

# Multiracial efforts 'not completely successful'

Intermingling rate faster among certain groups, says MM Lee

BY LESLIE KOH & LYNN LEE

MINISTER Mentor Lee Kuan Yew yesterday gave a frank assessment of Singapore's efforts at multiracialism: better than many other societies, but not completely successful.

The Government had tried hard to get the different races to intermingle by making them live together in the same housing estates, attend the same schools and shop at the same shopping centres.

"We have got as far as we have by persuasion," he said.

"It's not been completely successful because the rate of intermingling and acceptance is faster among certain groups than others.

"The Malay community now is centred on a mosque more than the other social centres we have built."

He made this observation when asked at a dialogue here with university heads, how Singapore had fostered multiracialism.

"That's the end result, we live with that," he said.

This theme of "living with it" was a constant message throughout the hour-long session with about 50 presidents of universities from around the world.

Although the dialogue at the National University of Singapore's University Hall was part of its centennial celebrations, education was, ironically, the topic least raised by participants yesterday.

Instead, the academics preferred to grill Mr Lee on his experience in building up Singapore and his views of world and regional politics.

In his replies, Mr Lee refused to be drawn into the "what-ifs" question, prefer-

ring to focus instead on developments that had actually taken place and how to move ahead.

"No point wishing for other things," he said after one university chancellor asked him what he would have done differently for Singapore.

After outlining Singapore's early problems, he said: "These were the cards we were dealt with; take those cards and use them to maximum effect."

One topic that dominated the session was terrorism.

Mr Lee was asked how the world could combat terrorism.

His response: First destroy the terrorist cells, then get moderate Muslims to take over the mosques and madrasahs to stop "this preaching of hatred".

Although he trotted out lessons from the past, he also stressed that countries could not keep harking back to history when trying to move ahead.

Taking the ongoing tension between Japan and China as an example, he said: "Do we want to live in enmity? Will you always go back to the past and say, you did all these awful things, rape of Nanking... and the Japanese say, look at Hiroshima and what you did to us?"

"Having learnt from all that, we've got to look ahead and say, what's the future?"

Overall, however, Mr Lee held out an optimistic view for the region and the world. The costs of a war or clash between China and Japan, or between India and China, were too great for them to start one, he believed.

The European Union would eventually sort out its teething problems, and South-east Asia could integrate economically.

"It's a very mosaic kind of region... but can we live together in peace? That must be our aspiration."



PHOTO: BRYAN VAN DER BEEK

## ON MOTIVATION

"If you've got everything, gold, diamonds, gas, uranium, coal, you name it...I think Singaporeans in those circumstances will become as leisure-loving as the Australians.

But I would not put it beyond the Australian, if put against the wall, that he suddenly puts the effort and makes it as he has done on previous occasions."

MINISTER MENTOR LEE KUAN YEW (above), responding to University of Sydney vice-chancellor Gavin Brown, who asked how he would motivate a country that is lucky and prosperous. MM Lee fielded a host of questions during an hour-long dialogue with about 50 university presidents from around the world

## ON SECURITY THREATS

"The immediate threat you will see from precautions we've taken is terrorism. I do not see big powers clashing because that's too disastrous. But it still could happen. If something stupid happens across the Taiwan Strait, conventional war may take place. But the Chinese do not want to take Taiwan. All they want is: Don't go for independence, just stay put.

We have our problems with neighbours about agreements... We said 'Let's go to the International Court', they said 'No'. Then we just stay put. But it's not going to lead to war."

TO University of California, Los Angeles' chancellor Albert Carnesale on security threats

## ON EDUCATION

"If I have to start my life all over again and I were 18 going to college, I think I'd want to learn enough linguistic skills to be able to do business in South-east Asia. And where would I want myself to be educated? I tell my grandson, I think you better go to America because it will be the largest single factor in the Pacific for a very long time. Then you've got to understand China, Japan, Korea, India, another huge dynamo. That's the future I see. And I may be completely wrong. Latin America may suddenly become a hive of activity and I may have to learn Spanish."

ON THE kind of education that today's youth need