

Provide meaningful opportunities for young to stay rooted: Chan Chun Sing

S Ramesh

Channel News Asia, 21 May 2012

SINGAPORE: The challenge of integration goes beyond the issue of immigration, said Acting Minister for Community Development, Youth and Sports Chan Chun Sing.

He said it's also about providing meaningful opportunities for the young, so that they'll stay rooted with a Singaporean identity.

Mr Chan made this point at the final session of the Institute of Policy Studies conference on integration.

Immigration is an issue which the government intends to debate on extensively this year.

For Acting Minister Chan Chun Sing, one concern is how Singaporeans look at their country many years from now.

Mr Chan said: "We hope not to be the one whereby our young people all go elsewhere and come back for retirement because that will have implications on what we said to provide opportunities for our young.

"I hope there is a large enough corps of Singaporeans that will stay rooted here.

"Because if everybody just come and go and this is nothing but Hotel Singapore, then I think we have another set of challenges which we have to manage and I am not sure that it will put us in good stead going forward or is that the best way for us to go forward.

"Do you all believe that we need a sufficiently strong Singaporean corps or do you think we can survive with a revolving door? Those are deep questions we have to ponder."

Integrating low-income workers into Singapore society was another concern.

Mr Chan said he has been floating an idea with his constituents to improve the wages of such workers in his ward - Buona Vista Division of Tanjong Pagar GRC.

"The cleaners are paid about S\$800 to S\$1,000, depending on their seniority and work hours. So I told them, why don't we do this.

"Can we increase their salaries and give them more - say about S\$1,500 a bit more than that? For a start, if everyone of our household just pay one dollar more per month for their conservancy charges, are we prepared to do that? That is a social choice that we can make ourselves."

Mr Chan said what Singapore needs is a diversity of solutions to forge the consensus to tackle the problems for a better Singapore.