MM Lee’s wish if he were student: Global education

He tells Korea University audience about importance of creativity, new ideas and English

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WHAT would Minister Mentor Lee Kuan Yew want if he were a student at Korea University today?

A global education, where creativity is encouraged, new ideas are welcomed and faculty standards are on a par if not higher than the top American universities. And he would also learn English so as not to be disadvantaged in a globalised economy.

Mr Lee was speaking to a packed auditorium of some 400 professors and students yesterday after he was conferred an honorary doctorate by the premier Korea University in Seoul.

"If I were an undergraduate, I would expect the university to encourage creativity, be receptive to new ideas and give me space to develop my personal skills and talents," he said.

"The university should provide me with opportunities to interact with the best minds from Asia and the world. We need a global mix of students and faculty, apply the best practices from around the world and a strong global component in the content." He emphasised that Asian universities in a region of dynamic growth can provide such an education with a quality on a par if not superior to what the best American universities can offer.

"The three universities should tap the opportunities provided by globalisation and talent from around the world," he said, referring to the agreement between Korea University, the National University of Singapore (NUS) and China’s Fudan University to exchange students, operate joint research programmes and develop collective curricula.

MM Lee endorsed the agreement, which was signed yesterday, as a way to broaden the capabilities and opportunities that each university can offer.

He said: "No university can be excellent in every field. There is potential for synergies and cooperation between them.

"NUS can serve as the gateway to South-east Asia. Fudan as the entry point to a vibrant China and Korea University as the connection to the technology and vibrancy of Korea.""