as a potential successor to Mr Xi, Mr Hu's political prospects dimmed after Mr Xi declined to promote the former Guangdong party chief to the elite Politburo Standing Committee (PSC), the top echelon of political power in China. But his age and appointment as vice-premier means Mr Hu, a Hu Jintao protégé (no relation) who also rose up through the CYL, may yet be groomed for higher office.

Han Zheng, 63, Executive Vice-Premier

- The former Shanghai party boss is first among equals on the next rung of the leadership, as the only vice-premier who also sits on the elite seven-man PSC. Trained in economics, Mr Han will run the State Council, or Cabinet, together with Mr Li Keqiang. He is also likely to have a diplomatic role, as he was Mr Xi's envoy to the Winter Olympics in South Korea.

Sun Chunlan, 67, Vice-Premier

- The only woman occupying a top government position, Ms Sun is a former party boss of the politically important Tianjin. Ms Sun heads the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) United Front Work Department, the organ in charge of spreading the CCP's influence abroad, which includes getting Chinese students overseas to uphold the party line and limiting Taiwan's space on the international stage.

Liu He, 66, Vice-Premier

- The Harvard-educated economist who represented China at Davos last year serves as Mr Xi's top economic adviser, and is a close confidant having grown up in the same elite circles in Beijing. Mr Liu double-hats as director of the General Office serving the CCP's Leading Group for Financial and Economic Affairs, the highest body coordinating China's economic matters, putting him at the heart of Mr Xi's inner circle.

KEY PORTFOLIOS



**Yang Xiaodu, 64,
director of National
Supervision Commission**

- Formerly the Minister for Supervision and deputy secretary of the party's fearsome anti-corruption watchdog under Mr Wang Qishan, Mr Yang heads the new super-agency that brings the various anti-corruption departments under one roof and is charged with investigating both party members and civil servants. As its first director, he is tasked with institutionalising China's anti-graft campaigns.



**Wei Fenghe, 64,
Defence Minister**

- Among the first in the top military brass to declare allegiance to Mr Xi when he took office in 2012, the former missile force commander has been instrumental in carrying out Mr Xi's reorganisation of the People's Liberation Army into a more streamlined fighting force. General Wei is likely to help Mr Xi deepen military reforms, which includes greater integration of the various services through a higher training tempo and more combat realistic drills.



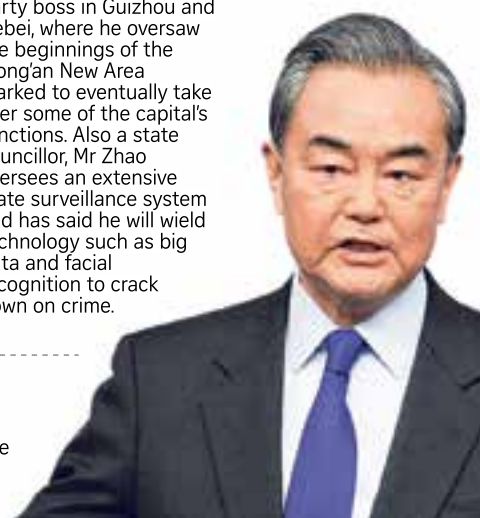
**Yi Gang, 60,
governor of the People's
Bank of China (PBOC)**

- A protege and long-time deputy of his predecessor Zhou Xiaochuan, China's first new central bank chief in 15 years is a US-educated economist who takes over an empowered PBOC that was last week granted more control over laws and regulations for the banking and insurance sectors. The former professor takes over at a time when the PBOC's policies have a growing impact on the world's markets.



**Zhao Kezhi, 64,
Minister of Public
Security**

- A Xi loyalist, China's new police chief was former party boss in Guizhou and Hebei, where he oversaw the beginnings of the Xiongan New Area marked to eventually take over some of the capital's functions. Also a state councillor, Mr Zhao oversees an extensive state surveillance system and has said he will wield technology such as big data and facial recognition to crack down on crime.



Wang Yi, 64, Foreign Minister

- A seasoned diplomat who has served as ambassador to Japan and headed China's Taiwan Affairs Office, Mr Wang not only retained his foreign minister post but was also promoted to state councillor, China's top diplomatic job. This is a sign that Beijing is boosting its foreign affairs apparatus, once a second-tier office, just as perception of China as a threat is gaining ground.

EXPANDED RESPONSIBILITIES



**Li Ganjie, 53,
Ecological
Environment Minister**

- An environment protection official for 18 years, Mr Li heads the expanded ministry with a mandate now covering areas such as air, water and soil protection, which were previously divided among different ministries. With environment protection now a political priority, he will oversee a ministry with expanded powers to implement and enforce environment protection policies.

PHOTOS:
REUTERS,
BLOOMBERG,
EPA-EFE,
XINHUA



**Guo Shuqing, 61,
head of China Banking and Insurance
Regulatory Commission**

- Considered a reform-minded bureaucrat, the former top banker and deputy central bank governor heads the new super agency created through the merger of China's banking and insurance regulators. Mr Guo is expected to lead a sustained crackdown on risks in China's finance sector, such as shadow banking and risky investment and lending practices by both banks and insurers.



Lu Hao, 50, Natural Resources Minister

- A rising political star, the former Heilongjiang governor who became CYL first secretary at 41 now heads the ministry that combines agencies previously in charge of land, resources, maritime protection and surveying. Mr Lu will be watched for how his new ministry oversees land use and urban planning amid greater competition for land, as well as allocation of rights over water resources, grasslands and forests.



**Luo Shugang, 62,
Minister of Culture and Tourism**

- A senior propaganda official, Mr Luo was appointed to this newly-created ministry that merges the Ministry of Culture and the National Tourism Administration at a time when China sees tourism and culture working in tandem to enhance its soft power and global influence. The ideologue is expected to strengthen China's overseas links at a time when its soft power is taking on a sharper point.

Helping citizens to keep it real online

Intense debates arose during the public hearings of the Select Committee on Deliberate Online Falsehoods on whether new laws are needed to deal with a scourge that has been put on steroids by the online world. Despite the pervasiveness of fake news, activists maintain that existing legislation suffices because they fear overreaching laws might be abused. Others, however, pointed to the untrammelled power of giant tech firms who have contributed to the hyper speed at which fake news travels. Their lack of transparency over how they operate – from the algorithms that promote stories to the organisations that pay for content to be produced and played up – not to mention the shocking recent revelations about misuse of users' data, do not inspire confidence that relying on self-policing will produce results. Old remedies are insufficient for new ills; yet strong prescriptions might have unintended results, like curbing news reporting and fair comment. Striking the right balance for the nation is the challenge facing the committee.

A tactic of black propaganda

operations of the past, fake news is being leveraged determinedly now for political purposes because the results are often spectacular, as witnessed during the 2016 American presidential election and the Brexit referendum.

Old remedies are insufficient for new ills; yet strong prescriptions might have unintended results, like curbing news reporting and fair comment. Striking the right balance for the nation is the challenge facing the committee.

Here, half of those surveyed by Reach, a government feedback unit, identified WhatsApp and Facebook as the main sources of bogus news. This circulates widely because it evokes suspicion, fear and anger. The truth might sound bland in comparison, especially when presented in officialese and jargon, as well as when there is inordinate delay in fashioning a response. Not surprisingly, facts take about six times longer to reach people, according to one study.

The harm of fake news is accentuated by news filter bubbles which echo the beliefs of the like-minded and exert polarising effects. Tech giants also play a part in influencing people in the way they covertly calibrate algorithms to rank content before pushing it at targeted users. In the Cambridge Analytica scandal, misappropriated data of Facebook users was used for microtargeting purposes – individualised streaming of dubious messages to influence the unsuspecting. Such practices must be reined in; tech giants have to own up to the role they are playing in shaping democratic processes and outcomes, however inadvertent.

New laws alone won't solve the problems created by disinformation campaigns. Other avenues worth exploring include media literacy; fact-checking mechanisms; Web extensions to flag what is real, fake or satire; and an independent body for objective judgments when the truth is not black or white. Ultimately, citizens must be empowered with information – and sceptical minds – to check the spread of false claims. □

Gambits threaten rule-based order

This has been a challenging and frenetic month for global trade. Earlier this month, American President Donald Trump announced import tariffs of 25 per cent on steel and 10 per cent on aluminium in the name of national security, initially on all countries. Then on March 22, Mr Trump called for tariffs on US\$60 billion (S\$79 billion) worth of Chinese goods, in addition to tighter restrictions on inward investment from China. Beijing promptly responded that it would, if necessary, retaliate.

To some extent, and at least so far, the protectionist threats have been more bark than bite. For example, soon after announcing the metal tariffs, Mr Trump allowed several countries to be exempted – first, Canada and Mexico (with whom the US is renegotiating the North American Free Trade Agreement); and later, Argentina, Australia, Brazil, the European Union and South Korea. Given that collectively these countries account for more than two-thirds of US imports of steel and aluminium, the exemptions significantly dilute the

potential impact of the tariffs.

The tariffs on Chinese goods – the list of which will be published by mid-April – are not due to take effect until June. Prior to that, a public consultation will be held, during which there will almost certainly be pushback. Large sections of US industry would stand to lose from the tariffs, as well as from the potential retaliation by China. These would include much of the organised retail sector as well as the information technology industry and agricultural interests.

What is worrying is that the World Trade Organisation (WTO) has been largely reduced to the role of a spectator in the ongoing trade drama.

Meanwhile, US and Chinese trade officials are engaged in talks. The Chinese, who have long favoured a negotiated solution, have already indicated a willingness to be flexible. Issues which the US and many of China's other trade partners attach high priority to include requiring foreign

companies to transfer technologies, and inadequate protection of intellectual property rights.

Thus, since the tariffs were announced, US officials have indicated that they are “cautiously hopeful” of reaching mutually satisfactory trade arrangements with China. This is by no means assured, but hopefully, what threatened to be a potentially disastrous trade war just a week ago, might turn out to be a resolvable trade skirmish.

What is worrying is that the World Trade Organisation (WTO) has been largely reduced to the role of a spectator in the ongoing trade drama. By invoking national security as the rationale for the metal tariffs, Mr Trump was able to bypass the WTO (as well as the US Congress). The tariffs on China were based on Section 301 of the US Trade Act of 1974, which permits unilateral action by the US. The move violates the spirit, if not the letter, of WTO rules. So even though we may avoid the prospect of a trade war, for now, we are witnessing threats to the rules-based system that governs world trade. That shouldn't be taken lightly. □



Public Hearing of the Select Committee on deliberate online falsehoods.
PHOTO: GOV.SG

Keeping it real in Singapore

A high-level parliamentary committee examines how the Republic could thwart deliberate online falsehoods

Three months after Singapore's Parliament voted unanimously to form a Select Committee to study the issue of deliberate online falsehoods, the panel completed the public hearings phase of its work on March 29.

Over eight days, the committee heard from 65 speakers in public hearings that lasted 50 hours. It also considered 170 written submissions. It will reconvene in May to deliberate on a report of its

findings to Parliament.

A number of clues on what to expect from the committee's report were revealed during the public hearing phase, with committee members showing their thinking through the questions they asked and the themes they focused on.

Here's a look at five recommendations that could emerge from the fake news Select Committee, compiled by our political writers Tham Yuen-C, Ng Jun Sen and Seow Bei Yi. □



Defining fake news

A key question asked of the Select Committee had to do with how deliberate online falsehoods would be defined.

During the exchanges, committee members gave a hint of what factors could be considered in defining it: the deliberate intent of the person or organisation spreading the information; that it appears on an online platform; that it is demonstrably false; and has a significant impact, such as affecting national security or racial and religious harmony.

Home Affairs and Law Minister

K. Shanmugam stressed several times that the committee was not dealing with opinions, no matter how irresponsible, as long as they are based on a substratum of facts.

A few said that any new laws to counter deliberate online falsehoods must be clear in their definitions,

Other witnesses suggested that the Government should not be the sole definer of truth, with some saying that independent bodies should define it instead.



Home Affairs and Law Minister K. Shanmugam said courts have no difficulty identifying what is false and what is true.
PHOTO: GOV.SG

Lawyers and law academics generally agreed that it was possible to define a deliberate online falsehood.

On this, Mr Shanmugam said falsehoods are already defined in various places in Singapore's current laws, and the courts have "no difficulty identifying what is false and what is true".

Enacting new legislation

The issue of legislation was mentioned every day during hearings.

Several committee members, such as Law and Home Affairs Minister K. Shanmugam, MP Edwin Tong and Nominated MP Chia Yong Yong said several times that they personally felt new legislation was necessary.

This was also the sentiment of Singapore Management University School of Law dean Goh Yihan, who said that the current legislative tools “run up against limitations - of scope, speed and adaptability”.

Many recommendations during the hearings involved some kind of mechanism that can quickly remove or prevent access to online falsehoods, whether by compelling people or technology platforms such as Facebook and Twitter to remove the illegal content or blocking them.

Some who supported the idea of a new law also said it should be carefully calibrated, so that it is not



Any legislation to counter deliberate online falsehoods should not be broad and sweeping, said SPH editor-in-chief Warren Fernandez. PHOTO: GOV.SG

too sweeping and broad, and does not punish those who inadvertently share falsehoods or crimp the ability of journalists to do their job.

Several activists and content producers running alternative news websites strongly objected to new legislation, suggesting that it will be used to curtail free speech and stifle legitimate dissenting views.

But some speakers made a distinction between deliberate online falsehoods and free speech.

National University of Singapore (NUS) law professor Thio Li-ann, an expert in constitutional law, said untruths - designed to mislead people, manipulate election results and turn groups against one another - harm society and undermine democracy, and belong to a category of speech that does not warrant protection.

Regulating tech companies

At several points over the eight-day hearings, the committee showed a grotesque cartoon of male, ethnic minority migrants abusing a semi-nude white woman and killing her baby - accompanied by a Twitter hashtag “#DeportallMuslims”.

It was an image seemingly created to inflame anti-immigrant sentiments around the world. But during a British parliamentary hearing, a Twitter executive said the tech giant would not remove the image as “it was not in breach of its hateful conduct policy”.

In Singapore, representatives of tech giants Google, Facebook and Twitter could not answer when Law and Home Affairs Minister K. Shanmugam used this same example to show that self-



Facebook Asia-Pacific vice-president of public policy Simon Milner admitted that it did wrong in withholding information about the data breach. PHOTO: GOV.SG

policing by the tech firms was insufficient.

As self-regulation appears to be lacking, several speakers tell Insight that the committee is likely to deliberate on ways to regulate social media platforms, which in recent years have become very dominant forums carrying a great deal of citizen discourse.

These rules could force tech firms to take more active steps, such as flagging disputed content, strengthening their detection of falsehoods, deprioritising unreliable online news sources and removing fake accounts.

Setting up fact-checking mechanisms

Having a fact-checking mechanism was a popular suggestion at the Select Committee hearings, and could be among the measures to be recommended.

While the end goal is to help people verify information, witnesses proposed different ways to do this, including having a fact-checking service, setting up independent fact-checking organisations or supporting fact-checking networks online.

Singapore Press Holdings and broadcaster Channel NewsAsia (CNA) said they were willing to form a fact-checking alliance, which could include not only media companies and industry practitioners, but also other interested parties. For such an alliance to be seen as

a trusted arbiter of truth, it should sit independently from government bodies and commercial entities, they said.

A concern raised by the committee was whether fact-checking services would be able to address serious falsehoods that have national security or public health implications.

Senior Minister of State for Communications and Information Janil Puthucheary, a committee member, asked if an independent fact-checking body could respond fast enough, suggesting that a take-down may be a necessary first step in such instances.



Committee member Senior Minister of State for Communications and Information Janil Puthucheary asked if an independent fact-checking body would be able to respond fast enough. PHOTO: GOV.SG

Enhancing media literacy

Including media literacy as part of a multi-pronged approach to counter the spread of online falsehoods was a recurring call by academics, students and civil society alike.

The building of such literacy, and urging against the sharing of information without checks, could form long-term

measures to counter disinformation, said Mr Benjamin Ang, a senior fellow at the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, who was a witness at the hearings.

Singapore Management University law don Eugene Tan noted in his written submission that “there will always

be falsehoods deliberately sown; no legislation can, and will, put an end to such activity”.

This is why “our first line of defence has to be a population of media-savvy individuals”, he said, adding that it would be “too late” to rely on the authorities to step in each time.

Disinformation in action

Foreign and local experts at the Select Committee for Deliberate Online Falsehoods brought up examples of deliberate falsehoods and disinformation they have come across in their countries and the region. Lester Hio looks at eight countries mentioned during the hearing, where disinformation has been and is in action.

France

- The French presidential election last year was hit by falsehoods spread during the election campaign.
- Eventual presidential winner Emmanuel Macron was the target of fake news articles which accused him of harbouring secret offshore accounts.
- These rumours circulated hours before a televised debate with his opponent Marine Le Pen, complete with falsified documents posted online.
- In January, Mr Macron said he would present new legislation to fight the spread of fake news.



United States

- The term "fake news" gained prominence during the 2016 United States presidential election, popularised by eventual presidential winner Donald Trump.
- The election has since been discovered to have suspected Russian involvement, which Mr Trump allegedly worked with to sway the campaign in his favour.
- The election also saw the use of online botnets – automated accounts run by computers – to spread rumours and false news reports discrediting the candidates.



South Africa

- Sophisticated botnets on Twitter were used to influence the results of the election of a new leader for the African National Congress last December.
- These accounts were created to impersonate genuine Twitter users in order to seem more legitimate. They shared same names with Twitter users, but replaced lower-case "Ls" with "Is" and "Os" with numerical zeros.
- While they did not appear in large numbers, this serves as a warning of future tactics in the upcoming presidential election in 2019, said defence and disinformation analyst Ben Nimmo.

Germany

- In 2016, a 13-year old girl named Lisa of Russian descent claimed she was abducted and raped by three men of Middle Eastern appearance in Berlin.
- Russian media accused German police of not taking action, and featured emotional interviews with family and community.
- While the Berlin police issued a statement after interviewing the victim that there was neither abduction nor rape, and that the girl had retracted her initial story and had actually spent the night at a friend's place instead, Russian-language media continued to report on the story without giving equal play to the Berlin police's response.
- This led to activists accusing the authorities of a cover-up, resulting in hundreds of ethnic Russians and anti-migrant activists holding protests against Germany.

Latvia

- Latvia is a target of Russian-sponsored disinformation, due to its history and proximity.
- Russian propaganda targets Russian-speakers in Latvia, downplaying its growing economy and playing up its structural problems such as high social inequality and poor healthcare.



Ukraine

- Russian-led disinformation campaigns make up most of the fight against falsehoods in Ukraine, as the Kremlin seeks to consolidate its control over the country.
- Russian media, such as RT and Sputnik, have carried out long, sustained disinformation campaigns in Ukraine for years, especially after Russian military incursions in 2014.

Malaysia

- A data firm which uses profiling to send unique messages, which could include disinformation, to voters might be at play in Malaysia.
- Cambridge Analytica, which also worked with Mr Donald Trump during the 2016 United States election, might have been hired by people involved in the upcoming general elections, said Dr Shashi Jayakumar of the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies.
- The firm can send targeted ads to users based on survey behaviour and online profiles, including content which might be false or fake.

Indonesia

- A fake news factory, Saracen, charged its clients tens of millions of rupiah to publish and spread fake news and even hate speech against others.
- It is thought to be involved in spreading rumours against former Jakarta governor Basuki Tjahaja Purnama, which included attacks on his Chinese ancestry and Christian religion. Current Indonesian president Joko Widodo is also an ongoing target.
- Online fake news factories continue to flourish in Indonesia based on the lucrative nature of the trade, with one estimate suggesting that a single popular post on Saracen could bring in 100 million rupiah (\$9,500).



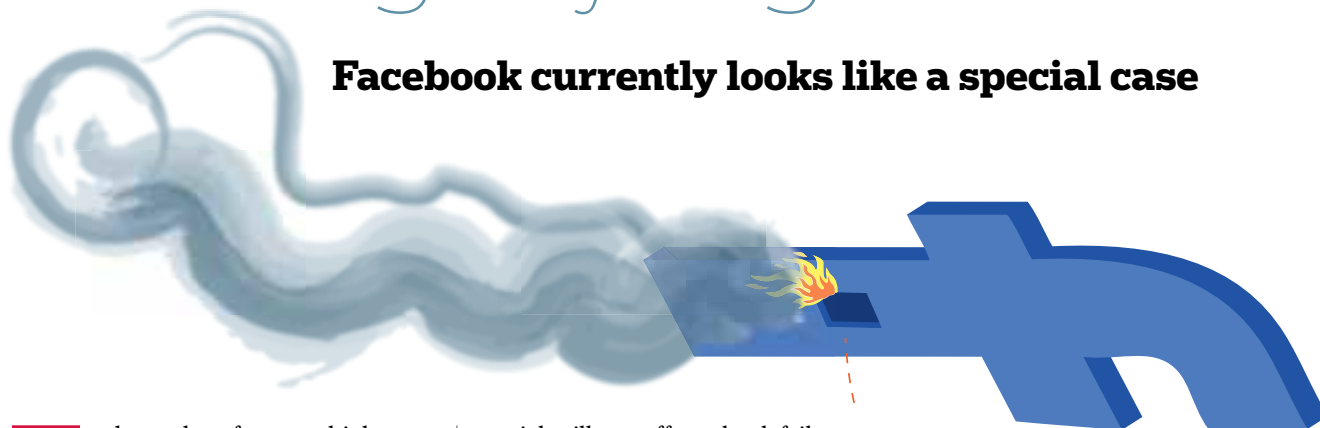
Simon Johnson

For The Straits Times



Should tech companies be more tightly regulated?

Facebook currently looks like a special case



In the wake of recent high-profile tech scares, such as a fatality involving an Uber self-driving car and Facebook's alleged mishandling of users' personal data, stricter regulation of the industry – along the lines of, say, the financial sector – has become the policy question du jour. Stock market values for leading tech companies are down – or perhaps just becoming more volatile – in the light of such concerns.

Obviously, rules regarding motor vehicles need to be examined carefully. In the United States, this is generally a state-level decision, though the federal National Transportation Safety Board has a very good reputation for its investigations and often changes how we think about best practices. The NTSB is investigating the Uber crash and previously assessed a fatality involving a Tesla vehicle.

As for Facebook, press reports suggest that the company may have made some egregious mistakes. One hopes we will learn more about the details of its decision-making on data privacy when its chairman and CEO, Mark Zuckerberg, testifies before Congress, as he has agreed to do.

But responding with tighter regulation at the federal level seems premature, even for these specific activities – let alone for the broader tech sector.

Finance is regulated because of major po-

tential spillover effects: bank failures can bring down the whole economy. That is why safety nets, such as deposit insurance, have been put in place. But the existence of deposit insurance creates room for abuse, in the form of excessive risk-taking, because bank executives get the upside if things go well, and any potential losses are imposed on the insurance fund. Preventing abuse and encouraging appropriate caution requires rules, and the US Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation is one of the world's best examples of how to make these work.

The world of high technology – computer hardware, software, and digital services – is very different. There is plenty of competition for hardware. If one firm gets into trouble, it will not bring down the system. Of course, some policymakers like to favour “national champions” vis-à-vis international competitors, but this raises issues that are different from regulating behaviour.

Amazon is a powerful and rising company, spanning multiple activities – now including grocery stores and the delivery of fresh food. But it has plenty of competitors in this area, and existing rules and regulations (such as those covering how food is handled) seem sufficient.

Other digital-based companies, such as Google and Ap-



ST ILLUSTRATION: MANUEL A FRANCISCO

ple, are very strong in specific activities. But they do not exhibit the kind of monopoly pricing behaviour that triggers anti-trust action by the government. And it is not clear what other kind of regulation would be helpful to customers.

A MAJOR STEP FORWARD

The European Union is considering more regulation of digital firms, and insisting on greater care for the handling of data may make sense. But the EU also substantially missed out on the round of digital entrepreneurship that began in the 1990s, and it is not generally at the forefront of this sector currently – so few people in the US are rushing to follow its example.

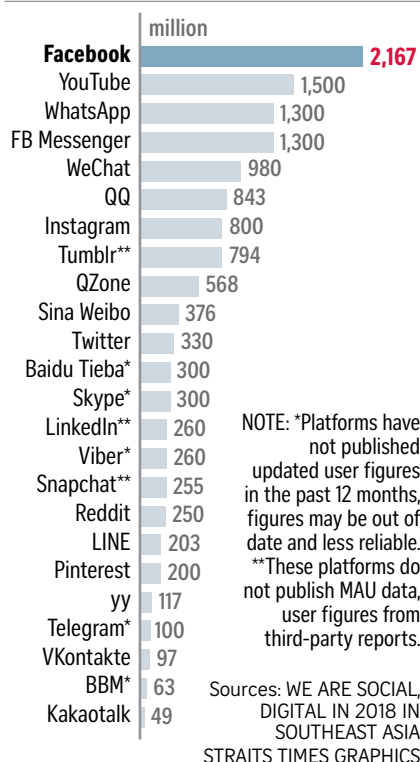
To avoid misunderstanding, let me be clear: not everything is going well with regard to US government policy in this area. In particular, the impending repeal of the “net neutrality” rule by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) appears to be a major step toward



Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg. PHOTO: REUTERS

Global Social Media

Facebook remains the most popular social network worldwide, as of January 2018, ranked by number of active users (in millions)



favouring large incumbents and away from making it easy for digital startups to prosper quickly. Andy Lippman of the MIT Media Lab has a very good video explainer on this issue, which should be required viewing for policymakers (and voters).

Facebook currently looks like a special case, in the sense that network effects mean millions of people will stick with this service, regardless of how they are treated. And there may have been some misunderstanding or (allegedly) miscommunication regarding how their personal data would be treated. Facebook faces understandable political pressure to change its practices, but what it really needs is new competitors that prove they can be profitable while putting privacy first.

Cryptocurrencies reflect a growing overlap between finance and tech. It would not be a surprise if the US Securities and Exchange Commission determined that a great deal of recent money-raising activity (known as Initial Coin Offerings) in this industry actually amounts to the issuance of securities, which would trigger the application of various rules and requirements. But such a decision would not amount to

new regulation – just the application of existing regulations. The principles applied by securities regulators since the 1930s remain sensible: protect investors and require sufficient disclosure of all the risks involved in an investment.

The same is true of self-driving cars. There were 40,000 road fatalities in 2016 in the US, and more than one million worldwide, according to the latest World Health Organisation data. As in all previous years, human error of various kinds was responsible for most of these deaths. Reducing road fatalities is an important goal, and the growing engagement of tech companies (and competition with the established auto companies) should be welcomed, in the interest of improving road safety. Here, too, existing regulatory principles, and the agencies that apply and enforce them, should be given an opportunity to prove themselves. PROJECT SYNDICATE.

The writer is a professor at MIT's Sloan School of Management and the co-author of White House Burning: The Founding Fathers, Our National Debt, and Why It Matters to You □



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Chua Mui Hoong

Opinion Editor



My relationship with Facebook: It's complicated

Taking to Facebook to announce an intention to withdraw from it

I have a love-hate relationship with Facebook. If there was a status update for Facebook, it would read: It's complicated.

I've been on Facebook for years, and come to love it. I check it frequently for work reasons, to read what others are posting and commenting on. As Opinion editor, I use it to promote and share commentaries published in The Straits Times. I use Messenger to harangue contributors, asking them to write for The Straits Times. I'm sometimes able to identify topics that whet their interests, by looking at what they have been posting.

I obsessively click through on my Facebook friends' many, interesting articles. I selectively Like, Feel Sad or Love them. I count the number of times friends Like my post, Comment on it, or Share it.

When I'm feeling lonesome, it gives me a sense of community and connection with others. Never mind if I'm in a foul mood that day; on Facebook I can post cheery updates, engage people I have never met in serious conversations or bantering ones, and then feel better.

Facebook can be an emotional crutch, and I, of all people, who work, eat, live and breathe news and information, should know.

Then, last Wednesday, I sat in my office Toast Box cafe, and slowly scrolled through my list of Facebook apps, and deleted them one by one. After about 30 minutes, I had only removed about 50 of them. I hadn't even known I had given permission to these apps to reside on my Facebook account, let alone to mine my account for my personal data, and my friends' data.

By Wednesday evening, as more information about Cambridge Analytica broke, I had enough. I started drafting a Facebook post that said: "Fed Up. Going

on Facebook fast for the rest of Lent."

Then the irony of taking to Facebook to announce my intention to withdraw from it – which would compel me to check feverishly to see what my friends thought of the decision – struck me.

I deleted that post. Instead, I went to settings, clicked on general account settings, picked manage account, and hit Deactivate.

I couldn't bring myself to #deleteFacebook. I could only deactivate it. Like I said, it's complicated. There might be some co-dependency going on.

Deactivating my Facebook account was an act of pique, a gesture of annoyance at the social media giant for the way it has acted.

It has certainly been less than upfront about the fact that it had let third-party apps access users' data and users' friends list, without their permission.

When it found out that such data, from 270,000 users who took part in an initial survey in 2014, had been passed on to data analytics company Cambridge Analytica (CA), it requested that CA delete the data. CA said Okay. This was in 2015. Facebook didn't check if it had done so, and kept mum about it.

Until March 2018, when a whistleblower went to the media with the story.

CA reportedly used some of those data to build a database of 50 million profiles of voters and used it to help its client, Mr Donald Trump, win the 2016 United States presidential campaign, so the stakes are high.

The social media giant is now in hot soup. Its executives have been grilled in



ST ILLUSTRATION: MIEL

the British and Singapore Parliaments, and likely, the United States Congress is next. The US Federal Trade Commission (FTC) is investigating if Facebook violated an earlier promise to get users' consent before harvesting their data.

As a Facebook user, I've often found it sneaky when it comes to privacy issues.

Many of us will take some care to set privacy settings when we first set up an account, or once we get the hang

of using it. I've certainly gone into Facebook to specify who can see what information, or who can post items to my timeline, and even who can send me friend requests.

A few years ago, I was puzzled as to why those settings did not appear to be respected. Then I read in the news that Facebook was changing default settings without telling users!

In 2011, it was taken to task by the FTC over its privacy settings policy and was asked to get user consent for certain changes to privacy settings.

At that time, a news report highlighted FTC's description of Facebook's "deceptive and unfair practices": "For example, it said Facebook promised users that it would not share personal information with advertisers, but it did. Also, the company had failed to warn users that it was changing its website in December 2009 so that certain information that users had designated as private, such as their 'Friends List', would be made public."

As part of that investigation and subsequent settlement, Facebook was also forced to subject itself to 20 years of independent audits.

So, one would think Facebook would have learnt to take data privacy much more seriously right? For example, surely the privacy settings you set are cast in stone?

Unfortunately, no. Because there are settings, and there are settings, and smartphone apps and Facebook apps are so smart, most of us have no clue what permission we are giving them and what liberties they are taking with our personal information when we download an app.

After all, Facebook is just a platform on which thousands of apps ride. Smart developers are designing fun, interactive games and quizzes that lure you into taking part. For example, I'm a sucker for psychological quizzes. What mythological Greek goddess do I take after? What colour appeals to me naturally? What does my profile picture say about my sociability/ physical age/ sociopathic tendencies? I often while away minutes before bed doing these quizzes.

Until last Wednesday when I started looking at app permissions, I hadn't realised that answering those quizzes also meant I had inadvertently let them take up permanent residency in my account, and permitted them to trawl my data and even my friends'.

In fact, it looks like a lot more than lists of names, workplaces, and birthdates are being harvested. Location data, likes, dislikes, what you search for,

and what you click through to see, are all potential goldmines.

As we now know, that initial 270,000 users' data became 50 million users, as the app trawled their contacts. This is not so surprising, when you consider that if each person has just 200 contacts, that 270,000 users will have 54 million contacts in all.

What profile can it build of those 50 million users? CA itself admitted recently that it had "5,000 data points on over 230 million American voters", or almost the entire US population. Capturing so many data points translate to a very high level of granularity in figuring out what makes a person tick – and selling that information en masse to advertisers.

Many netizens are willing to trade some privacy for the convenience and connections of being on social media networks. But that relationship with the social media platform must be based on trust.

I wouldn't mind so much if advertisers targeted me to sell things like handbags. At one phase, I was clicking through many handbag ads, and I was quite pleased to see more such ads popping up on my feed. I enjoyed watching videos from crowdfunding stores promising the world's best office laptop handbag for women, or a smart travel jacket with pockets for all your devices.

But I would hate for my personal data to be sold to people who want to get into my brain to influence my vote or my ideas, or to manipulate me into joining a protest, an organisation or a riot.

Personal agency is very important, especially in an age of social media nudges and algorithm-defined news that pull us along predefined paths. I would like to think I can remain an autonomous person with my own views and preferences, and not be some rag doll jerked here and there by some master-puppeteer.

Apart from the US, Facebook is also facing the heat in Germany for consent issues.

Reuters reported last month: "The Federation of German Consumer Organisations (VZVB) said that Facebook's default settings and some of its terms of service were in breach of consumer law, and that the court had found parts of the consent to data usage to be invalid.

'Facebook hides default settings that

are not privacy-friendly in its privacy centre and does not provide sufficient information about it when users register,' said Mr Heiko Duenkel, litigation policy officer at the VZVB."

The report added: "The Federal Cartel Office, in an interim update on an investigation into Facebook, said in December that it objected to the way the company gains access to third-party data when an account is opened.

"This includes tapping information from its own WhatsApp and Instagram products – as well as how it tracks which sites its users access.

"One concern highlighted by the consumer rights group was that, in Facebook's app for smartphones, a service was pre-activated that revealed the user's location to the person he was chatting to.

"Also, in the privacy settings, ticks were already placed in boxes that allowed search engines to link to the user's timeline, meaning that anyone would be able quickly and easily to find a user's profile.

"The judges ruled that all five of the default settings on Facebook that VZVB complained about are invalid,' the group said in a statement, adding that several other of Facebook's terms of use were found to be illegal."

This was just a month ago. It does not look like Facebook's track record on user privacy has substantively improved.

Many netizens are willing to trade some privacy for the convenience and connections of being on social media networks. But that relationship with the social media platform must be based on trust.

Platforms have to show they are trustworthy custodians of data. After all, data is their gold. They should be treasuring it, protecting it, and harvesting it for only the highest yields, not hawking it like some tawdry ware and handing it over lock, stock and barrel to any third-party app.

Facebook has to evolve from being sneaky to being responsible. Its sneakiness may have sprung from its roots as an undergrad jock page to rate girls. But these days, with over two billion users and US\$40 billion (\$52.6 billion) in annual revenue from selling those data, it has to grow up.

Deactivating Facebook means I'm taking time out from my relationship. But a part of me hopes the frat boy grows up real fast and learns not to take its users for granted.

muihoong@sph.com.sg

□

Asia's growth hubs

Several countries in Asia are focusing on developing growth zones that will create thousands of jobs, develop areas into metropolises and encourage investments. Here's an overview of some of them:



The 100ha Nongsa Digital Park is slightly larger than Singapore Botanic Gardens. PHOTO: NONGSA DIGITAL PARK

Batam tech park aims to be 'digital bridge'

**Arlina
Arshad**

Regional
Correspondent



A new multimillion-dollar technology park in Batam was launched in March, and it aims to bring digital entrepreneurs from the region together in an environment where its developers hope they can “work, live and play”.

The 100ha Nongsa Digital Park, slightly larger than Singapore's Botanic Gardens, is Batam's first large-scale commercial project. It was mooted

by Infinite Studios, a Singapore-based integrated media entertainment and creative services company, and developed by its parent, Citramas Group.

The foreign ministers of Indonesia and Singapore said it was an example of how both neighbours can work together through the private sector for mutual benefit.

Indonesian Foreign Minister Retno Marsudi said it was “a concrete follow-up” to discussions between President Joko Widodo and Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong at their retreat last September to develop Batam as a “digital bridge” between Singapore and many of Indonesia's fast-growing cities.

“This Nongsa Digital Park is a

beginning, a pilot project of our further efforts to achieve Indonesia's digital economy potential,” she told 350 guests at the launch ceremony. “A journey of a thousand miles begins with a first step, and this is a good step.”

Singapore Foreign Minister Vivian Balakrishnan said the park shows how both neighbours can work together with the private sector for a “win-win outcome”. He said: “We are happy to encourage more mutually beneficial projects with Batam. A thriving, confident, creative digital hub in Batam will be good for Indonesia, good for Singapore, and good for our region.”

The park is expected to rake in more than US\$500 million (S\$659 million) in potential investments, its senior director

Marco Bardelli said in a statement.

So far, three of nine office blocks have been completed in the first phase, which will create some 1,500 jobs. There are plans for pathways for eco-friendly electric bicycles and buggies, and more retail and food and beverage outlets.

Four main tenants now occupy two office blocks. One is Glints, a recruitment platform which helps to build engineering teams for companies in Singapore and Indonesia. More than 30 Indonesian developers and software engineers currently work out of a 150 sq m open-plan office space in a two-storey bungalow overlooking a lake. Said its chief executive Oswald Yeo, 25: "We can help our Singapore client companies tap a regional and cost-effective tech talent pool."

Ms Ho Semun, executive director of Singapore IT industry association SGTech, said: "There is interest from local companies in the Nongsa Digital Park but work is still in progress."

A spokesman for Singapore's Economic Development Board said the park "provides a valuable digital bridge across the region".

Singapore companies are able to further their opportunities and expand into Indonesia's market, while Indonesian and regional companies are able to co-create new solutions, test new ideas and be involved in joint digital projects in the region, she said.

"The park serves to support companies, not just in the e-commerce sector, but also other sectors that require digital talent, as they grow their businesses," she added.

Mr Lukita Dinarsyah Tuwo, chairman of the Batam Indonesia Free Zone Authority, said the authorities are looking into carving the park into the island's first special economic zone, with more tax allowances and tax holidays.

aarlina@sph.com.sg

Digital Free Trade Zone in Sepang, Malaysia

Trinna Leong

Malaysia
Correspondent



Malaysia and the world's largest retailer Alibaba launched a regional logistics hub in November, aimed at small and medium-sized businesses.

"We want to redefine global trade... I look forward to the rebirth of the new Silk Road," said Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Razak at the launch of the Digital Free Trade Zone (DFTZ), alongside Alibaba founder Jack Ma.

"With DFTZ, small businesses can use the digital way to sell and buy things. They can also buy global and sell global," said Mr Ma in his speech.

The first phase of DFTZ is a warehousing facility close to Kuala Lumpur's international airport to be operated by national courier, POS Malaysia. The former cargo terminal has already been transformed into a full-fledged warehouse with sorting, shelving and pick-pack facilities that deploy automated guidance vehicles.

The facility will initially serve Lazada, the region's largest online retail mall. Alibaba holds an 83 per cent stake in Lazada after injecting US\$2 billion (S\$2.7 billion) in investments into the Singapore-based startup.

Datuk Seri Najib and Mr Ma, who was made digital economy adviser to the Malaysian government in November 2016, also held a groundbreaking ceremony for the zone's second phase, a 24ha new facility to be jointly developed by Malaysia Airports Holdings Berhad

and Cainiao Network, Alibaba's logistics arm. This facility will only begin operations in 2020.

Both facilities hope to halve border clearance and handling times for cargo to three hours.

DFTZ has been touted by Malaysian officials and Alibaba as a platform that will propel small and medium-sized enterprises, particularly in Asia, on to the online marketplace. Alibaba has set up a similar hub in Hangzhou, China.

The DFTZ comprises eFulfilment and satellite service hubs while the eServices platform serves as a virtual zone, making it easier for customers' clearance, warehousing and logistics.

It also allows global market players to source from Malaysia's producers and sellers, making the country a regional fulfilment hub for global brands.

The government hopes that the DFTZ will see the involvement of over 9,000 SMEs by the end of 2018.

Estimates suggest it could also create 60,000 jobs and double SME exports to RM162.9 billion (S\$55.2 billion) by 2025.

- Additional information from The Star/Asia News Network. □



Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Razak with Jack Ma, the founder of Alibaba, looking at a model of the Digital Free Trade Zone at its launch in Sepang, in November.

PHOTO: BERNAMA

Myanmar plans massive Yangon development

Tan Hui Yee

Indochina
Bureau Chief



Singapore's former foreign minister George Yeo has been tapped to help lead the development of a Yangon city extension billed to spur growth for Myanmar, just like what

Shenzhen city did for China.

The massive industrialisation effort will cover an area over twice the size of Singapore, lying west of the river by Myanmar's commercial capital. It will contain homes, factories, power plants and water treatment plants.

Its development will be driven by the New Yangon Development Co (NYDC), which is fully owned by the Yangon region government but will have Myanmar tycoon Serge Pun as its chief executive. Mr Yeo is an independent

director in NYDC.

Mr Yeo, the chairman of Hong Kong-headquartered Kerry Logistics, told The StraitsTimes that he has known Mr Serge Pun since the 1990s and was invited by him to sit on the NYDC board.

Yangon, Mr Yeo said, has developed much of late, but "the city needs much better infrastructure".

"Like Shanghai and Suzhou, new space has to be opened up so that the old city can be refurbished and renewed."

Given its massive size, governmental

control is important.

"It has to be government-owned like new Pudong or Suzhou new district or JTC. It is big and has to be managed as a town or city," he said.

Jurong Town Corporation, currently known as JTC Corporation, created Singapore's first industrial township in Jurong, and later went on to develop other industrial and business facilities across the island.

Pudong New Area in Shanghai and Suzhou new district are industrial and business zones created by China.

Plans to develop the area south-west of Yangon had been made for years, but were dogged by controversy.

The previous government initially awarded an exclusive development contract to a firm with Chinese ties, but had to launch a new tender after a public outcry. While three other companies were later pronounced as winners, the National League for Democracy government reviewed the project once it came into power in 2016.

When launching the New Yangon development over the weekend, Yangon



Cars slow to a crawl in Yangon, Myanmar's largest city. **FILE PHOTO:** TAN HUI YEE

region chief minister Phyo Min Thein said it would rely on public-private partnerships to provide financing.

While at least US\$1.5 billion (S\$2 billion) would be needed to fulfil this plan, the regional government will provide capital of just US\$7 million, reported state media outlet The Global New Light of Myanmar. The development is expected to create some two million jobs.

Mr Serge Pun has vast interests in Myanmar's real estate, aviation and financial sectors, and is the chairman of Yoma Bank. He has vowed that his

companies would not bid for projects in the New Yangon development while he heads NYDC.

Mr Yeo, meanwhile, said at the launch: "It is natural that in the development of New Yangon, NYDC will scour the world for ideas and learn from the experience of other countries, of countries nearby and those farther away.

"We have to be both idealistic and practical. If we are not idealistic, we will not develop New Yangon well for the long term. But we must also be practical in order to draw in investors quickly and create good jobs." □

Xiongan holds out promise for firms

By Fu Jing

To the south of Beijing, Xiongan New Area is taking shape not only to offload non-capital functions from Beijing but also to become a "world-class water and forest city". The new city in Hebei province will be larger than London, which covers about 1,500 square kilometers.

Essentially, Xiongan New Area is a strategy to reduce congestion in the Chinese capital and create a new high-tech economic engine for China.

According to the vision plan, the new city will restrict the population to 5 million with modern living conditions. It will attract the best brains from across the world.

Work has already started on a high-speed railway linking Beijing and Xiongan, where the authorities have plans to build Asia's biggest railway station. Dozens of China's leading high-tech companies have agreed to set up representative offices in the core district while many construction projects are in full swing.

As a new "Silicon Valley" in the making, Xiongan holds out a lot of promise for foreign investors in the years to come. But given China's four decades of opening-up and reform, foreign investors must realise the conditions in



An aerial view of construction workers working to build the Citizen Service Center of Xiongan New Area in Xiongan, Hebei Province of China. **PHOTO:** GETTY IMAGES

Xiongan will be different compared to Shenzhen or Pudong New Area, China's two leading high-tech and economic powerhouses in the south and east.

Unlike the 1980s or 1990s when Shenzhen and Pudong New Area were opened up to the outside world, China today is a full member of the World Trade Organisation, so foreign investors can no longer enjoy preferential policies such as tax breaks and low-cost land. Besides, Chinese investors have become much more competitive and technologically advanced.

Still, there are lots of opportunities for foreign investors as China further opens up to the outside world. For example, to build Xiongan into a modern, eco-friendly city, European countries could offer their experiences

in water treatment, environmental protection and ecological conservation.

There are plans to build a world-class university in Xiongan. This is a visionary idea but not easy to realise. Cambridge, Oxford and Harvard could provide expertise while Peking University and Tsinghua University could also lend a helping hand.

Moreover, Xiongan will consistently need large amounts of capital, and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank has said financing China's projects will not be its priority. This leaves space for other commercial and multilateral financial institutions to invest in the new area, either through proposals to build a financial district or through financial services such as loans.

– China Daily/Asia News Network □



Mahathir's unfinished business

At 92, Malaysia's former prime minister is fighting the strangest electoral battle of his life

Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad eats very little.

He has ordered spaghetti beef bolognese but is full after several small mouthfuls. "This is too much for me," he murmurs 30 minutes into our meal, moving the plate, still heaped with pasta, to one side.

He barely touches his decaf latte, too. The swirly heart-shaped pattern on the foam is undisturbed.

We're at The Loaf, a chain of bakery-cafes he owns.

His people have chosen the branch in Cyberjaya to meet.

The cafe is on the ground floor of a shopping centre and surrounded by shops selling socks, sports gear and brooches imported from South Korea.

It feels surreal to be meeting Malaysia's longest-serving prime minister in such a mundane setting.

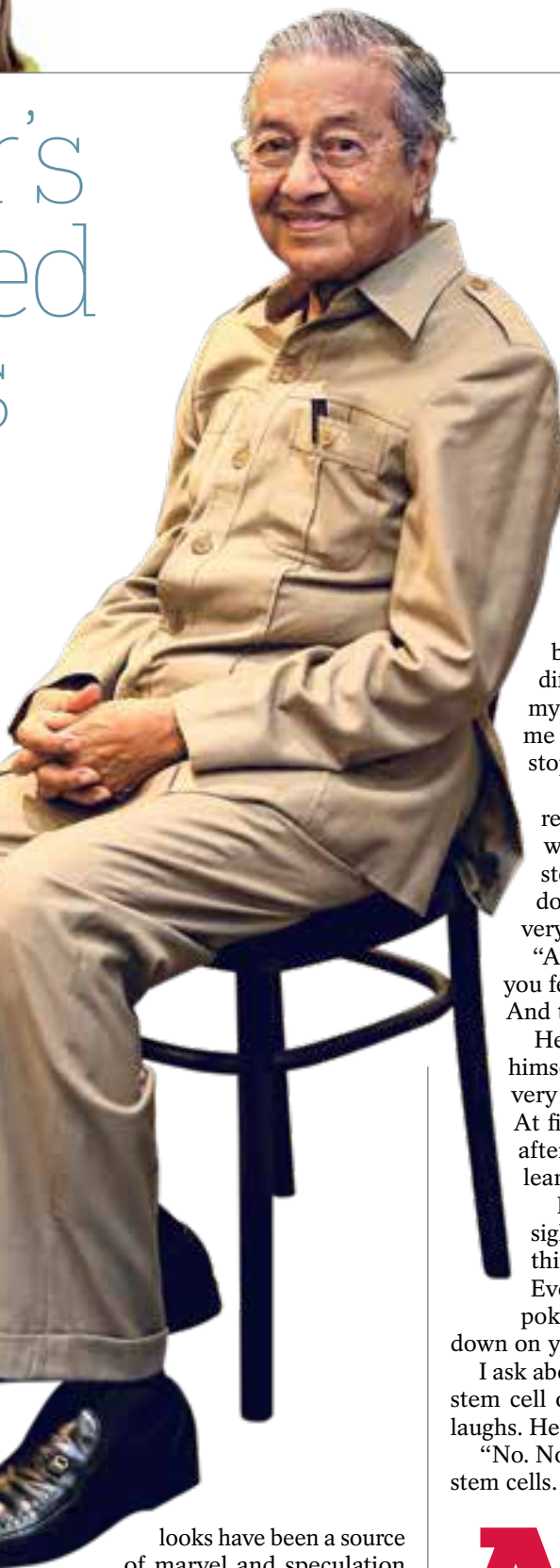
A waiter had told me earlier that "Tun", which is how most people address him, has bread, tomato slices and sugarless lemonade whenever he visits. I'm expecting him to order this spartan combination but he opts for spaghetti instead.

"I don't eat much," he says when I tell him I've heard he eats simply. "Usually, every item on the menu I divide by two, share with somebody else."

Breakfast for him is a slice of bread. Lunch is whatever the cook at home prepares. He has two spoonfuls of rice at night.

"I haven't had to change my measurements for 31 years. Same trousers I can still wear."

It's not just his measurements that have remained constant. His youthful



looks have been a source of marvel and speculation for years.

Up close, I am struck by how clear his eyes are, how much hair he still has and how full his face is. When he walks, his posture is straight and his gait is steady.

He is genial, polite and very soft-spoken, but you sense nothing escapes his eagle eyes. His answers are sharp and to the point.

He is often asked the secret to staying young. His answer is something

food-loving Singaporeans will find hard to stomach – stop eating once something tastes delicious.

"Once you are fat, to become thin again is very difficult. This is the advice from my mother," he says. "She told me that when the food is nice, stop.

"When I studied medicine, I realised how good that advice was. When you overeat, the stomach expands, and if you do that too often, it becomes very big.

"And if you don't eat enough, you feel hungry. So you eat a lot. And then it keeps on growing."

He has managed to train himself to eat very little. "I'm very disciplined in many ways. At first it was very difficult, but after some time it was easy. You learn to curb your feelings."

In fact, he is turned off by the sight of a paunch. "That is one thing that I don't like to see.

Every time I meet a fat man, I poke a finger and tell him, 'Cut down on your food.'"

I ask about rumours that he has had stem cell or placenta treatments. He laughs. He has heard those stories.

"No. No injections of any kind. No stem cells. Nothing. Nothing."

AT 92 turning 93 in July, Dr Mahathir is fighting what must surely be the final electoral battle of his life. It is also his strangest.

In 1981 when he was 56, the Kedah-born, Singapore-trained medical doctor became Malaysia's fourth prime minister. He first became an Umno Member of Parliament in 1964.

He was PM for 22 years and is credited with transforming Malaysia into a modern, thriving economy,

pushing more Malays to be professionals and championing Asian values.

But he has detractors who say he weakened the judiciary, used the Internal Security Act too freely, promoted cronyism and did not do enough to stop corruption in government.

His tenure was also marked by the sensational case of Anwar Ibrahim, his deputy prime minister who was jailed for sodomy.

When he retired in 2003, Dr Mahathir didn't quite go gently into the night. He fell out with his chosen successor Abdullah Badawi and backed Datuk Seri Najib Razak, who became PM in 2009.

In 2015, he became a fierce critic of Mr Najib after the 1Malaysia Development Berhad (1MDB) saga broke. He quit Umno and formed the Malaysian United Indigenous Party (PPBM) to fight Mr Najib.

PPBM is a member of the opposition alliance called Pakatan Harapan (PH). It includes the Parti Keadilan Rakyat (PKR) party of Anwar, who is back in jail on sodomy charges, and the Democratic Action Party (DAP), whom Dr Mahathir once railed against as Chinese chauvinists.

PH named him chairman of the alliance. In January, it said he would be its prime ministerial candidate should the opposition win the upcoming election.

Dr Mahathir has said he will pass the premiership to Anwar, who will be released from jail in June, after two years at most.

The turn of events has been nothing short of bizarre.

Does it feel weird to be in the opposition, I ask.

"Yes, it's very weird," he says. "The very people who used to call me names – and I used to call them names – now they are working with me." And, he says, they chose him to be their leader. "It is a strange kind of acceptance, you see, but I got to get on well with them."

He shares that Anwar and his family took a long time before they agreed to work with him.

"It was very difficult for him first to accept me as the chairman of the opposition, and then when my name was also put up for prime minister. It took a long time for him to decide, but eventually he realised, and people told him, there's no way you can put anybody else and win over Malay support."

Pragmatism, I suppose, rules in politics, even if it means gritting your teeth and sleeping with former enemies.

He puts a smooth – some might say unbelievable – gloss on things.

"Whatever difference we have is



Former Malaysian prime minister Mahathir Mohamad (right) and opposition leader Wan Azizah look on as a video clip of Anwar Ibrahim is played during a rally near Kuala Lumpur. Dr Mahathir has said he will pass the premiership to Anwar, who will be released from jail in June, after two years at most. PHOTO: REUTERS

the past. We have to learn to forget it, although off and on it crops up. But generally he has accepted."

On his part, he says of Anwar: "I don't care about the past, about what he did and all that.

"To me, it is nothing compared with what Najib is doing. Both of us agree that what Najib is doing is so terrible that we need to forget our past."

He also highlights, as he has done before, that Anwar is in jail this time "not because of me, he was put there by Najib".

He describes the opposition as being "very" united and says he has been surprised by how they have accepted him, especially its leaders.

"It was unthinkable at one time but I think they are quite sincere because we have the same goal – get rid of Najib."

That said, his biggest challenge has been explaining to his Umno base why he has joined forces with the opposition parties.

"They couldn't understand. For example, I used to condemn DAP and now I am together with DAP..."

"I explain, but die-hard Umno followers just cannot accept DAP."

Some friends now avoid him for fear of repercussions in their businesses.

While he understands where they are coming from, he is disappointed they are "so easily frightened".

The opposition has other challenges, like funding, and whether PH will be allowed to be formally registered in time for the election. Otherwise, the opposition will have to contest under individual party flags which he thinks could lead to confusion.

He brings up Mr Najib's name no fewer than 20 times during the course of our 90-minute meal. He seems genuinely convinced that the way the government has run up debt to cover its spending will ruin Malaysia and make it "become like Greece". He also complains that the

PM has intimidated those who support the opposition.

On his part, Mr Najib has come out strongly to defend Malaysia's debt. He has highlighted positive reports by credit rating agencies, and how other developed countries have higher debt-to-gross domestic product levels compared with Malaysia's 51 per cent.

He has also accused PH of irresponsible promises in its recently released election manifesto.

Abolishing highway tolls and the goods and services tax (GST) will see the country incur a debt of RM383 billion (\$128.6 billion).

Dr Mahathir appears to share some common ground with Mr Najib on this, saying he has told his "very socialistic" coalition partners that they can't just "give things to people".

But he maintains the GST is not necessary. "We never depended on the GST before and yet the country developed very well, and we didn't even borrow money."

When I ask how he would describe his feelings towards Mr Najib, his reply is "I am terribly disappointed".

He adds that he owes his own rise in Umno and becoming prime minister to Mr Najib's late father, Malaysia's second prime minister, Tun Abdul Razak Hussein.

"I was very grateful to the father, and the father left a legacy which we are proud of because he concentrated on developing the rural areas... So I thought the son would be like that, but I was grossly disappointed."

Up to the last general election in 2013, he supported Mr Najib.

"I campaigned for him. I even went on the stage to say that your choice is between Anwar and Najib. Do you like Anwar? So I campaigned hard for him and regained the state of Kedah for him. But when I hear about the 1MDB, that is something I cannot accept."

HIS schedule in the run-up to the election has been punishing.

He travels up and down the country for events, continues to blog and is active on Facebook. He writes out his posts and they are uploaded for him. Before our lunch, he had filmed a Facebook Live session where he gave a policy talk on education.

Most of his night events start late.

"Malay audience, they come out after 9pm.

"They always make me the last speaker, which means sometimes I'll be speaking at about 12."

In February, he was hospitalised for a chest infection. This has been practically cured, but he has a chronic cough which stems from a bout of pneumonia in 1999.

He believes he has the most support from Malaysians who had lived through the 1980s and 1990s when he was PM and who saw how the country progressed. "They knew what happened. They can make comparisons."

As to where he will contest, he claims he has not made up his mind, although pundits say it will likely be in Langkawi.

Wherever he says he will contest, "Najib comes along with a lot of gifts", he laughs. "People are grateful to me. They say because you come here, then we are getting all this."

More seriously, his decision will be based on winning.

"I cannot afford to lose. I will have to choose the best constituency where I could win."

He sees Johor as the main battleground because it is an important Umno stronghold. The opposition will have difficulty breaking into that state, he admits.

He rates the opposition's chances as "50-50". Most observers say it is much less than that, given PH's antagonistic factions and the high possibility of three-cornered fights.

An online poll in December found that Mr Najib's integrity and the 1MDB scandal – issues Dr Mahathir has been banging on about – were the least of the respondents' concerns, at 3 per cent and 2 per cent respectively.

You sense he is realistic about the opposition's chances. "If we fail, well, we have to accept it," he says. "But I'll be very sad indeed."

If the people cannot replace Mr Najib, "they must learn that they should care for the country more than just personal gains".

I wonder if the desire for power again is the motivation behind what he is

doing. Is power important to you, I ask.

"Power is important because with it, you can do a lot of things," he says. "When I was prime minister, I knew I had power. There were things that nobody could do and they came to me. I said, 'Well, this is a good thing, you can do it.'

"So that is what power is meant for. Not to enrich yourself. Not to bully people and that kind of thing. I don't think that was right."

His critics, I think, would have a view on this.

Does he have any regrets of that period when he had that power? He says that working with the opposition has opened his eyes to their "grouses" about him.

WHAT POWER MEANS TO HIM

Power is important because with it, you can do a lot of things. When I was prime minister, I knew I had power. There were things that nobody could do and they came to me. I said, 'Well, this is a good thing, you can do it.' So that is what power is meant for. Not to enrich yourself. Not to bully people and that kind of thing.

"There were occasions when I was perhaps a bit harsh on people, and I could have asserted more authority over the police, for example. But I just couldn't insist on things."

He repeats the well-used example of how he had told the police chief not to use handcuffs when arresting Anwar. "But they had their SOP, and that meant wearing balaclava and breaking doors and holding guns. It gave me a very bad image... The public thinks I asked them to do those things. But it was not my decision."

WITH so much going on in this late stage of his life, I am curious what makes him happy. His answer surprises me. "It is when I am among friends who have the same views as myself. I feel happy then."

His family, of course, also gives him happiness, he says.

He has seven children and 18 grandchildren.

Might his anger with Mr Najib be something that is eating away at him? It can't be healthy, I think to myself. "No, it's not that kind of anger," he corrects.

"I'm angry because of the things he does, which I feel is destroying this country."

His wife, Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali, 91, is often by his side. He says they quarrelled quite a lot in their early days. But being a person who "doesn't succumb to emotion much", he evaluated the situation and concluded that tolerance was key to a happy marriage. "In the end, I had to put up with the things that she does, as much as she has to accept my way of doing things."

I wonder who his closest friends are. He says there is "a person who is quite unknown, not a politician, but he gives me a lot of information about what's happening on the ground". He is comfortable with him and treats him like a confidant.

Is he an old friend? "Well, he's not so old," he says, amused at the question. "I don't find people my age anymore for friends, you see."

Singapore does not appear to figure much in his mind and he doesn't mention it until I raise it.

He talks with fondness about his classmates from the King Edward VII College of Medicine, but also remembers how there was a distance then between big-city Singapore and kampung-bred students from Malaysia.

He also hasn't forgotten how, as a student taking a taxi to the female hostel, the driver drove him to the kitchen there because he was Malay.

"Some things hurt me, but that doesn't mean that I hold any grudge against Singapore. But I have to maintain Malaysia's position. Of course Singapore has done extremely well. And I believe that we can do just as well. We have the same kind of people."

We've come to the end of the meal. Shannon Teoh, The Straits Times' Malaysia bureau chief who was also at the lunch, and I thank him for his time. He is gracious and thanks us, too.

He spends the next 15 minutes with the crowd outside.

He wears a bemused smile as they jostle to pose for photos with him.

Some, including a TV personality passing by, pledge their support in the election.

His energy doesn't flag. Over the next few days, I see on his Facebook page that he has kept up a packed schedule.

Dr Mahathir is geared up for battle and as he says at lunch: "For the next 100 days, they have already drawn up my programme."

sumiko@sph.com.sg

Twitter @STsumikotan

Tor Ching Li

For The Straits Times



A group of women taking training to be part-time "miko" or Shinto priestess for Nishinomiya Shrine's New Year events. PHOTO: GETTY IMAGES

Yen for daikou

Side-job culture gains traction in Japan as anything from the quirky to the creative is game for outsourcing

What do you do if you're driving to a party but would like to have a tippie? In Japan, you call a daikou driver to take you home in your car.

Daikou means "replacement" or "outsourcing", and these drivers usually hang around popular pubbing or clubbing areas to offer their services.

The peak demand times for replacement drivers – late at night and

especially on Friday and weekend nights – have made it a popular moonlighting option for salarymen looking to earn some extra pocket money.

If they worked for a daikou driver service provider, they could earn between 1,000 yen and 1,500 yen (\$12 to \$18) an hour on their shift.

In recent years, this service has grown more popular, partly because of the proliferation of smartphone applications that link daikou drivers with users.

Mr Kenji Miyake, 28, who works as a salesman for a printing firm, has been daikou driving on the side for six months. "The tips you get from your usually drunk client if you get along with them well are a welcome bonus, and sometimes I make some handy contacts," he said.

The daikou market has flourished in recent years, with a growing range of tasks being outsourced and more people

WHAT IT COSTS

An apology via phone or mail:

From
10,000 yen
(\$120)

For an apology in person:

From
20,000 yen

For divorce notice delivery with one witness:

3,000 yen

For divorce notice delivery with two witnesses:

5,000 yen

For temple/shrine visit with prayers and collection of amulet:

5,800 yen
(5,000 yen for the visit and 800 yen for the amulet)

offering their labour via apps or online platforms.

Nowadays, anything is up for daikou. From the surprising – paying respects at a relative's grave, going on pilgrimage, apologising to someone you've offended, prison visits – to the mundane, such as dog-walking, doing housework, queueing up for a popular restaurant, securing a prime spot for cherry-blossom viewing.

“Long working hours leading to a lack of personal time and the stress of double-income families has fuelled demand for daikou services, while job insecurity, a slow rise in pay and a lack of job satisfaction have made the idea of having a side job more common,” said Dr Natsuko Hagiwara, a sociology professor at Rikkyo University.

A survey of 1,600 workers aged 25 to 39 conducted this year by One Japan, an organisation that aims to promote corporate work-style innovation, found three out of four employees interested in a side job. Among them, 80 per cent were working for major conglomerates with a staff size of over 10,000, such as manufacturers and banks.

Respondents said their reasons for moonlighting include a desire to hone their skills, increase their take-home income, widen their network and a disillusionment in employment for life at large corporations.

In recent years, major conglomerates from Sony and Sharp to Toshiba have found themselves in turmoil, shaking the belief that there is job security in working for a big organisation.

“Another reason is a longer life expectancy, leading to a need to have some form of employment after retirement,” said Dr Hagiwara.

Riding the daikou trend is Singapore-based online concierge and delivery service firm Honestbee, which has been helping people in Japan do their grocery shopping and delivering it to their doorsteps since July. It charges a concierge fee of 490 yen and delivery fee of 490 yen, but waives these for purchases above 3,000 yen.

Signing up as a worker “bee” is a popular option especially among housewives, students, freelancers and young workers looking to make some spare cash. They have to work at least two hours a day. Compensation depends on their experience and the number of hours they work.

“Traditionally, having house help or house managers is not common in Japan. The introduction of a service that offers personalised shopping and delivery also helps address time management and logistic difficulties



Part-time workers or ‘bees’ are trained to shop and deliver groceries to clients.

PHOTO: HONEYBEE



A part-time employee of Yamato Transport Co. delivers a parcel for distribution in Tokyo.

PHOTO: BLOOMBERG

faced by many Japanese people,” said Mr Vivek Sampath, Honestbee’s country manager for Japan.

Japan’s Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare has put the size of the household-chores daikou market at 100 billion yen in 2012 and expects the market to grow six times in the coming years.

Daikou jobs are popular with people looking for a flexible side job.

Facilitating this trend are firms such as Lancers, which launched in April an “open-talent platform” application called Pook, where people sign up to

offer skills from cooking, assembling furniture, babysitting, sports coaching and event organising to offering advice or a listening ear, at their desired rate.

It also has an online platform called Lancers for more skilled freelancing jobs, from editing and website design to app creation.

“The idea is to help create a society where anyone can find work they want to do anytime and anywhere through the online network,” said a spokesman for the company.

torchingli@gmail.com

□

Theresa Tan
Social Affairs Correspondent



Asean's philanthropists



Businessman Keith Chua, 64, is a trustee of a fund which has given away millions to causes in education, healthcare and heritage.

The executive chairman of ABR Holdings, the food and beverage firm that owns Swensen's in Singapore, credits his family and his Christian faith with inspiring him to be a philanthropist.

His great-grandmother, Mrs Lee Choon Guan, also known as Madam Tan Teck Neo, was founding president of the Chinese Women's Association. She died in 1978 at the age of 100, after years of giving generously to promote education for girls and protect

women and children.

Mr Chua said: "My parents were also very generous individuals and their generosity caught my attention. The simple act of being able to help someone else gives me a sense of meaning."

His grandfather is the late Chua Cheng Liat, one of the Chua brothers who founded car dealership Cycle & Carriage. His late father Chua Boon Yew worked in the family business.

Today, Mr Chua is a trustee of the Mrs Lee Choon Guan Trust Fund, started by his great-grandmother in 1974 with a \$1 million donation.

In 2011, Mr Chua, a father of four, set up the SymAsia Nehemiah Foundation with an initial \$1 million pledge. Named after the biblical figure Nehemiah, the foundation supports social entrepreneurship, mental health initiatives and other causes.

Mr Chua is one of 25 philanthropists featured in a book released last week by the Asia Philanthropy Circle, a charity that brings together donors to collaborate and address social problems.

Its director Stacey Choe told The Straits Times it hopes to inspire others to give by showcasing the impact philanthropists in the region have had in effecting large-scale changes.

Here's a look at some of the other philanthropists featured in the book and their areas of focus:



Victor Hartono

The Indonesian philanthropist Djarum Foundation supports efforts in education, sports development, cultural preservation and strengthening national cohesion.



Grace Tan Caktiong

The co-founder of the fast-food chain Jollibee is taking steps to eradicate hunger and malnutrition in the Philippines through the Jollibee Group Foundation.



Tahir

The Indonesian tycoon is the founder of the Mayapada Group, one of Indonesia's biggest conglomerates, with businesses in financial services, healthcare and real estate. His Tahir Foundation has pledged \$100 million to fund healthcare programmes in Indonesia, among other initiatives.



Thippaporn Ahriyavraromp

The Thai businesswoman who is the daughter of Charoen Pokphand Group Senior Chairman Dhanin Chearavanont works in the areas of child development, environment, social development and spiritual harmony.



Kathleen Chew

The lady, who hails from a family of educators, is the programme director of the YTL Foundation, which funds initiatives to improve education.



Fernando Zobel De Ayala

The seventh-generation family steward of Ayala Corporation, a 184-year-old Filipino conglomerate with interests in real estate, banking, telecom, water, power, among others, strives to build self-reliant communities.

Read in detail about them and other regional philanthropists in the online version of the book Asean Impact 25 here: <http://www.asiaphilanthropycircle.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/ASEAN-Impact-25-Final.pdf>

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