

## Opening of Casinos Most Remembered by All: Poll

**Charissa Yong**

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Fifty years ago, then prime minister Lee Kuan Yew broke down and cried on television as he recounted the train of events that led to Singapore becoming independent after separation from Malaysia.

That moving image from Aug 9, 1965 ranks among the most enduring moments of Singapore's history in the minds of many, going by a recent survey by the Institute of Policy Studies (IPS).

Almost nine out of 10 Singaporeans are aware of that historic broadcast, the survey found.

But it was the opening of the country's two casinos in 2010 that almost everyone was aware of. Similarly, the two 2011 MRT breakdowns on the last weekend before Christmas, that affected nearly 100,000 commuters each time, left a lasting impression on most.

The IPS survey, highlights of which will be discussed at a seminar today, aims to give a glimpse into the historical events that resonate with Singaporeans as they mark 50 years of independence this year.

IPS interviewed 1,500 people face-to-face between August and October.

They were shown a list of 50 historical events selected by researchers - from the founding of modern Singapore in 1819 to the General Election in 2011 - and asked if they were aware of each.

The three least-remembered events were security crackdown Operation Coldstore in 1963 when 113 leftist politicians and activists were rounded up, the 1987 Marxist Conspiracy when activists were detained, and when terrorists took hostages aboard the Laju ferry in 1974. Fewer than one-fifth of those polled said they had heard of these events.

IPS senior research fellow Leong Chan-Hoong said the results show that Singaporeans are more likely to recall recent events, especially unfortunate ones, saying: "The human tendency is that you tend to remember the bad things."

However, National University of Singapore historian Professor Tan Tai Yong, feels some events that happened decades ago remain in the public mind because "they feature prominently in school texts, museums, public memorials and all sorts of national education programmes".

Prof Tan, who was not involved with the IPS study and is also a Nominated MP, added: "The shedding of tears by Mr Lee at the separation of Singapore from Malaysia has been replayed in so many documentaries and is featured prominently in the National Museum."

Dr Leong, who led the study, said it was the first of its kind in Singapore. Respondents were also asked if they thought the events were important to them and to future generations, and how they felt about them.

The results showed that events related to key national infrastructure and national symbols were more important for future generations than most of the recent events they remembered best.

The official launch of the MRT in 1988 and the opening of Changi Airport in 1981 were considered far more important to future generations than the casinos opening.

### ***TOP 10 EVENTS S'POREANS KNOW ABOUT***

1. Opening of two casinos (2010)
2. Sars outbreak (2003)
3. Major MRT breakdown (2011)
4. Mas Selamat escapes (2008)
5. Goh Chok Tong takes over as prime minister from Lee Kuan Yew (1990)
6. World War II Japanese Occupation (1942)
7. PAP loses Aljunied GRC (2011)
8. Raffles' landing (1819)
9. Lee Kuan Yew sobs on national television over Separation (1965)
10. Singapore hosts Youth Olympics (2010)