

## **Policy of gradual change 'to stay'**

***M. Nirmla***

***The Straits Times***, 20 January 2005

UNDER the new Lee Hsien Loong government, the gradual opening up of Singapore is a more likely political scenario than an accelerated pace of change, said Dr Derek da Cunha, a senior fellow at the Institute of South-east Asian Studies.

Mr Goh Chok Tong's policy of gradual evolution to greater political freedom and tolerance of minority views and practices will likely be maintained, he said at an Institute of Policy Studies' conference yesterday. In his paper on political change and continuity, he said it was too soon to pass judgment on Mr Lee's government.

'While the rhetoric points to a greater opening up of opportunities for Singaporeans to engage in public debate, it is doubtful there will be any significant change to the template of governance that has been passed down from the previous two prime ministers.'

He also spoke about opposition parties and said their prospects of winning more seats in Parliament will remain bleak for a long time.

Another speaker, Associate Professor Tan Ern Ser of the National University of Singapore, stressed the need to pay attention to the 40- and 50-somethings who have to look after their children and parents, and said policies are needed to help them find jobs and plan for retirement.