

## Leadership not about being popular: Aung San Suu Kyi

**One of the tests of ‘true leadership’ is doing what’s right instead of what’s popular, she says.**

By Sabrina Chua



Ms Aung San Suu Kyi gives leadership lecture in Singapore Management University on Sept 22, 2013. Photo: Don Wong

SINGAPORE — Leaders should respect their people, work to get their support and fulfill their needs, said Myanmar’s democracy icon Aung San Suu Kyi today (Sept 22) at the Singapore Management University (SMU).

A good leader will not necessarily be a popular one. she added.

Ms Suu Kyi said: “Leadership is not about being popular all the time. Sometimes, leadership means accepting that what you do may be unpopular and may well lose you the next elections. But if you truly believe that what you are doing is good for your country, you must be prepared to lose the next elections.

“That is one of the tests of true leadership, whether they’d rather be re-elected or rather they’d rather do the right thing, and secondly you have to respect the people truly, not pretend to respect them.”

Respect is something the 600-strong crowd of students, academics and business leaders clearly had for Ms Suu Kyi.

Her frank and candid style won her fans, as much as her call for young people in Myanmar to think more of their country and society.

“I really loved her speech. I think she really resonated what it means for her to do a new Myanmar, and I think one word that came across was stewardship,” said Associate Professor Annie Koh, vice president of business development and external relations at SMU.

“She says it really means so much to her that the people of Myanmar feel that they are in this together. There’s so much ethnic diversity, but if we all come together with one concern - and that is we are stewards of this country, and we want to pass this on to the next generation better, brighter and for the good of everyone within the country itself.”

Ms Suu Kyi’s inspirational speech also left a deep impression on the students.

“I think she is very, a truly inspiring person. And after hearing many of her talks, what I think is that she alone, may or may not be able to change the whole government and the constitution itself. I think we need the students like me and the rest to step up and contribute back to our society,” said Ms Aung Myat Ko, who is currently pursuing her studies in SMU.

Another SMU student Kyi Lai Lai Shoon said: “This is my first time seeing her in person and I’ve always been an admirer of hers because of everything that she did for our country and everything she’s been doing. It’s such an honour for me to meet her in person today.”

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