

Forum

on

Ethnic Identity and Culture

Thursday, 19 July 2018
Multi-Purpose Hall (Level 1)
The Grassroots' Club
190 Ang Mo Kio Avenue 8
Singapore 568046

PROGRAMME

(as at 23 July 2018)

8.45 am – 9.15 am

Registration

9.15 am – 9.30 am

Opening Remarks

Mr S Iswaran
Minister for Communications and Information
and
Minister-in-charge
Trade Relations
Ministry of Trade and Industry

9.30 am – 9.40 am

Launch of the Singapore Ethnic Mosaic Public Education Series by OnePeople.sg

9.40 am – 10.00 am

Presentation on Ethnic Identity

Dr Mathew Mathews
Senior Research Fellow
Institute of Policy Studies

10.00 am – 11.20 am

PANEL I

Singaporeans' Ethnic Identities – An Evolving Dynamic

Results from the 2017 CNA-IPS survey on ethnic identity showed that a simultaneous Singaporean and ethnic identity resonated with the highest proportion of respondents. This is contrary to a belief among some that ethnic and Singaporean identities are conflicting. What exactly are the hallmarks of the "Singaporean-ethnic identity"? Inevitably, any discussion of ethnic identities has to confront criticisms of the CMIO framework for being rigid and having homogenising tendencies, and thus suppressing expressions of various ethnic identities. The panel will also discuss the balance between communities asserting their ethnic distinctiveness and the broader need to build unity at different levels.

Chairperson

Mdm Rahayu Mahzam
Member of Parliament (Jurong GRC)
and
Management Committee Member
OnePeople.sg

Speakers

Associate Professor Eugene Tan
School of Law
Singapore Management University

Dr Alexius Pereira
President
The Eurasian Association, Singapore

Mr Zainul Abidin Rasheed
Ambassador (Non-Resident)
Embassy of the Republic of Singapore – Kuwait
Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Question-and-Answer Session

11.20 am – 11.50 am

Tea Break

11.50 am – 1.10 pm

PANEL II

How Relevant are Ethnic Traditions in the Construction of Ethnic Identity?

Ethnic music and art forms such as Chinese calligraphy are seeing decreasing interest, and the CNA-IPS survey showed these were considered less important as ethnic identity markers, than compared to, for instance, being able to speak and write in one's mother tongue.

What is the value of ethnic cultural preservation? Do we still have to be concerned about demonstrating our Asian-ness vis-à-vis the "less conservative" values associated with Westernisation? How much should the government step in to help preserve and/or fund these declining art forms, or should this be left as an organic process?

What about the new practices and traditions of new citizens? How much should the state help support the growth and spread of such traditions and language? What will an increasing adoption of ethnic cultures from India and China (in the face of a rising China and India) mean for ethnic loyalties?

Chairperson

Ms Susanna Kulatissa
Management Committee Member
OnePeople.sg

Speakers

Mr Tan Dan Feng
Chairman
Singapore International Translation Symposium

Dr Norshahril Saat
Fellow
ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute

Mr Sasitharan Thirunalan
Co-Founder and Director
Intercultural Theatre Institute

Question-and-Answer Session

1.10 pm – 2.10 pm

Lunch

2.10 pm – 3.30 pm

PANEL III

Building Cohesion in a Multi-Ethnic Environment

Singapore's multiracialism (and multireligiosity) stresses tolerance of ethnic and religious diversity and accords equal status to the main ethnic groups. It allows for a private-public distinction where groups interact in the shared public sphere as Singaporeans, while in the private domain they remain members of a particular ethnic community. Yet, recent trends of increasing religiosity and decreased social mixing among communities suggest that Singaporeans may become more exclusionary towards those of other ethnic backgrounds. Which public policies can be strengthened, tweaked or enacted to protect the shared common space and ensure that citizens continue to see value in it rather than turn towards segregationist practices? What aspects of shared history and commonalities between beliefs, experiences and our different cultural celebrations can be revisited, and emphasised so that it is apparent that Singapore's ethnic cultures are engaging and welcoming of others? What can be done to continue to ensure that there are good levels of intercultural understanding, including of new citizens and their traditions?

Chairperson

Mr Leonard Lim
Research Associate
Institute of Policy Studies

Speakers

Dr Hon Chiew Weng
Former Principal
Hwa Chong Institution

Mr Mohamed Irshad
Founder and President
Roses of Peace

Dr Sharifah Mariam Aljunied
Lead Facilitator
OnePeople.sg
and
Chartered Psychologist

Question-and-Answer Session

3.30 pm – 4.00 pm

Tea Break

4.00 pm - 5.20 pm

**PANEL IV
Dialogue**

Chairperson

Dr Mathew Mathews

Speaker

Mr Bilahari Kausikan
Chairman
Middle East Institute
and
Former Ambassador-at-Large
Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Question-and-Answer Session

5.20 pm – 5.30 pm

Closing Remarks

5.30 pm

End of Conference

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