



Lawrence Wong: Listen, consult, reflect

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Pearl Lee

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LEADERS everywhere face the challenge of addressing their citizens' growing expectations when it comes to quality public services, acting minister Lawrence Wong said yesterday.

This is because people are now more empowered in an age where social media and advanced communication technologies are breaking down barriers, added the Acting Minister for Culture, Community and Youth.

He urged an audience of 58 senior Chinese and Singapore officials to be open-minded and have an experimental mindset. This will allow them to deal with challenges and opportunities as they come, especially as environments become increasingly complex.

Mr Wong added that China has to continue to "reform its economy, and make growth more sustainable and inclusive".

He said the country's size gives it the advantage of being able to conduct "policy experiments in selected locales and expanding the successful ones nationwide".

This provides China with the space to innovate and try out different ideas.

The acting minister told his audience that policies are not just guidelines or schemes formulated in the office.

Instead, they "have a real impact on the lives of people, on a daily basis". He said: "It is crucial, as policymakers, that you go to the ground, you see the people that the policies serve... Listen, consult, and reflect."

Mr Wong was speaking at a valedictory dinner at the Four Seasons Hotel for graduates of the National University of Singapore Master in Public Administration and Management programme.

They include Member of Parliament Yeo Guat Kwang, who is the first Singaporean to graduate from the year-long programme.

Calling the course an "interesting learning platform", Mr Yeo said his course mates' diverse backgrounds made group discussions particularly enriching. "We actually learn more through our discussions, and it made me rethink some of our approaches and concepts," he said.

The master's programme, which is in its third year, was born out of an agreement between the Singapore and Chinese governments.

It aims to meet the increasing need for public administration education among officials and state-owned enterprise executives from China.

The course is jointly offered by the university's Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy and its Business School.

leepearl@sph.com.sg