

SINGAPORE PERSPECTIVES 2010

Home.Heart.Horizon.

Prime Minister Lee: IPS has a role in informed public debate

In his Keynote Address at Singapore Perspectives 2010: Home.Heart.Horizon., Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong discussed the importance of informed public debate on national issues in Singapore and IPS' role in this process. We excerpt the relevant portions from his speech below:

So we have to make fundamental adjustments in these three areas – in our economic policies, in our demographics and in our political system. [...] Navigating these problems is not just a matter of getting the policies right but of communication and persuasion, being sensitive to Singaporeans' concerns and yet not losing the bigger picture. In other words, the human aspects of leadership in government. We have to bring people along to understand what is happening and why we have to reach a consensus on the way forward. We have to strengthen our bonds with each challenge that we meet and tackle together. It is critical for us to have regular, continual conversations on these issues -- airing different views, discussing and analysing problems, examining alternative approaches and solutions.

The Institute of Policy Studies provides such a forum for this purpose. That is why it was created in the first place. The Institute organizes public discussions on issues of the day. It aims to encourage a critical group, the intelligentsia -- people who follow policies, who have an interest, and we hope, have informed views about matters. Informed debate among opinion leaders provides the essential backdrop to policy-making. The Government does not work in a vacuum. It works in a context of a society, of a tone in the society, of opinions, of views; what do people feel, what do they consider to be possible to do and beyond that possibility, what can the government help them to achieve, not just what they imagine they can do but something more; something beyond the expectations, but yet it is something which is realistic and which we can do together.

Informed debate, therefore, sets a tone of the national discourse, helps to shape the broad understanding of issues among the population and thus enables the society to consider more options and to make more informed choices. The IPS is independent of the government but it is useful for the public sector to cooperate with the IPS and to be forthcoming with information and access, for example, when IPS holds public forums or conducts policy research. This way, the government can consult more widely and develop better thought-out policies, and IPS will be more effective in fostering informed discussion of policies outside government. I know there are quite a number of people from various government departments who are attending this session today. So I am putting in this little plug on behalf of IPS. I hope they will take note.

[...]

I have always followed carefully the reports of IPS' flagship annual conference. I do not always agree with the views expressed. I should say I do not always disagree with the criticisms

made. But I have always found the discussions valuable because they give a sense of how informed observers, especially those outside the government, view government policies and economic, social and political developments in Singapore and around us. I am confident that this conference will be equally fruitful and successful. I hope IPS will continue to do this over the years and in this way, help Singapore to make the right choices and build better lives for all.

Source:

<http://www.pmo.gov.sg/News/Speeches/Prime+Minister/PM+Lee+at+Singapore+Perspectives+2010+at+Raffles+Convention+Centre.htm>