

DPM Heng echoes LKY, 'For Singapore to survive & prosper, we need to be relevant & useful to the world'

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The Independent News, 2 October 2019

In an event commemorating Singapore's historical milestones on its 200th year, Deputy Prime Minister Heng Swee Keat talked about the legacy of founding Prime Minister, Lee Kuan Yew as well as that of colonialism, among other things.

The late PM Lee paved the way for Singapore to survive and prosper, Mr Heng reminded the audience, which is "to be relevant and useful to the world."

Mr Heng said this at the Singapore Bicentennial Conference at Fairmont Singapore on September 30, organised by the Institute of Policy Studies and supported by the Singapore Bicentennial Office. He answered questions from participants at a dialogue chaired by ambassador-at-large with the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Chan Heng Chee.

Mr Heng emphasized how significant it is that the English language is widely-used in Singapore, one of the results of colonialism. "Today, there are between 1.5 and 2 billion English speakers in the world. And it's pretty much the language of commerce, diplomacy, and in people-to-people exchanges," he said.

Yahoo Singapore reports that he also drew attention to Lee Kuan Yew's understanding of the importance of the rule of law, and how he worked to get it deeply rooted in Singapore.

"Mr Lee Kuan Yew was a student of law in the UK. And when he came back, he had a very strong conviction that the rule of law is important for Singapore. And that is why we had such focus on enacting the right laws, enacting the right institutions to manage this."

This has made Singapore what it is today.

"That's how we became very multi-racial, and of course, also very multi-religious. And the pledge that we take every day – regardless of race, language, and religion – is now a very important part of our legacy and a very important part of our future."

The Deputy Prime Minister talked about how the late Mr Lee laid the foundation for a strong Singapore in the global setting.

"Mr Lee put it very well when he said, 'For Singapore to continue to survive and prosper, we need to be relevant and useful to the world.' And to be relevant and useful to the world is a simple term, but in reality, awfully complex to navigate.

It is a world that's changing so rapidly that we have to change and evolve many of our systems, In order to make our contribution to the world," he added.

But the most crucial part at the moment is for "Singapore and Singaporeans can continue to stay as one people".

“Because if you look at the fate of many nations, why things broke up eventually is that people don’t feel that they are one people. And the sense of unity in our country in our nation is critical.”

DPM Heng, in relation to this, talked about the challenges to the country’s multicultural, multi-racial nature, and touched on tackling the issue of inequality as well, especially concerning how it affects obtaining an education.

“I think it is a very different world when people of different races religions are mingling with one another all the time. It’s something which is always a work in progress, but we must try.

I hope that our leaders in our universities and in various places, can do a better job of integrating our students. Because by harnessing the strengths of people, judging people on the merits, and on what they can contribute, rather than the basis of their race language of religion, we can build a better society together and indeed a better world.”