



Minister for Culture, Community and Youth Edwin Tong (centre) looking on as The Silent Foundation's executive director Mathew Teng (left) shook hands with Institute of Policy Studies director Janadas Devan at the ceremony for the \$2.5 million donation held at the Oei Tiong Ham Building at the National University of Singapore on Tuesday. ST PHOTO: ALPHONSUS CHERN

The Silent Foundation donates \$2.5m to IPS to promote harmony

Chin Soo Fang
Senior Community
Correspondent

When the 1969 racial riots took place in Malaysia, Mr Teng Ngiek Lian was in Dungun in Terengganu.

As a minority Chinese there, he was relieved that there was hardly any trouble in the small town, unlike in Kuala Lumpur. He attributed this to the interaction and good understanding among the people across races there.

Mr Teng, now 72, left Malaysia for Singapore after the race riots. In 2010, he started The Silent Foundation (TSF) to help the "silent sufferers". This was in line with his professional work as a value fund manager, as he had made money by investing in "overlooked and unloved" stocks.

Given his experience with the racial riots, he decided that TSF should promote racial and religious harmony.

On Tuesday, TSF pledged \$2.5 million to the Institute of Policy Studies (IPS) over a period of five years. The contribution will go towards establishing The Silent Foundation-IPS Racial and Religious Harmony Fund, which will support two new IPS programmes.

The first, the IPS Programme on Race, Religion and Intergroup Cohesion, is aimed at promoting knowledge in race, religion and intergroup cohesion in Singapore.

The second, the IPS Thought Leadership Forum on Racial and Religious Harmony, will be an annual forum on race, religion, and intergroup cohesion.

Mr Edwin Tong, Minister for Culture, Community and Youth and Second Minister for Law, said as

Singapore has not had tensions or violence arising from racial strife since independence, people sometimes overlook the fact that the peace they enjoy requires concerted effort and hard work.

The importance of maintaining this harmony has become especially crucial in recent years as the world becomes increasingly fractured, he added.

"Back at home, our society is also becoming more diverse, with more cultural identities emerging due to immigration and a growing number of inter-cultural marriages," he said.

Mr Tong said there had been several initiatives to continue enlarging the common space for people to interact, such as the refresh of the Racial and Religious Harmony Circles, or ground-up networks that promote interracial and interfaith ties.

In September, the International Conference on Cohesive Societies also brought together 800 local and foreign delegates to discuss social cohesion.

Mr Matthew Teng, 43, TSF's executive director and Mr Teng Ngiek Lian's son, said the donation to IPS is the single largest one TSF has committed to so far.

He added that from the start, TSF has also been advancing the education of Malay, Indian and Eurasian students. It set up a fund to provide bursaries exclusively for students of these three races who need financial support.

Noting that most of TSF's educational funding is devoted to supporting minority students, IPS director Janadas Devan said: "Mr Teng and his adopted country made the same choice: We shall be one united people, regardless of race, language or religion."

chinsf@sph.com.sg