

PM Lee's message timely, say experts

By **GOH CHIN LIAN**

A DAY after Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong urged young Singaporeans to seize the day, MPs and academics gave their take on the significance of his message.

They said yesterday that his choice of venue shows he wants to directly assure the country's youth that they have a future and a role to play right here in Singapore.

Mr Lee had made the call at a student forum at Nanyang Technological University (NTU).

The experts also said the mes-

sage is timely because young people are worried about job security, cost of living and not being able to do better than their parents.

A large part of their anxiety, they said, is fuelled by their own higher expectations of success and their hurry to achieve it.

MP Irene Ng said: "As daunting as the future may seem to young people sometimes, we should help them acquire an outlook of optimism and hope. This positive attitude is crucial for them to succeed."

This is not the first time a prime minister has delivered such

a message to a young audience.

In 2002, then Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong challenged young Singaporeans to rise above their mood of despondency about the country's future amid competition from other countries and their fears of a brain drain to these places.

Don't be quitters, but live up to the founding generation's never-say-die spirit, he had told them.

On Tuesday, PM Lee's call to the young centred on the exciting opportunities that are theirs for the taking in a globalised world. He urged them to build on the old-

er generation's achievements.

Sociologist Tan Ern Ser, however, feels they have cause for concern as "the goal posts seem further away, and there are few low-hanging fruits".

He said: "I believe Mr Lee has a good sense of ground sentiments, and that as the leader, he needs to inspire and motivate the people."

The PM's positive tone also resonated with academics like NTU provost Freddy Boey, who said it addresses Singaporeans' tendency to worry and fail to take pride in their successes relative to others.

Singapore Management Univer-

sity vice-president Annie Koh feels it "(ignited) the positive energy of the youth", amid a pervasive disillusionment among youth worldwide.

MP Baey Yam Keng, chairman of the Government Parliamentary Committee for Culture, Community and Youth, said: "Some people may say they have no opportunities and leave the country."

"PM's message is to remind them that this is home, where there are many things they can do, and that they should be confident of the country."

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