

Online users agree with Prof Tommy Koh's that Singapore is a first world country with third world people

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The Online Citizen, 2 October 2019

On Tuesday (1 October), National University of Singapore Professor Dr Tommy Koh opined that Singapore is a first world country with third world citizens as many of them don't have the civic-mindedness that is required out of people in an advanced country.

"I am more critical of Singaporeans than of the Government. Many of our people don't give a damn for the environment when they should. Many of our people are selfish and unkind. Just look at the way they drive," explained the Ambassador-at-Large at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

He said this while speaking at the Singapore Bicentennial Conference, conducted at Raffles City Convention Centre. The conference was organised by the Institute of Policy Studies.

During the dialogue, Prof Koh and Bloomberg News editor-in-chief John Micklethwait came together to discuss areas in which the people of Singapore can improve.

Prof Koh expressed that he wants the poverty line in the country to be set higher and raise the wages for workers. He also pointed out that there is a large gap in terms of pay between a company's top executive and its rank and file employees.

When asked on whether there's an alternative to capitalism, Prof Koh said that it's better to ask what kind of capitalism Singapore wants.

He explained that moral capitalism is when businesses consider themselves accountable to both shareholders and the society. They also should show care for the environment, ensure their employees are well taken care, and prioritise gender equality and diversity, Prof Koh said.

"I love Singapore. I would die for Singapore. But are we a perfect people? We are not," he said.

He added, "But I believe that we can always be better and in the remaining years of my life, I want to dedicate my time, energy to making Singapore an even better place, and Singaporeans an even better people."

Upon reading Prof Koh's statement about Singapore, many netizens agreed with him. Commenting in the Facebook page of ST, they said that many people lack civic-mindedness, manners and social etiquette, which can be clearly seen at how they behave in public areas. For instance, how noisy they are in cafes, spitting and throwing rubbish in common places, and many more. Eugene Sim described Singaporeans as "a well educated generation with a barbaric behaviour".

Although a large group of them shared the same opinion as Prof Koh, others blamed foreigners for the Third Class mentality that citizens in Singapore have. They said that the city-state has no more national identity with the amount of foreigners in the country, and

“many migrants touted as talents are from countries known to have no respect for personal space and orderliness”. As such, Maevis Lee noted that locals’ lack of civic-mindedness happened due to “new citizens bring their old habits” to Singapore.

On the other hand, some blamed the society and government for how the people in the country are behaving. “Chan ShiJie said “the society & government mould the citizens into only thinking about themselves & not others”, causing them to behave badly in public.

Some opined that Singaporeans are living in a stressful environment with no social protection, long working hours and demanding bosses, causing them to care less about the environment and society. David Firdaus highlighted that “because we are a society blinded by money and material wealth so much that courtesy and manners takes a back seat”.