



TEMASEK JUNIOR COLLEGE
2026 JC2 PRELIMINARY EXAMINATION
Higher 1



GENERAL PAPER

8881/01

Paper 1

25 August 2026

1 hour 30 minutes

No Additional Materials are required.

READ THESE INSTRUCTIONS FIRST

An answer booklet will be provided with this question paper. You should follow the instructions on the front cover of the answer booklet. If you need additional answer paper ask the invigilator for a continuation booklet.

Answer one question.

Note that up to 20 marks out of 50 will be awarded for your use of language.

All questions in this paper carry equal marks.

Answer **one** question.

Answers should be between 500 and 800 words in length.

- 1 'Technological advancements have made people more fearful about the future.' How far do you agree?
- 2 Assess the view that fiction exists only to entertain.
- 3 'We expect too much from governments.' Do you agree?
- 4 How far are sporting pursuits given adequate support and recognition in your society?
- 5 'Migration is the solution to demographic challenges.' Discuss.
- 6 Evaluate the claim that the state should not regulate the media during times of crisis.
- 7 Is forgiveness the best way to deal with injustice?
- 8 'A city without soul.' How true is this of your society?

**2026 JC2 PRELIMINARY EXAMINATION
GENERAL PAPER
Paper 1 Markers' Report**

**Q1. 'Technological advancements have made people more fearful about the future.'
How far do you agree?**

Strengths

- Stronger responses made clear links between technological advancements and fear by explaining why they would make people more fearful about the future, rather than merely describing the advantages and harms of these technologies.
- More perceptive responses recognised that whether technological advancements would make people more fear about the future depends on how safely they are used, regulated and managed, supported by appropriate examples.
- More insightful responses presented a balanced and nuanced judgement by recognising that technological advancements can bring both fear and hope for the future. They gave convincing reasons, supported by strong examples, to explain why technological advancements could cause greater worry, anxiety or fear about their potentially more negative effects on people in the future, or why they could give people greater hope for the future.

Weaknesses

- Students often described the past or present benefits and harms of technological advancements without clearly linking them to fear about the future, leaving the explanation at the level of identifying positive or negative effects.
- Responses that disagreed with the view that technological advancements would increase fear about the future were especially likely to simply describe the advantages brought about by advancements, without explaining how these benefits would reduce or remove fear about the future.
- Many students gave limited attention to the keyword 'future', with some making only a token mention of the word without adequately addressing it. They often focused on how technological advancements cause or reduce fear in the present, without considering whether and why these effects would continue into the future.
- Examples of technological advancements were sometimes too general, inaccurate or inappropriate, with weaker responses often referring to generic technologies such as 'medical technology' instead of citing concrete examples by name, such as CRISPR. This limited the depth, precision and credibility of their arguments because generic examples made it difficult to explain specifically how a technological advancement could affect people and why it would cause greater fear or hope about the future.
- Some responses had overly lengthy introductions which took up too much time and space, leaving students unable to develop their arguments fully or complete the essay.

A. QUESTION ANALYSIS

technological advancements

- improvements and innovations in technology (e.g. AI, robotics, biotechnology, automation, digital platforms, surveillance technology) that transform how people in societies live, work, communicate, and function

have made people more fearful

- heightened people's anxiety, dread, worry or concern about the actual or potential loss of safety, autonomy, and control over their lives

the future

- the time and conditions that lie ahead for individuals and society, including expected changes in society, work, and daily life shaped by current technological, economic, and social trends

How far do you agree?

- the extent of agreement with the claim in the question, supported by evaluation and balanced reasoning and a clear overall judgment

B. SUGGESTED APPROACH**Background information**

- Technological advancements have become a powerful force shaping the future of society, transforming economies, healthcare, governance and everyday life at an unprecedented pace. While they have improved living standards, expanded access to information and enabled solutions to complex global challenges, their rapid development has also made the future increasingly uncertain. As new technologies create possibilities once unimaginable, they also introduce risks and disruptions that may be difficult for societies to anticipate, regulate or manage, making the future more uncertain and fearful.

Possible stand

- While technological advancements offer the prospect of greater human capability and solutions to many future challenges, they also create uncertainty over the consequences of increasingly rapid and powerful change. Concerns about economic disruption, digital insecurity, surveillance, misinformation and the erosion of ethical boundaries as technology advances beyond established moral and regulatory frameworks have made the future less predictable and more daunting, leading to greater fear about the future.

(POB) With the enduring aim of solving humanity's problems to make life better, it cannot be denied that technological advancements have given people some reason to feel reassured about the future by strengthening humanity's ability to overcome longstanding socio-economic challenges.

- By making healthcare, education and economic opportunities more accessible, technological innovation has fostered confidence that problems which have persisted for generations may increasingly be solved. Successful breakthroughs provide tangible evidence that humanity can actively shape outcomes that once seemed inevitable, reducing uncertainty about whether future challenges can be controlled. This strengthens optimism that scientific progress will continue to improve quality of life and equip future generations to overcome seemingly insurmountable challenges.
- One illustration can be seen in healthcare, where technological advances are making longstanding problems increasingly manageable. The 2024 rollout of the R21/Matrix-M malaria vaccine, recommended by the World Health Organisation in countries such as

Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire, has strengthened confidence that one of humanity's oldest and deadliest diseases can eventually be brought under control. Its significance extends beyond malaria: by demonstrating that deeply entrenched threats can be reduced through innovation, it reassures people that future health challenges need not be accepted as inevitable.

- Beyond healthcare, technological advancement in education has also become a source of forward-looking confidence. Cloud-based platforms such as Coursera, alongside smartphones and low-cost internet access, have allowed learners in disadvantaged countries such as India and Nigeria to overcome traditional infrastructure barriers and access education remotely. This demonstrates that constraints once considered fixed need not determine future opportunities, providing reassurance that longstanding educational inequalities can likewise be reduced. Technological advancements have therefore fostered optimism that future generations will benefit from greater educational equality and social mobility.
- **Collectively, these developments show that technological advancements give people greater hope rather than making them fearful about the future, by demonstrating humanity's growing ability to overcome challenges that once seemed unavoidable.**

Other possible POBs

1. There is also merit to the claim that technological advancements have alleviated fears about the future by strengthening humanity's ability to anticipate, prepare for and respond to emerging global crises, giving people greater confidence that future disruptions can be managed rather than feared.

(POA) However, while technological advancements have indeed solved pressing challenges, they have also ushered in unprecedented levels of surveillance and data-driven governance, fuelling fears of a future in which privacy, autonomy, and personal freedom are progressively eroded.

- As artificial intelligence and big data become increasingly sophisticated and embedded in everyday life, many fear a future in which governments and other powerful institutions wield unprecedented power to monitor, evaluate, and shape human behaviour. Unlike traditional surveillance, these technologies can process vast amounts of information continuously, raising fears that future advances could enable authorities to predict and influence individuals' behaviour in ways that are increasingly difficult to resist or even comprehend. This raises the prospect of societies where individuals are constantly watched, judged, and controlled by digital technologies, rather than trusted to exercise their own free will.
- Surveillance technologies such as facial recognition, artificial intelligence, and mass data analytics have enabled governments to monitor individuals on an unprecedented scale. In China, systems such as Skynet and Sharp Eyes use extensive camera networks and facial recognition to track people's movements and support law enforcement. While these technologies strengthen public security, they also fuel fears of a future in which individuals are constantly watched, particularly as technological capabilities may expand faster than legal protections governing their use. As surveillance becomes commonly used in everyday life, many worry that they will increasingly censor their own behaviour out of fear of being monitored, eroding personal autonomy and freedom.
- Such fears are not confined to authoritarian states like China. In 2013, Edward Snowden's leaks revealed that the United States' National Security Agency (NSA) had

been collecting vast amounts of phone and internet data from ordinary citizens through post-9/11 counterterrorism programmes. Although intended to enhance national security, the disclosures fuelled fears that governments possess both the means and willingness to conduct mass surveillance. The episode also demonstrated how technological capabilities can develop beyond what citizens realise is possible, reinforcing fears that future surveillance may similarly expand before effective safeguards are established. Many worried that constant monitoring would lead people to self-censor their online activity and private conversations, undermining privacy, personal autonomy, and democratic participation – a concern echoed by civil liberties groups such as the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU).

- **Indeed, technological advancements have fuelled fears of a future in which increasingly powerful surveillance technologies erode privacy and autonomy, as people become less able to predict or control the extent to which their lives may be monitored.**

(POA) Moreover, technological advancements have heightened fears about the future by creating growing uncertainty over whether stable employment opportunities will remain available as artificial intelligence and automation increasingly replace human workers across both routine and skilled occupations.

- As artificial intelligence (AI) and automation become increasingly capable of performing tasks that once required years of education and professional training, many people fear that their qualifications and expertise may no longer guarantee stable employment or social mobility. This is particularly unsettling for the future because technological capabilities can advance faster than individuals can retrain, making it increasingly difficult to predict which skills or occupations will remain secure. This has intensified concerns that future labour markets may become more competitive and unstable, with both younger workers struggling to secure entry-level roles and older employees at risk of retrenchment if they cannot adapt to AI-driven systems.
- These fears are not merely speculative, as job displacement is already taking shape across both professional and manual occupations. Professional services and technology firms such as IBM, KPMG, and PwC are increasingly using generative AI to automate tasks such as document review, data analysis, and report drafting, while tools such as GitHub Copilot have reduced the need for routine coding and debugging. At the same time, companies such as Amazon and Walmart have adopted robotics, automated sorting systems, and mechanised processes in warehouses, logistics, and retail operations, reducing reliance on routine manual labour. The significance of these developments extends beyond the jobs already affected: each advance demonstrates that the range of tasks machines can perform is expanding, making future employment prospects harder to anticipate.
- **In the light of these developments, technological advancements have intensified fears about the future by creating uncertainty over whether human skills and qualifications will remain valued as technological change increasingly outpaces people's ability to adapt and remain employable.**

(POA) Furthermore, the rapid pace of technological advancement has heightened fears about the future because new technologies can create capabilities whose ethical and social consequences are difficult to predict, while laws and regulations often struggle to keep pace with their development.

- As technological capabilities advance faster than governments and institutions can establish appropriate safeguards, people may fear that technologies will be used in ways that cross ethical and medical boundaries before society has fully understood their

consequences. This is particularly frightening because some technological decisions may be irreversible, affect future generations, or fundamentally alter what it means to be human. People therefore face uncertainty not only about whether new technologies may cause harm, but whether humanity may acquire the power to make changes that it later regrets or cannot undo.

- This concern is illustrated by developments in gene-editing technologies such as CRISPR, which have created unprecedented possibilities for modifying human DNA. Although such technologies could help prevent or treat serious diseases, their increasing capabilities raise difficult questions about how far humanity should go in altering human genetic material, particularly where changes could be inherited by future generations. The fear lies in the possibility that decisions made today could permanently shape the genetic makeup and health of future generations, without those affected having any say in the decision. This makes the future particularly difficult to predict and control, especially if technological capabilities develop faster than ethical consensus and regulation.
- **Consequently, technological advancements can make the future more frightening by expanding humanity's power faster than its ability to determine how that power should be used, potentially leaving future generations to bear irreversible consequences.**

Other possible POAs:

1. Technological advancement can heighten fears about the future by making it increasingly difficult for people to distinguish truth from falsehood, as generative AI and increasingly sophisticated digital manipulation enable misinformation to spread at unprecedented speed and scale.

Conclusion

- In conclusion, while technological advancements have improved lives and expanded human possibilities through innovations in areas such as healthcare and productivity, they have ultimately made people more fearful about the future by creating growing uncertainty over economic disruption, digital security and ethical boundaries. The rapid pace of innovation has made the consequences of future technological change increasingly difficult to predict or control, intensifying anxieties about what the future may hold.
- Ultimately, whether technological advancements continue to make people fearful about the future will depend not on how quickly innovation progresses, but on how effectively societies can govern it, adapt to its consequences, and ensure that it continues to serve humanity.

Report prepared by: Mrs Evangeline Ho

Marked by:

Q2. Assess the view that fiction exists only to entertain.

Strengths

- Good scripts were able to engage accurately with the absolute assertion in the question and highlight how fiction serves more than just to entertain.
- Good scripts were also able to show a deep and accurate understanding of the

characteristics of fiction to drive their arguments about its function/purpose. They also provided a wide range of functions that fiction served to achieve.

- Good scripts were able to draw examples from a wide variety of fiction and use them well to substantiate their arguments in a convincing manner.

Weaknesses

- Weak scripts showed an unawareness of the absolute assertion in the question and the aims and objectives of fiction at large.
- Weak scripts merely provided example-driven arguments without engaging thoroughly with the characteristics of fiction.
- Weak scripts also did not show apt use of arguments or examples. Many such scripts utilised examples that were irrelevant and illogical. For instance, many students erroneously classified 'advertisements', 'religion' and 'political cartoons or propaganda' as works of fiction.
- Weak scripts also did not have a balance paragraph and merely inserted liners throughout their essay nebulously stating that fiction was entertaining without unpacking their claims thoroughly.

A. QUESTION ANALYSIS

assess the view

- to evaluate the view

fiction

- any work that is based on imaginary characters and events and not based on real people and facts
- it is characterised by made-up characters, plots, settings, themes and creative storytelling techniques designed to entertain, inform, or inspire audiences/readers that engage with it
- fiction can take many forms, including novels, short stories, plays, screenplays, poems, films, television series, video games and audio dramas
- these works can also belong to different genres such as fantasy, science fiction, mystery, romance, historical fiction, horror and thriller – each distinguished by its own themes, settings and conventions

exists only to entertain

- to serve the sole function/purpose of serving as a form of distraction and/or providing amusement, enjoyment and escapism
- an absolute assertion that needs to be challenged

B. SUGGESTED APPROACH

Background Information

- George Orwell's fictional novel, 1984, opens in a bleak, oppressive world where telescreens watch every moment, truth is rewritten by the state and even private thoughts of citizens can be treated as a threat to authority. Through the unsettling portrayal of his dystopic, imagined society, Orwell encapsulates in his writing the true essence of fiction. Fiction is essentially a form of imaginative storytelling that constructs invented characters, events and settings to explore, reflect and question aspects of

human reality.

Possible Stand

- Because fiction is often encountered through such immersive and engaging narratives, it is commonly assumed to exist primarily to entertain, offering readers escapism and enjoyment through compelling storytelling.
- However, this view is overly limited. While entertainment is undeniably an important feature of fiction, it also functions as a medium for social critique, intellectual reflection and the exploration of deeper human concerns. I therefore largely disagree that fiction exists only to entertain.

Arguments

(POB) At first glance, it may appear that fiction exists only to entertain as it is most often consumed as a form of leisure designed to engage audiences through riveting plots, relatable characters and immersive storytelling that provide escapism from everyday life.

- Fiction operates on an implicit 'contract' between creator and audience: readers and viewers understand that the narrative is not reality yet willingly suspend disbelief to enter the world constructed by the creator. This willingness to temporarily inhabit another reality facilitates escapism and reinforces the perception that fiction is primarily a source of amusement and leisure.
- Fiction is often commonly encountered in accessible and enjoyable forms such as novels, films, and television series, all crafted to capture attention and sustain interest over time. Its narrative structure – built around conflict, climax, and resolution, naturally lends itself to entertainment, as it is designed to emotionally engage audiences and keep them invested in 'what happens next', thereby reinforcing the perception that its purpose is to amuse rather than to serve deeper intellectual or social functions.
- For instance, mainstream genres such as romance novels like 'The Notebook' or fantasy works like 'Twilight', as well as television series such as 'Bridgerton', are widely consumed for enjoyment and escapism from routine, everyday life. Similarly, action films like 'John Wick' or 'Mission: Impossible – The Final Reckoning' prioritise fast-paced storytelling, spectacle and emotional stimulation, further reinforcing fiction's association with entertainment value.
- In many cases, such works also rely on familiar or formulaic storylines designed to appeal to broad audiences and maximise commercial success.
- These narratives often deliver immediate emotional payoff by resolving in ways that meet audience expectations, such as happy endings, the triumph of the hero, or the reunion of characters. However, they may not always encourage deeper thematic exploration, functioning more as commercially driven products within the entertainment industry rather than vehicles for sustained reflection or social critique.
- Consequently, fiction is frequently associated with leisure consumption rather than serious intellectual engagement, especially when compared to non-fiction works such as history or scientific writing, which are perceived as more explicitly informative or educational in purpose.
- **Therefore, naysayers often assume that fiction exists only to entertain because it is predominantly experienced in accessible, emotionally engaging forms and widely consumed as a form of leisure rather than as a medium for instruction or critique.**

(POA) However, it overly simplistic to argue that fiction exists only to entertain, as many fictional works use engaging and accessible storytelling precisely as a vehicle to critique society and expose uncomfortable truths.

- While fiction often entertains through compelling plots and relatable characters, these same features can be deliberately constructed to draw readers into serious reflection about real-world issues such as power and inequality.
- The immersive and emotionally engaging nature of fiction allows audiences to lower their defences, making them more receptive to challenging ideas that might otherwise be resisted in more direct or factual forms of storytelling and information dissemination.
- For example, Suzanne Collins' novel, 'The Hunger Games' captivates readers with its fast-paced survival competition while exposing a dystopian society marked by extreme inequality. It also critiques authoritarian control, using fear to punish dissent and reinforce the government's power. Ultimately, the games commodify human suffering, turning contestants' pain, relationships and deaths into mass entertainment and prompting readers to question societies that profit from violence and sensationalism.
- This, along with other examples such as Netflix's drama series, 'Adolescence', demonstrate that entertainment and intellectual provocation are not mutually exclusive; rather, entertaining narrative forms often function as a gateway to deeper reflection.
- **Therefore, fiction cannot be reduced solely to entertainment, as its engaging qualities frequently serve as mechanisms for meaningful social commentary.**

(POA) Moreover, while fiction is often appreciated for its ability to entertain through emotionally resonant storytelling, its deeper value lies in how it expands readers' understanding of human experiences beyond their own.

- By drawing audiences into the inner lives, relationships and struggles of characters, fiction enables them to engage with perspectives and circumstances they may never encounter personally.
- This imaginative engagement is significant because it develops empathy, allowing readers to better understand the motivations, emotions and moral dilemmas of others in real-world contexts, thereby strengthening social awareness and ethical sensitivity.
- A quintessential example is Khaled Hosseini's novel, 'The Kite Runner', where Amir's insecurity and desire for approval led him to betray Hassan. The lasting consequence – guilt, fractured relationships and regret – ultimately forced readers to confront how fear and social hierarchy can drive morally damaging choices.
- This progression encourages readers to move beyond surface-level engagement with the plot and instead reflect on how ordinary human weaknesses can produce long-term ethical consequences in real life.
- Likewise, William Shakespeare's play, 'Romeo and Juliet' presents a tragic romantic narrative in which audiences are drawn into the intense emotions and impulsive decisions of the two protagonists, while also confronting the consequences of entrenched family conflict and longstanding hostility.
- Through its dramatic portrayal of love, loyalty, and fatal misunderstanding, the play encourages reflection on how emotional intensity and social pressure can shape decisions with irreversible outcomes, deepening understanding of human behaviour and moral complexity.
- These examples illustrate that fiction's emotional engagement is not merely a device of enjoyment but a mechanism through which those who engage with it can develop greater moral awareness and sensitivity to complex human situations.
- **Therefore, fiction's purpose should not be reduced to entertainment alone as it plays a crucial role in cultivating empathy and deepening understanding of human**

behaviour and ethical complexity.**Other possible POAs**

1. It is overly reductive to view fiction merely as entertainment because through this very entertainment, fiction also preserves cultural memory and shapes collective identity. By drawing on interesting historical experiences, traditions and shared values, fictional works allow societies to not only marvel at a very different world, but also remember their past, reflect on their present and transmit cultural beliefs across generations. Thus, fiction serves as a vehicle for cultural continuity, rather than mere amusement.
2. The purpose of fiction should not be limited to entertainment, as it also sustains a major global creative economy. The production of entertaining fictional works supports the livelihoods of writers, publishers, filmmakers, actors and digital creators, while contributing to national economies through employment, tourism and media exports. Therefore, fiction has economic value beyond the very ability to entertain audiences.

Conclusion

- In conclusion, while fiction is often perceived as a form of entertainment due to its accessible, emotionally engaging and commercially driven nature, to argue that it exists solely to entertain is far too narrow a view to espouse.
- Entertainment remains an important feature of fiction, but it is not its sole function. After all, fiction frequently extends beyond amusement, serving as a medium for social critique, empathy-building and cultural reflection.
- The most impactful fiction is that which not only engages audiences, but also challenges perspectives, deepens understanding of human experience and contributes meaningfully to both individuals and society.

Report prepared by: Ms Sasha Kaur Dhillon

Marked by:

Q3. 'We expect too much from governments.' Do you agree?**Strengths**

- Strong scripts were able to unpack 'too much' accurately, engaging with the negative effects of our excessive expectations from governments.
- Strong scripts were also able to provide apt points of balance to their argument for this question.
- Good scripts also discussed a wide variety of expectations and separated them into categories such as basic governance expectations (law, order, infrastructure), welfare expectations (healthcare, education, housing) and moral/global expectations (climate leadership, inequality reduction).
- Good scripts were able to draw examples from a wide variety of governments globally and used them well to substantiate their arguments in a convincing manner.

Weaknesses

- Weak scripts lacked the awareness of how to engage with the keyword 'too' and often erroneously treated it as an absolute word.

- Weak scripts also did not handle the balance to 'too' accurately, instead arguing that our expectations were 'too little' and changing the focus of the question entirely.
- Poor scripts were also characterised by repeated arguments and framing the concept of expectations far too narrowly.
- Weak scripts also did not show apt use of arguments or examples. Many such scripts utilised examples that were irrelevant and illogical.

A. QUESTION ANALYSIS

we

- refers to citizens of a country

expect

- to believe that someone should conform to certain standards of behaviour or fulfil specific roles

too much

- refers to a quantity, degree, or level that exceeds what is reasonable, appropriate, or realistically sustainable in a given context
- it implies an excess beyond acceptable limits, often resulting in negative consequences

governments

- the authorities managing a country, city, or group of people

Do you agree?

- requires a personal voice, while also showing a balanced perspective

B. SUGGESTED APPROACH

Background Information

- When a crisis occurs, citizens often look immediately to their governments for solutions, whether in response to rising costs of living, public health concerns or environmental challenges. Yet, when governments fail to deliver rapid improvements, frustration quickly emerges, raising questions about whether citizens are demanding too much or simply holding leaders accountable.
- In contemporary society, governments are increasingly expected to address a wide range of concerns, from providing essential public services and maintaining economic stability to tackling complex challenges such as climate change, inequality and technological disruption.

Possible Stand

- While some argue that such demands place excessive pressure on governments, which face limitations in terms of resources, capacity and competing priorities, these expectations reflect the basic responsibilities of any government, which is tasked with safeguarding citizens' welfare, maintaining social stability and responding to issues that significantly impact society.
- Therefore, I disagree that citizens expect too much from governments, as many of these demands are not unreasonable burdens but legitimate expectations of effective governance.

Arguments

(POB) With contemporary challenges becoming increasingly complex, there is indeed a case for the view that citizens are placing unrealistic demands on governments by holding them accountable for issues that governments can no longer resolve alone.

- This occurs because visible government interventions often create a 'performance benchmark' against which future governments are judged. When states successfully overcome previous crises, citizens may come to assume that similar levels of control and effectiveness can be applied to all future challenges, even when these problems involve unpredictable factors and actors beyond government authority.
- For example, governments have long promised citizens that they can guarantee national security by preventing terrorism and protecting them from violent threats. Following the September 11 attacks, many governments expanded counter-terrorism measures and invested heavily in intelligence capabilities, surveillance and military operations, giving rise to public expectations that terrorism could be eliminated.
- However, the rise of decentralised extremist networks and lone-wolf attacks has demonstrated the limits of state power. Even with extensive security measures, governments cannot completely prevent radicalisation, which is influenced by online ecosystems, social grievances and individual choices beyond direct state control.
- Similarly, governments' past success in managing economic crises has contributed to expectations that they can always protect citizens from financial hardship. During the 2008 Global Financial Crisis, many states intervened through bailouts, stimulus packages and financial regulations to stabilise economies. This reinforced the belief that governments could shield citizens from future economic disruptions.
- However, challenges such as inflation, supply chain disruptions and global market volatility are often driven by international forces beyond any single government's control.
- These examples illustrate that while governments have significant capacity to intervene, past achievements can create unrealistic assumptions about the extent of state power.
- **Therefore, while governments should remain accountable for their responsibilities, it may be unreasonable to expect them to independently resolve complex challenges that require cooperation beyond the state.**

Other possible POBs

1. It can also be argued that citizens expect too much from governments by underestimating the constraints of bureaucracy and institutional complexity. Unlike private organisations, governments must navigate regulations, public consultation and inter-agency coordination, which may slow decision-making but are necessary to ensure transparency, legality and accountability.

(POA) However, it is far too simplistic to argue that we expect too much from governments, as governments are uniquely positioned with the authority, resources and institutional capacity to address collective challenges and safeguard public welfare in ways that no other institution can.

- Governments are entrusted with the responsibility of maintaining social order and protecting citizens' well-being, which naturally creates expectations that they provide essential public goods such as healthcare, education, security and infrastructure. Given their mandate and ability to mobilise national resources, it is reasonable for citizens to hold governments accountable for outcomes that directly shape quality of life.

- More importantly, governments possess a level of authority and coordination capacity unmatched by private organisations or individuals: they can legislate, regulate markets, allocate public resources and implement nationwide policies. Therefore, expecting governments to tackle large-scale societal challenges is not excessive, but a reflection of their unique role as the primary institution capable of coordinating collective action.
- This is particularly evident during crises, where government intervention is often the most viable means of achieving responses at the necessary scale.
- During the COVID-19 pandemic, governments in countries such as South Korea and Germany were expected to coordinate nationwide testing, enforce public health measures and manage vaccine distribution because no other organisation possessed the legal authority or logistical capacity to organise such efforts effectively.
- Similarly, in climate adaptation efforts, governments across the European Union are expected to establish regulatory frameworks, invest in renewable infrastructure and coordinate cross-border emission targets, recognising that private firms and individuals alone lack the capacity to address systemic environmental challenges.
- **Therefore, expectations placed on governments are not inherently unrealistic; rather, they stem from the fundamental reality that governments are uniquely empowered to mobilise resources, coordinate society and respond to challenges that require collective solutions.**

(POA) Furthermore, while expectations placed on governments may at times appear to be excessive, they are not necessarily so, as they are important in ensuring accountability and improving policy responsiveness.

- High public expectations create continuous pressure on governments to justify their decisions, ensuring that policymaking remains transparent and responsive to societal needs. Even when expectations are demanding, they function as an external corrective mechanism that prevents complacency and encourages governments to refine their performance over time.
- This is important because governments do not operate under constant electoral evaluation, and therefore sustained public scrutiny between elections helps maintain institutional accountability. Even seemingly unrealistic expectations can therefore push governments to engage more actively with public concerns and improve service delivery.
- For example, the persistent expectations for improved public transport reliability in Singapore have driven ongoing efforts by authorities and operators to enhance punctuality standards, service frequency, and network efficiency across major MRT and bus systems. Similarly, strong public pressure for safer digital environments in the European Union has led to stricter regulatory frameworks on data protection and online platform accountability, including the enforcement of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).
- These cases demonstrate that even when expectations may exceed what governments can fully deliver at the moment, they can still produce beneficial policy outcomes by incentivising reform, innovation, and greater responsiveness.
- **Therefore, while people's expectations of governments may sometimes seem excessive, they serve a constructive function in improving governance quality and ensuring that governments remain accountable to the public they serve.**

Other possible POAs

1. Expectations placed on governments today are not excessive but reflect the enduring social compact between citizens and the state: in exchange for authority and legitimacy, governments are expected to provide security, stability and essential public goods. Since

contemporary governments possess far greater institutional capacity, technological capabilities and financial resources than their predecessors, it is reasonable for citizens' expectations of them to rise in tandem.

Conclusion

- Ultimately, while it is understandable that citizens place high expectations on governments, it is difficult to argue that we expect too much from them, given their central role in managing complex societal needs and coordinating large-scale responses to national and global challenges.
- Their importance in ensuring stability, delivering public services, and addressing collective problems makes scrutiny both inevitable and justified, even when such expectations appear demanding.
- Rather than viewing public expectations as inherently excessive, it is more constructive to recognise them as a necessary feature of governance that can, at times, stretch beyond practical limits yet still contribute positively to accountability and improvement.
- Moving forward, the key challenge lies not in reducing expectations, but in aligning them more realistically with institutional capacity while preserving the pressure that keeps governments responsive, effective, and continuously improving.

Report prepared by: Ms Sasha Kaur Dhillon

Marked by:

Q4. How far are sporting pursuits given adequate support and recognition in your society?

Strengths

- Stronger responses differentiated and engaged both support and recognition effectively.
- Stronger responses contained arguments that considered multiple stakeholders involved.

Weaknesses

- Weaker responses contained arguments that were supported by hypothetical or personal examples, if at all.
- Some responses overly focused on government funding and did not consider other perspectives.
- Some responses did not evaluate/ assess the keyword 'adequate'.

A. QUESTION ANALYSIS

How far

- evaluate the extent to which existing support and recognition meet the needs of sporting pursuits

sporting pursuits

- participating, competing, pursuing careers related to sports

- can include both professional and recreational sports

adequate

- sufficient, enough

support

- financial assistance or sponsorship, infrastructure or resources for one to train/ hone their sporting skills, avenues/ pathways to develop one's talent

recognition

- social prestige/ respect, media coverage, honours and accolades

in your society

- consider the traits, features and characteristics of the society that are relevant to the issues raised by the question

B. SUGGESTED APPROACH

***for the purposes of this essay, your society = Singapore*

Background information

- When 17-year-old Singaporean kitefoiler Maximilian Maeder won an Olympic bronze at the Paris Olympics, he was celebrated as the little red dot's next most promising talent, alongside other rising talents like Loh Kean Yew and Shanti Pereira. His achievement generated widespread media coverage and renewed public interest in the country's sporting achievements.
- Sporting pursuits have admittedly gained increasing prominence over the years. Singapore transformed its urban blueprint to integrate sports into daily life for all Singaporeans. Singaporean athletes are also achieving unprecedented success at recent international games.

Possible stand

- In Singapore's highly achievement-oriented society, support and recognition have certainly increased compared to the past.
- However, this remains rather inadequate. Significant gaps remain in societal attitudes and career development suggesting that the support and recognition given are not adequate enough.

Arguments

(POB) Admittedly, sporting achievements in Singapore have received growing support and recognition as they are viewed as symbols of national pride and excellence which is significant and meaningful for a small nation.

- For a small city-state with no natural resources, athletic success offers visibility and prestige, which is something rare and invaluable. Nothing quite unites a nation like a moment where a Singaporean athlete stands on the podium and the national anthem plays. This is the moment where Singaporeans, regardless of their race or religion, can claim collective ownership of an achievement that belongs to all Singaporeans.

- When sprinter Shanti Pereira became the first Singaporean woman to win gold at the Asian Championships in 2023 and when shuttler Low Kean Yew obtained the first men's singles gold at the BWF World Championships in 2021, both victories were met with an outpouring of public celebration. Their achievements were swiftly amplified by national outlets that dedicated prime time slots and the front pages to the win.
- Beyond national celebrations, Joseph Schooling also attracted major sponsorship deals from OCBC and Milo after his historic 2016 Olympic gold, reflecting that the private sector also recognises athletes who embody success as worthy individuals to invest in. Such responses are clear evidence that when the small nation punches above its weight, the support and recognition accorded are significant.
- Singapore government's allocation of S\$50 million in grants to support elite athletes following Schooling's gold medal also reflects a deliberate national investment in athletic talent, one that positions and recognises sport as a vehicle for nation building.
- **Hence, when there are signs of promising results, sporting achievements do receive substantial support and recognition given their powerful role in unifying the small country with a shared moment of pride.**

Other possible POB

1. Moreover, the Singapore government supports and recognises recreational sports because they promote healthy and active lifestyles among Singaporeans, improving overall physical and mental well-being, as reflected in the substantial government investment in sports facilities, infrastructure, and programmes that encourage widespread participation.

(POA) Nevertheless, sporting pursuits continue to struggle to receive support and recognition than academic pursuits given that academic achievement has long been placed on a pedestal, treated as the generally accepted pathway to success and financial security.

- Such a reverence for academic credentials is so deeply ingrained in Singapore's social fabric that it shapes how families raise children and how Singaporeans evaluate one another. Furthermore, choosing to focus on academic pursuits rather than sports becomes a more pragmatic and natural decision given the high cost of living and an extremely competitive environment in Singapore.
- Against such a backdrop, sports clearly occupy a subordinate position. Talented athletes often abandon sports at critical junctures like the O-Level or the A-Level examination as the tradeoff is often perceived to be too high in a society like Singapore where academic milestones can determine one's education or future trajectory for years. Unlike academic qualifications, which are seen to be enduring over time, a sporting career offers a short lifespan, uncertain progression and little guarantee of stability.
- While the support and recognition given to sports have been changing over the years, the fact remains that venturing into sport goes against the very DNA of the country. Athletes continue to face pressure to prioritise academic pursuits for greater stability instead. While Singaporean athletes do receive greater financial support today, this counts for little if sport is not respected as much as academic success.
- **Unfortunately, in a society where academic achievement is the entrenched measure of a person's value, sporting achievements are perhaps celebrated but not quite accorded the same value. This distinction is precisely what makes the support and recognition of sports fundamentally inadequate.**

(POA) Furthermore, because Singapore's culture places a premium on measurable results and proven track records, support and recognition are disproportionately concentrated among a handful of sports that have delivered success on the global stage.

- Given Singapore's highly pragmatic priorities, sponsors and investors naturally prefer to invest in athletes and sports that can guarantee returns on their investment. Sports with immediate medal prospects or that are highly marketable tend to receive comparatively much more funding as opposed to niche or emerging sporting areas that have yet to make a mark. With a small population and a limited pool of sporting talent, neither national nor corporate funding can afford to be spread too thinly across a wide range of sporting disciplines simultaneously.
- Sports like swimming and badminton that have historically performed well usually tend to receive more funds and attention unlike sports like rugby or hockey. Following Joseph Schooling's historic Olympic gold medal in 2016, swimming enjoyed even greater visibility and investment. Not only were there greater public interest and participation in the sport, Schooling's success further reinforced government support for initiatives such as the Swimming Association's high performance programmes.
- In contrast, equestrian sport receives comparatively less financial support despite the substantial costs involved in training and competition. As a niche sport without the same international visibility or consistent medal-winning success as swimming, it attracts less government funding and institutional investment. This is reflected in Caroline Chew's experience in relying on her family's financial support for her elite-level training and international competitions. While Sport Singapore and the Olympic councils provide some support, much of the financial burden remains on the athlete.
- Similarly, even in the case of the prestigious Sports Excellence Scholarship (spexScholarship), athletes must typically already have a regional or international standing before they are awarded the scholarship. While such an approach is practical from the perspective of allocating resources, to require athletes to first achieve success before they can be supported would mean that many promising talents may actually never receive any opportunities to realise their potential.
- Moreover, considering that many, if not most, Singaporeans only recognise the sportsperson after a medal has been won or there is noticeable coverage in the media due to the achievements, this further reinforces the perception that only medal-winning athletes are worthy of attention and support.
- **Hence, although sporting pursuits in Singapore receive considerable support and recognition, the uneven distribution of resources to only a select group of proven winners suggests that support and recognition remain less than adequate.**

Other possible POAs

1. As a small city-state, with a relatively modest sporting ecosystem, Singapore offers athletes limited opportunities for sustainable long-term careers, resulting in comparatively inadequate financial support and public recognition for their sporting pursuits.

Conclusion

- Singapore has certainly made commendable strides in supporting and recognising sporting pursuits. There has been considerable investment in both infrastructure and development of athletes that demonstrate Singapore's growing commitment to nurturing sporting excellence.

- However, the support and recognition for sporting pursuits remain rather inadequate. The value in academic and professional paths is deeply ingrained in the Singaporean society and consequently sporting pursuits and achievements often tend to occupy a secondary position.
- As Singapore continues to redefine the notion of success and strives to become a more mature and holistic society, the challenge lies not in producing more Maeders or Schoolings, but in creating a culture that values sporting pursuits long before any medal arrives.

Report prepared by: Ms Thangam

Marked by:

Q5. 'Migration is the solution to demographic challenges.' Discuss.

Strengths

- Stronger responses recognised how migration can address some demographic challenges more than others.
- Stronger responses considered the perspectives of both host and home countries of migrants.

Weaknesses

- Some students based their essays on a generic discussion with limited or no reference to specific countries.
- Weaker responses did not distinguish between different types of migrants.

A. QUESTION ANALYSIS

migration

- the movement of people from one country/ region to another; including leaving and entering countries
- can be both voluntary or involuntary
- either temporarily or permanently

the solution

- to completely resolve a problem
- an absolute term that needs to be challenged (not the same as 'a' solution)

demographic challenges

- difficulties that arise from changes to population numbers/ profile etc.
- difficulties include ageing population, low birth rate, rapid population growth, labour shortages, influx of illegal immigrants/ refugees

Discuss

- evaluate the extent to which migration is effective in eliminating demographic challenges.

B. SUGGESTED APPROACH

Background information

- Many developed countries like Japan, South Korea and Italy are grappling with increasingly severe demographic challenges. Persistently low birth rates and ageing populations have resulted in rising dependency ratios and added pressure on the economy and healthcare systems. Migration is admittedly a natural and even attractive solution for many countries as it creates an immediate supply of manpower to plug the gaps needed.

Possible stand

- While migration clearly can alleviate many demographic challenges, it would be rather extreme to consider migration to be the solution as demographic challenges are often rooted in deeper structural and economic factors that migration alone cannot resolve.

Arguments

(POB) In an era where many developed countries are dealing with ageing populations and declining birth rates, migration admittedly provides an immediate reprieve to labour shortages.

- The demographic challenge facing developed nations is rather structural in nature. As larger groups of elderly workers retire and fewer younger workers enter the workforce to replace them, it is unfortunately a sad reality that many essential jobs and services are unfilled threatening the country's ability to sustain economic activity.
- Unlike policies aimed at increasing fertility rates, which takes decades to produce results, migration does offer countries a quick stop gap measure. For example, countries like Germany and Canada actively welcome many immigrants to address shortages in various sectors like engineering or healthcare and to support economic growth. The fact that the supply of migrant labour can even be calibrated to the country's needs of both skilled and unskilled workers makes migration even more well-suited to tackle the pressing demands within such countries.
- Despite many countries simultaneously raising their retirement ages in an attempt to deal with labour shortages by keeping older workers economically active for longer, the fact remains that such shortages persist. Though this may increase workforce numbers, they are not able to fill in all the possible gaps. As individuals age, both their physical and cognitive capacities decline, limiting their ability to perform highly demanding roles. Labour-intensive sectors such as construction or manufacturing require physical stamina and strength and cognitively demanding sectors such as technology and finance require quick decision-making and rapid adaptive skills. As a result, older workers may be less suited to occupying certain positions regardless of how long they remain in the workforce, highlighting the challenge of relying solely on domestic manpower to resolve labour shortages.
- Hence, migration is not a matter of choice but a practical necessity for countries whose domestic workforce is not longer able to sustain economic activity on their own and it is clearly an immediate option.**

Other possible POBs

- For countries burdened by overpopulation, migration presents an opportunity as it relieves domestic pressure on resources and employment while the remittances it generates sustain both the origin and receiving economies.

(POA) However, in reality, migration often results in an unintended consequence, where demographic problems are transferred from one country to another rather than actually solving them.

- The basis of migration as a solution rests on the assumption that home countries of migrant workers have more workers than they need and can afford to export talent without consequence.
- While receiving countries certainly benefit from an inflow of migrants that helps them with their labour shortages and ageing population, this actually causes new demographic challenges to emerge in the home countries of these migrants. They suffer from 'brain drain' when they lose the very skilled and educated individuals whose skills are also critical to domestic development migrate to countries that offer better wages and living standards.
- For example, many healthcare professionals from Philippines and India migrate to countries like the United Kingdom or Australia to address the shortages in these countries. In reality, the departure of these skilled professionals often causes shortages in the migrants' home countries where medical services are already strained and their services are needed for their far larger and more vulnerable population at home.
- For many years too, countries like Germany and the United Kingdom have benefited from the migration of workers from Eastern European countries like Poland and Romania. However, the departure of many such young workers has contributed to labour shortages within the home country itself. Poland has experienced significant emigration while facing one of Europe's lowest fertility rates. In such a situation, migration is simply redistributing the problem of labour shortage from one country to another, and often this happens from a wealthier country to a poorer country.
- **Thus, migration cannot be regarded as the solution since it can worsen demographic pressures in the country of origin.**

(POA) Furthermore, given low birth rates and ageing populations in many countries, reliance on migration alone may be increasingly unsustainable, given that the conditions that make migration viable are beginning to erode.

- In order for migration to be a strategy, there must be a sufficiently steady pool of young and economically active migrants who are willing to relocate.
- However, in today's context, an ageing population is no longer confined to only a select group of developed countries, but is in fact a global phenomenon. The global pool of working-age migrants is in itself finite and shrinking.
- Traditional source countries for migrants, including China and Thailand are also facing rapidly ageing populations and declining fertility rates. This implies that the pipeline of available migrants that developed countries have relied upon is narrowing. Countries that look towards migration as a solution are drawing on a resource that is not being replenished at the rate it is being consumed.
- As more and more countries compete for the same limited pool of skilled and working-age migrants, competition inevitably intensifies and it is no longer a case of simply attracting talent but a case of outbidding rivals in a competitive market, which is not sustainable. Countries like Canada have introduced increasingly attractive immigration schemes to compete for global talent. Canada redesigned its Express Entry categories in 2026 to target top-tier talent. This system now allows them to specifically prioritise

sectors facing acute shortages, such as healthcare and STEM areas instead of the past system which used points to enable immigrants to speed up their permanent residency applications. But this is simply not something that all countries can keep up with as attracting foreign labour becomes a case of being more affluent or being in a better position to attract migrants.

- **Thus, as birth rates decline and ageing populations become an increasingly global phenomenon, the very conditions that once made migration a viable solution are disappearing. Given that most nations are expected to face the same demographic challenges, migration is simply not a sustainable long-term solution.**

Other possible POAs

1. In today's increasingly fragmented world, large scale migration can create new and more social integration challenges of its own instead of solving demographic challenges.

Conclusion

- In sum, migration does play a key role in helping countries by addressing their short-term challenges of labour shortages and supporting continued economic growth. However, to claim that migration is the solution to demographic challenges is overly simplistic. Demographic challenges are multi-faceted and migration alone cannot address it.
- Migration can perhaps buy Japan, South Korea and Italy some valuable time, but on its own, it cannot completely solve the long-term and complex demographic challenges. It is especially crucial for governments to delve deeper into the issues and address the root of the problem instead.

Report prepared by: Ms Thangam

Marked by:

Q6. Evaluate the claim that the state should not regulate the media during times of crisis.

Strengths

- Effective answers weigh both benefits and drawbacks of media regulation in crises in important domains such as security, public order, cohesion, and press freedom.
- Stronger responses assess whether different situations justify different levels of government intervention.
- Good scripts use evidence and examples to judge if regulation is necessary, proportionate, and effective, while considering risks.

Weaknesses

- Less effective responses take a one-sided view and fail to engage with alternative perspectives on media regulation during crises.
- Weaker responses generalise across all crises, ignoring context and relying on vague, poorly explained reasoning.

- Oversimplified responses use weak or generic examples and reach absolute conclusions without nuance or qualification.

A. QUESTION ANALYSIS

evaluate the claim

- assess how far the claim is valid by weighing different perspectives before arriving at a reasoned judgement

the state

- the authority responsible for governing the country, making and enforcing laws, safeguarding national security, maintaining public order and social cohesion, and promoting economic growth

should not regulate the media

- assess whether the state should refrain from censoring, restricting, or penalising the media, considering the public interest, media freedom, fundamental rights, and the government's responsibilities and obligations
- regulation may involve censorship, restrictions, shutdowns, fines, or legal penalties for media content or operations
- this is an extreme position that invites challenge

during times of crisis

- periods of emergency or severe disruption, including pandemics, wars, natural disasters, economic downturns, cyberattacks, social unrest, and other unexpected, high-impact events
- situations characterised by heightened danger, public anxiety, uncertainty, and threats to social stability, and public and national security

B. SUGGESTED APPROACH

Background information

- As dramatic images of iconic Los Angeles landmarks consumed by flames flooded social media during the 2025 wildfires, millions struggled to distinguish fact from fiction. Many of the most widely shared images were later revealed to be fabricated, exposing the media's ability to amplify misinformation in times of crisis. While the media serves as a vital source of information that helps societies respond to crises, the rapid spread of unverified content can also fuel confusion, misinformation, and public anxiety. As this can amplify public panic, undermine trust, and hinder effective crisis response, the question of whether governments should regulate the media becomes increasingly pressing.

Possible stand

- While critics argue that media regulation may restrict freedom of speech, unchecked misinformation during crises can cause significant harm, threatening public safety and national security. Therefore, government regulation is necessary to ensure that the media fulfils its essential role as a source of reliable information during times of crises and uncertainty.

Arguments

(POB) Admittedly, it can be argued that a free and independent press is essential for holding governments accountable through accurate reporting and scrutiny of their actions especially in a crisis.

- Crises are often unprecedented, complex, and rapidly evolving, making accurate and independent media reporting essential for holding governments accountable, especially when their decisions have far-reaching consequences. By scrutinising official actions and presenting a diversity of perspectives, the media can expose blind spots, broaden public understanding, and contribute to more informed and effective responses.
- Such scrutiny, however, depends on the media being free from direct government control or undue restrictions, so that journalists can investigate, verify, and report independently on government actions. This independence, in turn, enables citizens to make informed judgements about whether those in power are responding effectively to a crisis, in terms of both the speed and accuracy of their response.
- During the COVID-19 pandemic, for example, investigative journalism and real-time reporting on hospital capacity, testing shortages, and delays in vaccine rollout in countries such as the United States and the United Kingdom helped expose policy gaps and pressured governments to adjust strategies, increase transparency, and accelerate public health responses.
- The importance of independent reporting becomes even more apparent when crises are unprecedented and uncertain, as governments may themselves lack clear answers to new and complex questions. During the 2011 Fukushima nuclear disaster in Japan, for instance, independent journalists raised questions about radiation risks, evacuation measures, and the adequacy of the authorities' response. By bringing alternative perspectives to public attention, such reporting enabled citizens to scrutinise government decisions more critically when the appropriate response was far from certain.
- **Such cases therefore raise legitimate concerns that government regulation and control of the media during crises may hinder independent scrutiny of government actions and weaken society's ability to hold governments accountable.**

Other possible POBs

1. Another concern is that government regulation of the media during crises may limit the flow of information, making it more difficult for people to judge the seriousness of the situation, trust official information, and respond appropriately.

(POA) Although government regulation of the media raises legitimate concerns, it is justified during crises where unrestricted information threatens public safety and national security.

- In crisis situations such as war and terrorism, unrestricted reporting can inadvertently reveal sensitive information, provide hostile actors with valuable intelligence, and jeopardise the safety of security forces and response teams. The leaking of such vital information may compromise security operations, incite fear, and even provoke further violence, thereby worsening an already dangerous situation and putting more lives at risk. Unrestricted reporting can also spread panic among the public by exposing alarming or incomplete information before authorities have had the opportunity to provide context or reassurance.

- During the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine, an ongoing military crisis, the Ukrainian government consolidated television broadcasting into a single national news programme and restricted the reporting of military information that could assist Russian forces or undermine national security. By limiting the disclosure of troop positions, military movements, and strategic operations, the government prevented Russia from exploiting publicly available media information to target Ukrainian defences and safeguarded sensitive information that could have jeopardised military operations.
- Similarly, governments may need to regulate the media when information released during a crisis could be exploited by harmful actors to endanger the public. Following the 2019 Christchurch mosque attacks in New Zealand, the gunman attempted to livestream the attack and publish his manifesto online, but the government worked with media organisations and online platforms to prevent the material from being widely disseminated. This limited the spread of content that could inspire copycat attacks, glorify violence and facilitate radicalisation. Government regulation of the media was therefore both timely and necessary during the crisis to prevent the attack from being further exploited to incite violence and endanger public safety.
- **Thus, governments should regulate the media during a crisis when doing so is necessary to protect national security, by preventing the disclosure of sensitive military information and denying enemies the publicity and influence they seek to gain through the media.**

(POA) Furthermore, government regulation of the media is necessary to ensure citizens receive consistent and reliable information that enables a coordinated and effective crisis response, mitigating panic and maintaining public order.

- In emergencies and crises, conflicting reports, rumours, and false information can trigger fear and uncertainty, causing people to ignore official instructions, hoard essential supplies, flee affected areas, or resist emergency measures. Such disorderly behaviour not only endangers individuals but also overwhelms emergency services and undermines governments' ability to manage the crisis effectively.
- During Hurricane Milton (2024) in Florida, USA, false evacuation warnings and exaggerated flood claims spread on social media without effective verification. This created confusion, with some residents evacuating unnecessarily while others delayed leaving due to conflicting information. Emergency services had to issue repeated corrections, showing how the lack of media regulation by the government during crises can fuel panic, confusion, and unsafe decision-making.
- In contrast, the 2014 Ebola outbreak in Sierra Leone demonstrated how media regulation can support an effective crisis response. As rumours and misinformation caused distrust of health authorities and resistance to containment measures, the government introduced emergency media regulations and worked with radio stations to spread accurate health information. This reduced confusion, improved public cooperation, and strengthened efforts to control the outbreak.
- **Therefore, government regulation remains necessary during crises to prevent panic and disorganised public behaviour, ensure that citizens act on accurate information, and enable the government and society to respond collectively and effectively in times of emergency.**

Other possible POAs

1. Government regulation of the media during crises is often necessary to safeguard social cohesion by curbing opportunist inflammatory content and extremist propaganda that can inflame tensions and deepen divisions within society.

Conclusion

- In times of crisis, a free press plays an important role in keeping the public informed, but unchecked reporting can also spread misinformation, create panic, and disrupt security efforts.
- This shows why government regulation of the media is often necessary during crises to prevent harmful information from spreading and maintain public order. However, excessive control can hide the truth, distort information, and reduce public trust in both the media and the government.
- Therefore, governments should adopt a balanced approach by regulating harmful content while protecting press freedom, preserving public trust, and ensuring that people receive accurate information during times of crisis.

Report prepared by: Mrs Evangeline Ho

Marked by:

Q7. Is forgiveness the best way to deal with injustice?**Strengths**

- Stronger responses contained arguments that were supported with concrete examples drawn from a range of contexts.

Weaknesses

- Some students based their essays on a limited view of 'forgiveness' or used them synonymously with 'forgetting' what had happened.
- Weaker responses contained arguments that were supported by hypothetical or personal examples, if at all.
- Weaker responses also digressed into developing other ways of dealing with injustice.

A. QUESTION ANALYSIS**forgiveness**

- act of letting go of resentment, anger or the desire for revenge
- can be personal, societal, judicial
- does not necessarily imply forgetting the wrongdoing

injustice

- unfair treatment, violation of rights/ dignity/ entitlement by another person, institution or society as a whole
- can occur at different levels – individual, social or international

best way to deal with

- most effective/ desirable/ appropriate way to respond to/ address/ manage
- suggests an absolute stance

What is your view?

- evaluate if there is any truth in the claim

B. SUGGESTED APPROACH

Background information

- 'The weak can never forgive. Forgiveness is the attribute of the strong.' This quote by Mahatma Gandhi illustrates that forgiveness is often regarded as one of the noblest responses to injustice. By forgiving, individuals free themselves from negative emotions despite the wrongdoings against them. Across history, forgiveness is seen as a noble virtue capable of healing wounds and breaking cycles of revenge and hatred caused by injustice. In a world marked by conflict, many may view forgiveness as a powerful and perhaps even necessary way to enable societies to move forward.

Possible stand

- While forgiveness is indeed a constructive and effective way of dealing with injustices given that it promotes healing and liberates one emotionally, it is certainly not the best response to deal with every unjust situation, particularly when injustice involves severe harm or systemic oppression.

Arguments

(POB) Forgiveness is widely regarded as one of the most constructive ways to deal with injustice as it allows victims to heal emotionally and move forward with their lives.

- Injustice often leaves victims burdened by strong emotions of anger and resentment. While these feelings are understandable, prolonged bitterness can negatively affect one's mental health and personal well-being.
- Choosing to forgive allows the victim to reclaim peace of mind and avoid being consumed by the resentment. This concept is also encouraged across different faiths like Buddhism and Christianity, among many others.
- In the 2019 Christchurch mosque attacks in New Zealand, a gunman killed over 50 people and injured dozens more. Despite the immense grief, several survivors and family members of the victims publicly expressed forgiveness towards the perpetrator. Farid Ahmed, whose wife was a victim, publicly forgave the gunman during the national remembrance service and explained that his faith enabled him to forgive the attacker to free his heart from being consumed by anger.
- Despite the depth of the wrong inflicted, rather than allowing anger and revenge to dominate their thoughts, forgiveness enables survivors and loved ones to move on with their lives instead of being confined in a state of anger.
- Eva Kor, a Holocaust survivor publicly forgave her Nazi perpetrators in 1995. Kor was explicit in stressing that forgiveness did not mean that she was forgetting the atrocity, but she was releasing the psychological grip that the trauma had over her. Forgiveness prevents victims from being psychologically trapped by the wrongdoing committed against them. Instead of being consumed by resentment which actually prolongs their suffering way after the attack itself, individuals are able to focus on healing and have the capacity to be happy again.
- **Hence, given that forgiveness is a more constructive approach, valued for its capacity to restore psychological wellbeing of the victims and frees them from the grip of the offender's actions, forgiveness can be an effective way in dealing with injustice.**

Other possible POBs

1. Forgiveness is also often seen as the best way for social cohesion, especially after periods of conflict, in order to create meaningful opportunities for dialogue and reconciliation among the community.
2. Being able to forgive is also perceived as the best way as it reflects moral maturity and compassion enabling individuals to rise above the injustice committed against them.

(POA) However, forgiving too quickly may instead embolden perpetrators and enable further wrongdoing instead of being a way to address injustice.

- Unfortunately, while forgiveness is a morally admirable response to injustice, extending it too soon or rushing to give it before the perpetrators have demonstrated remorse or even processed the act and taken accountability is likely to inadvertently encourage them to continue with their wrongdoing. In such situations, instead of forgiveness being a means of justice, it becomes a shield behind which perpetrators are able to avoid scrutiny.
- The 1993 case of Jon Venables and Robert Thompson, both aged ten, abducting and murdering two-year-old James Bulger in the United Kingdom, underscores the risk of forgiving too quickly in the absence of genuine reform. While the justice system's emphasis on rehabilitation reflected a belief in the redemptive potential of youth given their age, his repeated imprisonment after his release in 2001 reveals that leniency, without sufficient accountability does not necessarily deter future wrongdoing.
- Similarly, American vlogger Gabby Petito's case is a sobering reminder that in cases of domestic abuse, forgiving the perpetrator too quickly without protective boundaries or legal accountability can directly enable the escalation of violence. Though police were called in after a physical altercation with her fiancé Brian Laundrie, she defended him and requested that he be excused without consequences. He murdered her sometime after and died by suicide some months after he went missing. Far from resolving the injustice, the absence of consequence resulted in a tragic outcome.
- **Indeed, where forgiveness is extended without meaningful consequences, it fails to deter wrongdoing and tends to instead create conditions for injustice to recur or worsen.**

(POA) Besides, forgiveness is not always the best way to fight against injustice as it is often institutionalised and requires structural reform more than forgiveness.

- In many cases, injustice is often not a one-off situation but is deeply embedded within institutional or political structure that disadvantages groups of people collectively. Under such situations, while forgiveness can continue to help victims achieve some emotional closure, forgiveness does not actually address the root causes of the injustice and may actually result in continued injustice and suffering. Injustice can only be meaningfully addressed through collective action and reform that is aimed at dismantling the structures that sustain it. Without concrete intervention to address these underlying causes, forgiveness remains only an emotional response and cannot bring about meaningful change.
- For instance, the #MeToo movement exposed a widespread culture of sexual harassment of women by their male bosses across various industries from entertainment to finance. For years, many victims chose to remain silent, privately forgive or simply suppressed and moved on from their anger as their perpetrators are powerful people. While such forgiveness may have helped some individuals emotionally with their trauma, it is not the best way as it did little to challenge the injustice itself and the underlying structures that enabled such abuse to continue.

- Meaningful change only occurred when victims began to speak up against the misconduct by naming the abusers and demanding accountability. As a result, major corporations across industries overhauled their Human Resource (HR) reporting structures and anti-harassment policies. For instance, Fox News introduced an independent hotline for reporting misconduct and appointed an external law firm to handle complaints.
- On a more macro level, the Speak Out Act (2022) was passed in the US, limiting the use of non-disclosure agreements that had long been used by powerful perpetrators to silence victims. This dismantled one of the key legal mechanisms that had enabled abuse to go unchallenged for years in the US.
- Without addressing the larger underlying causes of injustice, forgiveness does not resolve injustice but quietly perpetuates it. Had victims chosen forgiveness without actually challenging the structures that enabled such practices, such abuse or discriminatory practices would continue to go unchecked, leading to a perpetual cycle of injustice.
- **Therefore, although forgiveness can play a role in helping individuals move on emotionally, it is not the most effective way to address injustice, as lasting change can only be achieved through systemic reforms that prevent future injustices from occurring.**

Other possible POAs

1. Forgiveness may not be the best way when perpetrators refuse to acknowledge their wrongdoing, accept responsibility and recognize the consequences or make amends for the harm they have caused.

Conclusion

- In conclusion, forgiveness is an important way in helping victims heal from injustice. However, it is certainly not necessarily the best response to injustice. Forgiveness does not replace justice and serious injustices often require accountability or structural changes in addition to forgiveness itself.
- Ultimately, there is no single 'best way' to deal with injustice. Instead, the most appropriate response is a multi-pronged one that is tailored to the circumstances, meets the needs of the victims, and addresses the underlying causes of the injustice.

Report prepared by: Ms Thangam

Marked by:

Q8. 'A city without soul.' How true is this of your society?

Strengths

- Strong scripts were able to unpack the keyword 'soul' accurately, engaging with distinct identity, character and emotional essence of a city. More competent scripts were able to achieve this with a specific and thorough focus on relevant Singapore-based characteristics.
- Good scripts also discussed a wide variety of aspects/domains and stakeholders to whom 'soul' could be applied.
- Good scripts were able to draw examples from a wide variety of domains and use them

well to substantiate their arguments in a convincing manner.

Weaknesses

- Weak scripts lacked an awareness of how to engage with the keyword 'soul'. Some students took it too literally to mean that 'soul' referred to the spiritual essence of human beings.
- Weak scripts were also unable to effectively maintain the absolute stance throughout the essay, failing to counter the points of balance raised.
- Poor scripts were also characterised by repeated arguments and framing the concept of soul far too narrowly (e.g. only focusing on the arts or creative industries throughout their essays).
- Poor scripts also did not effectively weave in and engage with relevant Singapore-based characteristics across their arguments and examples.
- Poor scripts also demonstrated a narrow scope of discussion via stakeholder-driven paragraphs.
- Weak scripts also did not show apt use of arguments or examples. Many such scripts utilised examples that were far too generic.
- Weak scripts focused on why Singaporeans lacked soul (e.g. pragmatic career choices, being burnt out at work) without linking it back to how this affected the city at large.

A. QUESTION ANALYSIS

city without soul

- refers to a city that is characterised by a lack of identity, character, or emotional and cultural depth, possibly being merely functional or modern
- it may be overly uniform or generic, with little distinction from other cities, highly commercialised or planned such that efficiency is prioritised over having character, and is culturally thin or fragmented, with a weak sense of shared heritage and community
- it could also refer to an emotionally detached environment where people feel disconnected from one another
- an absolute assertion that should be challenged

how true

- examine to what extent the claim is valid

your society

- arguments and examples must be anchored in the candidate's chosen society
- there should be a reference to relevant trends, traits and policies in the candidate's chosen society

B. SUGGESTED APPROACH

***for the purposes of this essay, your society = Singapore*

Background Information

- It is not uncommon to hear my society, Singapore, being described by critics as being a 'city without soul', a phrase which has sparked debated over whether our highly efficient and meticulously planned environment comes at the expense of cultural depth and emotional vibrancy.

- From its well-planned skyline at Marina Bay to its impeccably cleaned streets and tightly regulated public spaces, Singapore is frequently held up as a model of order, modernity and functionality in global urban discourse.

Possible Stand

- Singapore's rapid transformation from a developing port city into a global financial hub within a single generation reflects a broader narrative of state-led planning and economic pragmatism, which has shaped perceptions of Singapore as a highly efficient but culturally deficient city.
- However, this view is increasingly challenged by the city's evolving multicultural identity, vibrant neighbourhood ecosystems and a strong sense of shared national belonging.
- While Singapore's highly structured urban form may at times appear controlled or utilitarian, it is unfair to characterise it as lacking soul altogether. Therefore, it is largely untrue to describe Singapore as a 'city without soul', as its cultural richness and lived social experiences reveal a more nuanced and dynamic urban identity.

Arguments

(POB) Critics argue that Singapore is indeed a city without soul because its highly efficient and tightly regulated urban environment prioritises order and functionality over organic cultural expression and spontaneous social life, resulting in a cityscape that is overly planned, rigid and lacking in authenticity.

- Singapore's urban planning model is characterised by strong state regulation, strict zoning laws and carefully structured residential and public spaces. While these systems ensure cleanliness, safety and efficiency, critics argue that they leave limited room for spontaneous interactions and organically formed community relationships, as everyday social life is often shaped by formal planning rather than naturally emerging connections.
- This is evident in the regulation of public spaces and social behaviour, where activities such as street performances, informal vending and unsanctioned public gatherings are tightly controlled under legal frameworks such as the Public Order Act. Even public assemblies require permits, reducing the visibility of spontaneous civic expression that is often associated with culturally vibrant urban life.
- Furthermore, Singapore's emphasis on efficiency and order in everyday life, from its highly reliable transport system to its carefully curated urban districts, creates an environment where interactions are structured and predictable rather than organic or dynamic. Arguably, this reduces opportunities for the kind of messy, unplanned social encounters that give cities character.
- For example, in 2026, the floor-to-ceiling mirrors along the underground walkway connecting Bayfront MRT station to Gardens by the Bay were frosted after complaints emerged that the dancers practising there were obstructing pedestrian flow.
- Although the space had organically evolved into a vibrant community hub where aspiring dancers rehearsed, tourists stopped to watch and spontaneous social interactions emerged, its primary function as a pedestrian thoroughfare ultimately took precedence. Instead of accommodating multiple uses of the space, the mirrors were obscured and dancers were redirected to designated practice areas at quieter MRT stations, illustrating how informal cultural expression is often regulated in favour of efficiency and orderly use of public space.
- **Therefore, critics argue that Singapore's prioritisation of order, efficiency, and regulation over spontaneity and informal cultural expression contributes to the**

perception that it is a city without soul as its urban experience may feel functional and controlled rather than emotionally rich or organically lived.

Other possible POBs

1. Sceptics also argue that Singapore can be described as a city without soul because its highly commercialised and globalised urban identity has prioritised economic growth and consumption over the preservation and expression of local heritage, traditions and community-based cultural practices. As a global financial hub, Singapore's landscape is increasingly shaped by multinational corporations, luxury retail and corporate infrastructure, making it appear more homogenised and less distinctively rooted in local culture.

(POA) However, it is far too myopic to argue that Singapore is a city without a soul, as this view overlooks the ways in which careful state planning and modern development have actually enabled the creation of meaningful shared spaces and cultural hybridity which foster a distinctive sense of belonging.

- While Singapore's emphasis on efficiency, regulation and urban order may appear to limit spontaneity, it has also allowed for the deliberate cultivation of diverse cultural expressions and inclusive public spaces that bring different communities together in meaningful ways.
- Governments have a responsibility not only to maintain order but also to foster social cohesion in a highly diverse society, and in Singapore's context, structured planning helps to ensure that spaces are available to cultivate cultural expression.
- This balance between order and cultural expression is important, because carefully designed public spaces and policies can actively support interaction, identity formation, and shared national experiences rather than diminish them.
- For example, carefully developed spaces such as Kampong Glam and the Little India heritage districts preserve traditional narratives and cultural memory, while state-planned contemporary events like the Singapore Night Festival and Chingay Parade transform public spaces into large-scale celebrations of multicultural identity that actively involve citizens in shared cultural experiences.
- Similarly, everyday environments such as hawker centres that are planned for in every neighbourhood function as informal social equalisers where people from different backgrounds gather, reinforcing communal ties through shared food culture.
- These examples illustrate how Singapore's urban environment is not devoid of cultural life, but rather shaped by a different model of cultural expression: one that is structured, inclusive, and deliberately cultivated rather than spontaneous or unregulated.
- **Therefore, while Singapore's urban form may appear highly organised and modern, it is not accurate to describe it as a 'city without soul', as its cultural identity is actively constructed through shared spaces, multicultural practices, and everyday social interactions.**

(POA) Moreover, it would be remiss to claim that Singapore is a city without a soul, as Singaporeans themselves have continually been finding creative avenues to express their unique identity and individuality even within a highly regulated environment.

- This is because individuals naturally seek to assert and preserve a sense of distinct identity, particularly within a society where social norms and expectations can encourage conformity. Singapore's emphasis on order, convention and pragmatism may shape how

people behave, but it does not erase their desire to distinguish themselves, express their perspectives and retain practices that they see as uniquely their own.

- Consequently, Singaporeans develop their own forms of expression that allow them to retain this individuality while navigating the expectations of a highly structured society. Rather than rejecting Singapore's systems outright, they may adapt, reinterpret or push against them in subtle ways, allowing distinctive cultural practices and voices to persist alongside the country's emphasis on order and conformity.
- In fact, restrictions and conventions can also sometimes become catalysts for creativity, as Singaporeans devise unconventional ways to make their presence felt without directly contravening established norms.
- For instance, Singlish persists as a distinctive vernacular despite decades of efforts to promote Standard English for effective communication and global competitiveness. Its continued use in everyday speech, popular culture and online spaces reflects how Singaporeans have retained a linguistic marker of shared identity, suggesting that cultural expression cannot simply be engineered in a top-down fashion.
- Similarly, local artists have appropriated otherwise mundane or regulated urban spaces to inject humour and creativity into the city. The 'Reverse Graffiti' artist, Marcus Pang, for instance, uses water jets to clean patterns and messages onto dirty walls rather than applying paint, while the 'Sticker Lady' became known for placing humorous stickers around Singapore's public spaces. Such acts demonstrate how citizens can work creatively within legal and physical constraints to leave traces of individuality on an otherwise highly controlled landscape.
- Even when such expressions provoke controversy, the public response itself reveals that Singaporeans possess strong emotional attachments to their cultural landscape. The backlash surrounding the removal of the 'Samsui Woman' mural, for instance, showed that public art can become a site of collective memory and identity, with citizens actively debating what should be preserved and what Singapore's shared spaces ought to represent.
- These examples reveal that Singapore's soul is not necessarily found in the absence of rules, but in the human creativity that emerges within them. Therefore, Singaporeans are not passive inhabitants of a carefully engineered city. Instead, they continually reinterpret, personalise and sometimes challenge the spaces around them to inject their own 'soul' into them.
- **Therefore, while Singapore may lack the organic, unplanned development associated with the soul of other seemingly more vibrant cities, it would be reductive to call it a city without soul, as the cultural attachment and quiet defiance of its people continually breathe individuality into its structured landscape.**

Other possible POAs

1. Singapore is also not a city without soul, as its everyday culture of neighbourliness and civic-mindedness continues to foster genuine human connections despite its highly urbanised environment. Beyond formal institutions, social relations are shaped by informal practices such as affectionately addressing strangers as 'uncle' or 'auntie', neighbourly acts of looking out for one another, and community initiatives that encourage residents to support those in need. Together, these everyday interactions cultivate trust, mutual care and a shared sense of belonging that gives Singapore its distinctive soul.

Conclusion

- Ultimately, while Singapore is sometimes criticised as being a ‘city without soul’, such a characterisation is overly reductive and fails to capture the depth and complexity of its lived reality. Its strengths in order, efficiency, economic dynamism, cultural diversity, and strong social cohesion demonstrate that it possesses a distinct and evolving urban identity, even if it does not conform to more romanticised notions of spontaneity or informality.
- Rather than viewing the city through a narrow lens that equates ‘soul’ with unregulated expression alone, it is more productive to recognise that Singapore’s identity is continuously shaped through a combination of structured planning and lived social experiences, from kampung spirit and multicultural interaction to artistic expression and shared national narratives.
- Moving forward, the key challenge lies not in searching for a ‘soul’ defined by conventional standards, but in appreciating how Singapore continues to refine and express its identity in ways that are uniquely its own.

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