

22 August 2024

For Immediate Release

Appointment of the 15th S R Nathan Fellow for the Study of Singapore

The **Institute of Policy Studies (IPS)** is pleased to announce the appointment of **Professor Lily Kong**, President of Singapore Management University (SMU), as the 15th S R Nathan Fellow for the Study of Singapore.

From August to December 2024, Professor Kong will pursue research into the idea of the university and how it has evolved over time. She will examine the public value of universities, the potential and reality of their contributions to societal development, and how they reflect changing historical and societal conditions. She will deliver her series of three lectures at the National University of Singapore (NUS) on 8th October, 4th November, and 27th November 2024. Thereafter, the lectures will be compiled and published as a book.

The IPS-Nathan Lectures are free and open to all. Held at NUS, they enrich the vibrant intellectual and cultural life on campus, and advance understanding and discourse on issues of national interest among the general public. Details of Professor Kong's lectures will be published on the IPS website in due course.

A biographical note on Professor Kong is provided herewith.

About the S R Nathan Fellowship for the Study of Singapore

The S R Nathan Fellowship was announced in 2013 at IPS' 25th anniversary gala dinner. IPS wanted to recognise the unique contributions of Mr S R Nathan — Singapore's sixth and longest-serving President — to public service and the development of Singapore. With generous support from individual and corporate donors, the Institute raised around S\$5.9 million (including a matching government grant) to endow the fellowship.

The S R Nathan Fellowship for the Study of Singapore serves to further IPS' core mission: to research and analyse policy issues and challenges, build bridges between key thought leaders, and communicate the Institute's work to a wider audience.

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Professor Lily Kong has been President of Singapore Management University (SMU) since 2019. She is the fifth President and the first Singaporean to lead the 24-year-old university. She is also the first Singaporean woman to serve as President of any university in Singapore. She previously served as Provost of SMU from 2015 to 2018, making her the first woman to hold the position of Provost at any university in Singapore. Before joining SMU, she held various senior management roles at the National University of Singapore.

Since becoming SMU President, Professor Kong has led SMU in identifying Digital Transformation, Sustainable Living, and Growth in Asia as three key strategic priorities. These priorities address the future needs of Singapore, the regional economy and community, position students well for the future, and align with SMU's unique strengths. Under her leadership, SMU has also seen growth in student enrolment, research grant income, and donor support. The university has further increased its engagement with industry and university partners locally and internationally, and launched overseas centres in Jakarta in 2022, Bangkok in 2023 and Ho Chi Minh City in 2024, to deepen SMU's regional engagements. Through the strengthening of its education, research and engagement agendas, SMU has increasingly emphasised the importance of universities in making meaningful impact on economy, society and polity.

An award-winning researcher and teacher, Professor Kong has received numerous international awards, including the Commonwealth Fellowship Award, the Fulbright Fellowship Award, the Robert Stoddard Award from the Association of American Geographers for her work in the geographies of religion, and the Victoria Medal from the Royal Geographical Society (with the Institute of British Geographers) for conspicuous merit in social, cultural and urban geographical research. In a global study by Stanford University (2020), Professor Kong was identified as among the world's top 1% of scientists in the field of Geography. These accolades acknowledge her wide-ranging and impactful research on urban transformations, and social and cultural change in Asian cities. In particular, she has published a large body of work on inter-communal relations and social cohesion, national identity, cultural policy and cultural industries, creative cities and creative economy, urban heritage and conservation, smart cities, migration and education.

Professor Kong was conferred the Public Administration Medal (Silver) in 2006 and Public Service Star (Bintang Bakti Masyarakat) award in 2020 as part of Singapore's National Day Awards. She was recognised in Forbes Asia's Power Businesswomen list (2020), Forbes inaugural 50 over 50 (Asia 2022) and Tatler's Asia's Most Influential (2022). Professor Kong was inducted into Singapore Women's Hall of Fame in 2022.

About the Institute of Policy Studies

The [Institute of Policy Studies \(IPS\)](#) was established in 1988 as an independent think-tank to study and generate public policy ideas in Singapore. Today, IPS is an autonomous research centre of the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy at the National University of Singapore. The Institute continues to advance its core mission: to analyse public policy; build bridges between thought leaders; and communicate research findings to a wide audience. IPS examines domestic policy challenges across a variety of fields and studies the attitudes of Singaporeans through surveys of public perception. It adopts a multi-disciplinary approach in its analysis and takes the long-term view in its strategic deliberation and research.

For media queries

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