

Singaporeans can be more civic-minded, considerate, says Prof Koh

Veteran diplomat Tommy Koh laments that Singapore is a First World country with Third World people. Many Singaporeans lack the civic-mindedness that citizens of an advanced country should have, he said on Tuesday.

“I am more critical of Singaporeans than of the Government. Many of our people don’t give a damn for the environment when they should. Many of our people are selfish and unkind. Just look at the way they drive,” Prof Koh said, drawing laughter from his audience.

He was at the Singa-



Professor Tommy Koh (left) with The Straits Times editor Warren Fernandez (centre) and Bloomberg News editor-in-chief John Micklethwait.

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pore Bicentennial Conference, organised by the Institute of Policy Studies.

Fellow panellist, Bloomberg News editor-in-chief John Micklethwait, pointed out that meritocracy has created its own prob-

lems, both in Singapore and other cosmopolitan capital cities.

In such cities, the result is “a tribe of people who are working insanely hard to keep pushing ahead”, often pumping money and resources into their

children.

“That is a very good thing for your children, but it means society gets a bit harder for others to catch up, and that is one of the dilemmas of a modern country,” he said.

The Straits Times