

## S'poreans Consider SARS Outbreak, Changi Airport Opening as 'Most Important' Events: IPS Study

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**TODAY**, 25 January 2015

Singapore — As the Republic marks 50 years of independence, a study has found that the historical events best remembered by Singaporeans, are not necessarily the same ones which they viewed as most important.

The Institute of Policy Studies (IPS) study findings released today (Jan 25) showed that historical events fresh in the minds of most Singaporeans are: the opening of the two casinos (98.9%), the severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) outbreak (98.5%), the major MRT train breakdowns in 2011 (96.4%), Mas Selamat's escape in 2008 (95.2%), and the handing over of premiership from Mr Lee Kuan Yew to Goh Chok Tong in 1990 (93.1%).

**Table 1: Top 10 events Singaporeans are aware of**  
*Are you aware of this event? (Yes/No)*

EVENTS	N	%
Opening of two Casinos (2010)	1500	98.9
SARS outbreak (2003)	1493	98.5
Major MRT breakdown (2011)	1461	96.4
Mas Selamat escapes (2008)	1443	95.2
Goh Chok Tong takes over as PM from Lee Kuan Yew (1990)	1411	93.1
WWII Japanese Occupation (1942)	1403	92.5
PAP loses Aljunied GRC (2011)	1392	91.8
Raffles' landing (1819)	1361	89.8
Lee Kuan Yew sobs on national TV over Separation (1965)	1344	88.7
Singapore hosts Youth Olympics (2010)	1327	87.5

However, the list of events that respondents felt were most important to them differed slightly – apart from the SARS outbreak, events rated most important were the opening of Changi Airport (4.21) and the official launch of the MRT network (4.36).

**Table 2: Top 10 events Singaporeans think are important to them**  
*Ranked on a scale of 1 (not important to me at all) to 5 (very important to me)*

EVENTS	Mean
SARS outbreak (2003)	4.37
Official launch of MRT (1988)	4.36
Formation of HDB (1960)	4.23
Opening of Changi Airport (1981)	4.21
Creation of Singapore national pledge (1966)	4.20
Lee Kuan Yew sobs on national TV over Separation (1965)	4.14
Introduction of Singapore currency (1967)	4.14
Majulah Singapura is composed (1958)	4.11
Completion of NEWater (2000)	4.09
First batch of NS men enlist (1967)	4.07

And among the events that Singaporeans were least aware of are controversial episodes in local history. Under a quarter of respondents knew of the following: the Graduate Mother Scheme debate (24.9%), the Laju hostage incident (22.1%) , the discovery of a Marxist Conspiracy plot (18.5%), and Operation Cold Store (16.6%).

The IPS conducted the study on public perceptions of local history last year. A list of 50 events in local history — ranging from modern Singapore's founding in 1819 to the last general election in 2011 – was culled, and 1,516 Singaporeans were polled.

Respondents were asked if they were aware of a certain event, and then made to rank its importance on a five-point scale.

IPS senior research fellow Leong Chan-Hoong, also the study's principal investigator, explained that negative events tend to leave lasting impressions as "it is human nature to remember bad things".

"(What's viewed as important) tend to be... events that exemplify ... progress," he said, adding policymakers could draw on the study's findings when determining whether a policy aligns with the values of Singaporeans.