

## Singapore Perspectives 2014: Harnessing Our Differences for the Greater Good

On 28 January 2014, the Institute of Policy Studies (IPS) held its annual flagship conference Singapore Perspectives with the theme “Differences”. Speakers, including Education Minister Heng Swee Keat, put forth their views on addressing and managing the differences that exist and those that are emerging as a result of trends in immigration, new media and globalisation.

The conference drew 770 participants, including senior policymakers, business leaders, academics, members of civil society groups and tertiary-level students. It began with a presentation by IPS Senior Research Fellow Dr Mathew Mathews of the findings from a wide-ranging survey on race, language and religion, which offered insights into the perceptions and beliefs of Singaporeans through the lens of ethnicity and religion.

Dr Mathew’s presentation covered attitudes towards morality, one’s sense of identity and inter-racial relations; this set the stage for the three panel sessions that followed. In the first session, panellists looked at how Singapore had addressed its existing differences, some of which were common to other countries worldwide, while in the second, they identified emergent differences and suggested ways in which to constructively address these.

After lunch, leading Singapore intellectuals Professor Kishore Mahbubani, Dean of the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, and Professor Chua Beng Huat, a renowned sociologist at the National University of Singapore, had a vibrant and instructive debate on the motion “This conference resolves that consensus rather than contest will secure Singapore’s future”. To provide an interactive element to the debate, members of the audience were encouraged to use polling devices to demonstrate their support for either the proposer or the opposer of the debate.

The conference concluded with a dialogue session with Minister Heng, who addressed questions on how the government intends to bridge several widening differences in society, relating to income for instance, and how it could build a compassionate and meritocratic society.

For more insights and reflections on Singapore Perspectives 2014, please visit [IPSCommons](#).

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