

Can Singapore Fall?

In photos: IPS-Nathan Lectures by Lim Siong Guan

By Fern Yu

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CAN SINGAPORE FALL? Of course Singapore can, declares Mr Lim Siong Guan, the [Institute of Policy Studies' \(IPS\) 4th S R Nathan Fellow for the Study of Singapore](#). The more interesting question is how we might avoid or arrest a decline, and instead build a gracious and flourishing nation with a renewed pioneering spirit.

If we, as individuals and a society, agree that a change in our mind-set is critical, and if we start to adopt new modes of thinking and acting now, we could build a Singapore that the next generation of Singaporeans would be proud of.

These issues were explored in-depth over the course of Mr Lim's three lectures, held from September to November 2017.

For instance, a strong spirit of other-centeredness can provide an antidote to the high levels of decadence and indulgence that tend to accompany the decline of nations. This observation on selfishness was made in Sir John Glubb's *The Fate of Empires and Search for Survival*, which served as an inspiration for Mr Lim's views.

In addition, Mr Lim said that it was critical for Singapore to build up a culture of innovation. This is not just a matter of individuals acquiring new skills or winning school competitions. This involves individuals, families, government, and society each doing their part to support a way of life and a habit of the mind that values each individual, strives to develop their talents and abilities to their full potential, and promotes energetic and creative initiatives to confront social and national challenges.

"Much of what we can become depends on us, the citizens," said Mr Lim at his third lecture, "The Way of Hope".

"It is a choice of whether to 'die' in due time, on account of complacency and apathy, or to live well because we act in good time to do the things which will take a long time to establish."

[All three lectures](#) and accompanying Question-and-Answer sessions are being edited and compiled in a book, due to be released in 2018. Here are some of the moments from the lectures.



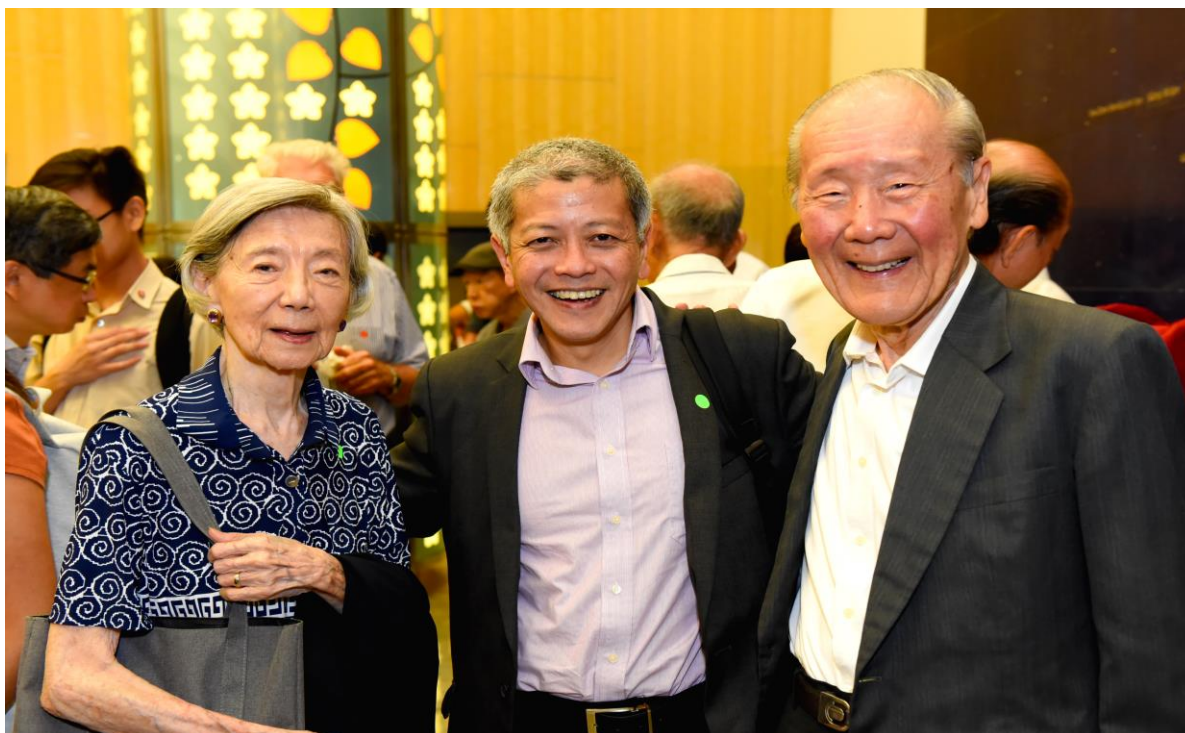
Mr Lim's three lectures, "[The Accidental Nation](#)", "[The Fourth Generation](#)", and "[The Way of Hope](#)", each drew an audience of around 400.



Former Head of Civil Service (1999–2005) Mr Lim (left) was a mentor to a whole generation of public servants and others now in the people and private sectors.



One of the Fellowship's goals is to encourage critical thinking in young Singaporeans. IPS actively reaches out to schools to bring their students to the lectures. [Contact us](#) for details.



"I went to listen to Lim Siong Guan's lecture and as a bonus, got to hang out with the amazing Wang Gungwu and his wife!" [posted](#) Professor Danny Quah of the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy on Facebook.



Singapore needs to create its own path, said Mr Lim. "What we need most of all is not maps — no one else is in our position, and no one else's map will get us to where our strengths can get us to."





Mr Lim played videos throughout his lectures to illustrate his points, keeping the audience entertained.



Following each of his lectures, several engaged members of the audience would stay back to ask Mr Lim further questions, or share with him their reactions.



The moderators for the Question-and-Answer (Q&A) sessions were (L–R) Professor Tan Tai Yong, President & Professor of Humanities (History), Yale-NUS College; Kuik Shiao-Yin, Nominated Member of Parliament; and Dr Gillian Koh, Deputy Director (Research), Institute of Policy Studies.



The lectures and Q&As have been uploaded to [IPS' Website](#), including video and sound recordings.



"I'm going to ask her what she learnt!" Ever the family man and teacher, Mr Lim brought his granddaughter along to one of his lectures.

[Fern Yu](#) is a Research Assistant (Special Projects) at IPS. She contributes to the work of the S R Nathan Fellowship for the Study of Singapore.

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