

Looking out for all

The Straits Times, 2 February 2008

'I've heard this phrase - the middle class, the sandwich class - a lot, especially the last three weeks because I'm trying to explain what a means test is all about, and to assure them it will not be 'mean' for all Singaporeans whether it is low income, middle income or upper income...

Government policies have always looked after all income groups. We have to because...if you just purely look after the low income - which means 10 or 20 per cent - and make it difficult for the rest of society, say 60, 70 or 80 per cent, how do you carry the votes come election time?'

HEALTH MINISTER KHAW BOON WAN, responding to a question on whether the middle class has been neglected

A PRACTICAL MINDSET

'There is a certain practical cast of mind among Singaporeans: You don't work, you don't eat.

And parents are constantly telling their children: 'You better study hard, so you can get good jobs, then you make something of your lives'.

The reason why we have been able to achieve fairly efficient and simple governance is because Singaporeans want this. And they want this not because they think in abstract it is a good thing, but because they know that life is merciless, that unless you contribute, your family suffers.'

FOREIGN MINISTER GEORGE YEO, on what has shaped the political culture in Singapore

LONG-TERM SURVIVAL

'As a young country, a small country, we cannot help but have a sense of insecurity.

We only have 3.6 million Singaporeans. And for us to say we want to share this 3.6 million with the rest of the world, with America, Europe and China ... China has the Great Wall, America has the Big Apple, UK has Manchester United, all these things, they are so irresistible.

Singapore, small little country, we don't have anything. What we are trying to do is create this Singapore for ourselves, try to secure long-term survival.'

MINISTER IN THE PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE LIM SWEE SAY, on why Singapore is not ready for dual citizenship

CASTING THE NET WIDE

'I'll be very candid, I've been involved in the process for two elections, there are good people that we have invited and they declined.

It is something which we have to continue to strive (for). There's no other solution other than the fact that we have to continue to invite good people to join and contribute...

We have to try and cast the net as wide as possible. Strategies have not changed, frankly speaking.

We have to go invite them to tea sessions, talk to them, we have to tell them the bigger picture.'

ENVIRONMENT AND WATER RESOURCES MINISTER YAACOB IBRAHIM, on efforts to ensure political succession