SINGAPORE: Expect Prime Minister Lee Hsien to spell out his vision for Singapore in Sunday's National Day Rally.

The speech is likely to build on this year's National Day theme of 'Our Global City', with emphasis on the overseas Singaporean community.

Political observers say it is also expected to be all-inclusive, addressing key concerns of the different groups in society.

Political observers believe Mr Lee's National Day Rally speech will be an important one.

Said Assistant Professor Eugene Tan, of the Singapore Management University, "It'll be the platform for his first major policy speech since the General Election and his first National Day Rally since obtaining his so-called first mandate from the people. It is his government now, not something he inherited, so I think he would want to leave his mark. He would want to show Singaporeans the sort of vision that he wants Singaporeans to embrace."

The usual themes are likely to take centre stage, say political watchers - from bread-and-butter issues and education in a knowledge-based economy, to the economy and youth.

Said Indranee Rajah, MP for Tanjong Pagar GRC and GPC chairman for Defence and Foreign Affairs, "I would expect some of things he would speak about are the challenges on the economic front. We have achieved a certain degree of equilibrium with globalisation. We need to constantly keep ahead of the pace of change: he would want to prepare Singaporeans for that. After the last election, there was a lot of talk of the post-65ers - there is a group of post-65 MPs - the concerns of younger Singaporeans. It is not to say the older ones are overlooked or neglected, but clearly the younger Singaporeans have aspirations and concerns, and these will be addressed as well."

Other issues expected to be addressed include terrorism, social resilience and population issues.

Said Professor Tan, "The government has talked a lot of the Singapore diaspora - that reflects the reality that many educated Singaporeans are working and living overseas. They may have emigrated, taken up foreign citizenship, but they still form part of the Singapore community. And so Singapore would like to tap their goodwill knowledge and their affection for Singapore."

Observers believe it will be a tough balancing act for Mr Lee to cater to the demands and needs of the different segments of the population.

Professor Tan said, "He has one group whose aspirations are global - the cosmopolitans, the well-educated. He also has this group with parochial day-to-day concerns, so he would then have to weave a vision that ties in these two different groups and actually show how they can work together. I think we have moved away from the talk of heartlanders and cosmopolitans, stayers and quitters. I think now he will take the more inclusive approach, avoid labels and actually try to embrace the larger Singaporean family."

Observers say the rally is the time to reflect on the developments over the past year, as well as the threats, challenges and opportunities ahead for Singapore.

But more importantly, as its name suggests, it is to rally the people forward. - CNA /ct