

Bigger pictures dominate Asean lens

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Hamid Albar, the same access.

"We are reading the signals that Myanmar prefers to deal directly with the UN rather than to work through Asean," said Mr Yeo in a recent interview with *Channel NewsAsia*. "They want more space because of their complexity of their domestic political process, and we should give them that space."

But Mr Yeo stressed it is important Myanmar remains within Asean. "If Myanmar were not part of Asean then there will be strong pressures on both the Indians and Chinese, and other great powers, to interfere in Myanmar's domestic affairs," he said.

Mr Syed Hamid indicated Asean was prepared to let the UN take over negotiations with Myanmar. One key reason was Asean's non-interference policy.

"As such, Myanmar can speak for itself better than we can speak for Myanmar," he was quoted as saying in the Malaysian press.

However South-east Asian law-

YEO TO LEAD TEAM TO KL

The Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr George Yeo, will lead the Singapore delegation to the 39th Asean Ministerial Meeting (AMM), the annual Post Ministerial Conferences and the 13th Asean Regional Forum (ARF) in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia from today to July 28, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs said yesterday in a statement.

The theme for this year's AMM is "Forging a United, Resilient and Integrated Asean". The Asean Foreign Ministers will review the progress of activities over the past year and chart new directions and

discuss issues including acceleration of the Asean Community from 2020 to 2015.

ARF Ministers will exchange views on developments in the region as well as adopt three statements: on Cooperation in Fighting Cyber Attack and Terrorist Misuse of Cyber Space, on Disaster Management and Emergency Response, and on Promoting a People-Centred Approach to Counter-Terrorism.

Foreign Ministers of Asean will sign the Instrument of Extension to the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in South-east Asia.

makers are pushing for Asean to act.

On Saturday, they called on the group to raise the Myanmar issue within the UN Security Council. Yangon had proposed a democracy roadmap in 2003 but is still at step one — the drafting of a new constitution.

North Korea's nuclear ambitions will likely be raised this week at the so-called Asean+3 sessions, which draws in Asean's dialogue partners China, Japan and South Korea.

The most sought-after delegate will be the United States Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, who is expected to attend the Asean Regional Forum on Friday.

Asean officials will also focus plans to boost regional integration, and foster a united identity through cultural exchanges and Asean-wide competitions: There is talk on the ground about the launch of an *Asean Idol* contest.



MODELLING SPECIAL EDUCATION: Parenting educator Choo Kah Ying, who is heading the World of Autism at Tampines.

Spearheading a difference

Frustrated parent designs curriculum for autistic children

JASMINE YIN

jasmine.yin@newstoday.com.sg

A MOTHER of a 10-year-old autistic son wants to forge a new education pathway for moderately to severely autistic children in Singapore.

The common attitude taken by educators towards this overlooked group is to dumb down the curriculum, Ms Choo Kah Ying, 34, told TODAY at the open house of the World of Autism centre yesterday. Her son, Sebastien, is moderately autistic.

"The approach is always from a conventional standpoint: 'Ok, the kid cannot do this, so let's make it easier.' They're missing the point because as long as they continue to dumb down the curriculum, the work just gets more boring for the kid, which will put the kid off even more," she said.

She now hopes to share her own experiences and customise affordable learning programmes to other parents at the World of Autism, which is located within the new Learning to Learn centre at Block 254, Tampines Street 21.

The Learning to Learn centre, which is supported by the Kampung Senang Charity and Education Foundation, aims to cater to children with special needs, including autism.

Said Ms Choo: "I don't have professional training in this, but what I want to do is to cre-

ate something dynamic and interesting for this group of children who are often written off."

Frustrated with the lack of quality education suitable for Sebastien locally and in the United States, where Ms Choo had lived for 12 years, she decided to home-school him using a myriad of unconventional methods.

For instance, she designed worksheets that required him to draw, write and type on the computer.

The World of Autism's activities include learning programmes that encompass elements such as academic, speech, motor and behavioural skills, that are customised to the functional level of the autistic child.

Also part of the programmes are house visits to assess the child's likes and dislikes, and training workshops for parents to better understand and take charge of their child's overall development.

Ms Choo, currently the only full-timer, hopes to get more volunteers to help out, especially parents who are not working and have enrolled their kids at the World of Autism.

For the time being, costs are being borne through a revenue-sharing arrangement that she has worked out with Kampung Senang, which has also applied for government funding.

Said Ms Choo, "The programmes have tremendous potential. If it can take off, it can be a pretty amazing model of special education for what people consider as low-functioning autistic children."

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