

IP rights, rule of law our competitive edge: MM Lee

S'pore will resist commitments to firm cuts in emissions at Kyoto II

By **CHEW XIANG**

[SINGAPORE] Singapore's protection of intellectual property and rule of law will – at least for the time being – keep it ahead of the Chinese dragon, Minister Mentor Lee Kuan Yew said last night.

Speaking at a dialogue with university students held at the National University of Singapore, Mr Lee said China, India, and possibly Brazil and Russia, were creating a new world order and that it would not be easy for Singapore to survive.

In the wide-ranging, hour-long discussion, Mr Lee also noted that Singapore will resist pressure from Japan and Australia to commit to firm cuts in emissions during the coming climate change talks in Copenhagen.

"If we have to make such firm commitments to cut down ... then our growth will slow down, which I think is unfair to us," Mr Lee said.

"They say that our emissions per capita is one of the highest in the world," Mr Lee said. "But that includes bunkering, aviation fuel, which is not all for Singapore Airlines, bunkering which is not all just for NOL or APL.

"We use as much gas as is available for our power



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Mr Lee: *It's very difficult to spot your niches. Whatever we do now, given time, the Chinese will do it better*

stations but the Japanese and the Australians want to upgrade us into Category One where we have to make firm commitments (to cutting emissions)."

He said that most of the goods produced here were for export, not domestic consumption. "We are going to resist that. The Australians want us brought to Category One so that we have to slow down economic growth and the Japanese think so too.

"We'll see. But we have prepared all our arguments and it's not possible to just treat us like an ordinary country."

The Minister Mentor was also asked by a student on key economic sectors that Singapore should focus on in the next ten years.

"It's very difficult to spot your niches. Whatever we do now, given time, the Chinese will do it better, because they've got more talent," Mr Lee said.

"So where do we retain our competitive edge? In my own analysis, it will take a long time to change the system from no protec-

tion of intellectual property rights to protection of intellectual property rights; from no rule of law ... to the rule of law. These areas they will not be able to compete with us," Mr Lee said.

He added that was a key draw for research and development as well as the pharmaceutical industry. "They go to China, no, because in six months you'll find what you've done on the market as a generic product, because they are smart, they reverse engineer it."

Students at the dialogue session chaired by Ambassador-At-Large Tommy Koh also asked Mr Lee questions ranging on his desired legacy, to the creeping threat of wealth inequality.

Mr Lee noted that the government was trying hard to integrate its foreign population by getting them to spread out through the city, rather than cluster in areas, but admitted he would not be happy if in time to come most Singaporeans were only second generation citizens.