

PSP says Straits Times report that it opposes minimum wage is untrue & a 'misleading interpretation'

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The PSP is in favour of a fair minimum living wage.

The Progress Singapore Party (PSP) released a public statement claiming that the Straits Times (ST) published a "misleading interpretation" of comments attributed to its assistant secretary-general Francis Yuen on the issue of the minimum wage.

The report, published on Oct. 22, covered the Institute of Police Studies online dialogue between three politicians:

- Rahayu Mahzam of the People's Action Party (PAP).
- Louis Chua of the Workers Party (WP).
- Yuen, PSP's assistant-secretary general.

At one point in the discussion, the talk turned to WP's minimum wage policy.

Chua said that the WP strongly believes in the minimum wage and wants it to be implemented "right now".

ST: PSP is against WP's proposal

S T reported:

"Progress Singapore Party is also against the WP proposal.

Its assistant secretary-general, Mr Francis Yuen, said wages are just one part of overall business costs, and the key is to raise productivity and reduce over-reliance on foreign workers."

However, PSP said this is not true and is a misleading interpretation of Yuen's comments:

"Our ASG did not say or allude to PSP being against minimum wage. The thrust of his comments is minimum wage will not drive up business cost as wages is not the only component that make up business costs. Furthermore, businesses should leverage on productivity to defray any increase in wages."

What did Yuen say?

Yuen was responding to a question from moderator Gillian Koh, who asked for his views with regards to business costs, and the question of balancing business interests with a minimum wage.

He said that from his experience as a CEO of a multi-national company, wages are not the only component of business costs.

"Wages is not really the only component of business costs. I speak with my own experience as a CEO of a company and running multi-national, my KPI is to drive productivity 5 per cent every year. So 2.5 per cent at the national level is not really an achievement. 5 per cent every year, which means you have to be more productive.

So that the objective is to make sure that your employees get better wages, from the profits shared with them. So we, our mindset should change to don't think of just wages as the main cause of business. As we all know, rental and everything else. You know, even the cost of electricity, power, as part of the costs. We don't have an air-con in the office, as part of the cost of business.

So there are a lot of areas where productivity can be enhanced, and if we are too mindset about that, and then we debate about the 32,000 people who earn less than S\$1,300 a month. It is not meaningful. I think we should take a bigger look, step back and think how creatively we could make life better for the lower wage people. And don't be over concentrated on just wage, as business costs, it is not."

PSP also pointed to a slide displayed during the forum by Yuen, which showed that the party is in favour of a "minimum living wage".

It added: "Although it is not exactly the same as minimum wage, the spirit of raising the level of low wages is the same."

As of 4pm on Oct. 23, ST has updated the article.

The sentence "Progress Singapore Party is also against the WP proposal" has been removed, and a correction notice has been added:

"Correction note: An earlier version of this story said the Progress Singapore Party is against the Workers' Party proposal for a minimum wage. What PSP assistant secretary-general Francis Yuen said was wages are just one part of overall business costs, and the key is to raise productivity and reduce over-reliance on foreign workers. We are sorry for the error."