

# Don't spread trend of bad behaviour

*PM urges Singaporeans to be big-hearted to our neighbours as well as to our fellow citizens*

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**SINGAPORE** – The troubling signs of lower tolerance and willingness to compromise are there: Residents using dustbins or flower pots to reserve public roads outside their houses to park their cars, neighbours quarrelling over a myriad of issues — such as noise and washing of common corridors — and people opposing nursing homes or studio apartments being built in their precinct.

These recent occurrences are “not new” and still a minority for now, but the rising trend of bad behaviour should not be allowed to spread, said Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong in his National Day Rally speech.

“We seem to be getting less patient, less tolerant, less willing to compromise in order to get along,” said Mr Lee.

Singapore may be a small island, but its people cannot be small-minded, said Mr Lee. He urged Singaporeans to be “big-hearted to our neighbours, to our fellow citizens, in fact, to our fellow human beings”.

One area of difficulty was highlighted by Mr Lee: Relations between Singaporeans and non-Singaporeans.

While he understood the concerns that have risen from the influx of foreigners and agreed that it was “fair enough” to disagree with, or even oppose the Government’s immigration trends or policies, Mr Lee said he was worried by some “nasty views” expressed anonymously online.

Singaporeans cannot be “one-eyed dragons”: Responding overwhelming-



Residents' use of rubbish bins to 'chope' parking on public roads has become a common sight. PHOTO DAVID NGIAU

“It is a reminder to unlock the potential in us, to be more aware of what's happening around us and for the silent majority to step up. I think it's significant and it's needed. Being PM he's got the national platform and opportunity to say that to all of us.”

**Dr William Wan**  
 GENERAL SECRETARY OF SINGAPORE KINDNESS MOVEMENT, ON PM'S REMARKS ABOUT BEING A BIG-HEARTED SOCIETY

ly to wrongdoings by foreigners, remaining blind to good deeds by them, and failing to criticise the transgressions of their fellow citizens, he said.

He contrasted the recent YouTube video that went viral of two women



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“I would still consider Singapore as extremely friendly and very open towards foreigners as a whole ... but we must also acknowledge the issue is not just about graciousness and respect but it's also about the sense of being crowded out by too much influx of foreigners and I think that is still on the minds of Singaporeans.”

**Mr Laurence Lien**  
 CEO OF NVPC AND NMP, ON PM'S REMARKS ABOUT BEING A BIG-HEARTED SOCIETY

— a Singaporean and a foreigner — quarrelling over a bus seat to the lack of response online to a Straits Times forum letter about a foreign nurse being the only person who helped a lady

who vomitted on a bus.

“It's not my job to give a lecture or a sermon, this is a speech. But I have to point this out, it's my duty,” said Mr Lee. “There will be social frictions from time to time, it's unavoidable ... So we should deal with these incidents maturely.”

When bad behaviour happens, “it's all right to express disapproval of what's happened; it's necessary, even”, said Mr Lee. “It's not all right to be a one-eyed dragon or to condemn all non-Singaporeans or all Singaporeans based on the actions of a few bad apples.”

Singapore's international reputation is also harmed when reports like the recent New York Times article with a “very powerful headline” (In Singapore, Vitriol against Chinese Newcomers, July 27).

“It reflects badly on us, it damages our international reputation, people think that Singapore is anti-foreigner, xenophobic,” Mr Lee said.

Mr Lee cited Vietnamese student Le Ha Thanh Mai as a case of successful integration.

Facing a language barrier and having initial difficulties adjusting when she came here on a scholarship at the age of 15, she is now leading integration efforts as International Students' Secretary of the Singapore Management University Students' Association. She now feels Singaporean and Vietnamese in equal measure, Mr Lee noted.

Similarly, there are immigrants from China doing grassroots and charity work, and Indian permanent residents volunteering as youth mentors at the Singapore Indian Development Association, he said.

Mr Lee called on new arrivals to embrace Singaporean values and make the effort to integrate, as he urged Singaporeans to be a “caring, generous, decent people”.