

We Must Embrace Diversity - And Not Just Among Singapore's 'Main Races': Heng

Education Minister Heng Swee Keat Said Singapore Needs To Continue Building Strong Community Bonds To Meet The Challenges Of Today's "Volatile, Complex" Global Environment.

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There is much to celebrate about Singapore and its state of racial harmony, but there are "areas that we need to work on", said Education Minister Heng Swee Keat on Monday (July 21).

Mr Heng said a recent study on indicators of racial and religious harmony by the Institute of Policy Studies and OnePeople.sg showed that there is room for improvement. Specifically, Singapore can do more in building "interest in intercultural understanding and interaction", he said during the Racial Harmony Day celebrations at Elias Park Primary School held on Monday morning.

"We have to continue to build strong bonds in our community - bonds of trust, friendship and understanding - to meet the challenges of the volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous global environment we face today," said Mr Heng.

The Importance Of Openness

The minister also said it is important to go beyond understanding the "main races".

"Singapore has thrived because of our openness to international trade flow, knowledge and cultures, all of which have brought us opportunities and progress. As Singapore moves towards a more diverse landscape, it is important that we continue to embrace diversity," said Mr Heng.

"We also need to go beyond understanding the main races to respecting all people regardless of race, language or religion, who live and work in Singapore - for the happiness, prosperity and progress of our nation."

This year, Singapore marks the 50th anniversary of the 1964 race riots. About 40,000 orange ribbon kits - typically symbolic of racial harmony - were distributed to Primary 4 students island-wide by the Ministry of Education and OnePeople.sg to commemorate the Racial Harmony Day.

Each Primary 4 student will make six orange ribbons, keeping one for themselves and giving away the other five to individuals from a different culture. The ribbon will also be accompanied with a personal note encouraging the recipient to talk to someone from a different race to find out more about their culture and practices.