

No dual citizenship for now: DPM Teo

By LEE U-WEN

[SINGAPORE] The Republic is not ready for now to allow its people to hold dual citizenship as this could dilute their identity, said Deputy Prime Minister Teo Chee Hean in Parliament yesterday.

"Allowing Singaporeans to retain or acquire a second citizenship is unlikely to enhance identity but could dilute it," he said in response to a question by Nominated MP Eugene Tan.

The NMP had asked what the preconditions were before Singapore was prepared to accept dual citizenship as well as the implications for Singaporean identity and national service.

In his reply, Mr Teo, who is also the Home Affairs Minister, said it was important that Singaporeans had a "long-term commitment" to building a future together in the country along with their fellow citizens.

"As Singaporeans, we

count on one another to be loyal and, if need be, to defend Singapore and fellow Singaporeans in our hour of need," he said. "We work together to build a brighter future for Singapore and Singaporeans. Singapore is a small and young nation."

Assistant Professor Tan later asked if Singapore should keep an "open mind" regarding the issue of dual citizenship, given the rising number of international marriages in the country.

He made the point that allowing dual nationality could help children from such marriages develop a stronger connection with Singapore.

The latest figures show that 9,000 marriages – a rate of about two in five – here in 2012 involved a Singaporean and a foreigner. This figure has remained steady for the last five years.

Mr Teo agreed with Prof Tan's point, adding that while Singapore would not allow this for the time be-

ing, "we should always keep an open mind".

During the Committee of Supply debate later in the day, which kicked off with MPs scrutinising the budget of the Prime Minister's Office, it was revealed that Singapore welcomed 33,205 babies in 2012.

This put the total fertility rate at 1.29, slightly higher than the rate of 1.2 in 2011, when there were 30,946 babies born to Singaporeans, said Minister in the Prime Minister's Office Grace Fu.

She also noted that the government was setting aside an annual budget of \$2.3 billion for the various marriage and parenthood packages, while more improvements would be made to the pre-school sector.

Separately, two MPs – Sylvia Lim of the Workers' Party and Seng Han Thong of the People's Action Party – wanted to know about the corruption situation in Singapore, given the recent high-profile corruption cases involving several top civil servants.

Mr Teo noted that the number of people prosecuted under the Prevention of Corruption Act had remained stable, with those from the public sector accounting for an average of 7.5 per cent of the total number of cases.

Last year, public servants comprised 5.6 per cent, or eight of the 143 cases. This was higher than the 131 cases in 2011 but lower than the numbers in 2009 and 2010, "so the numbers have largely remained stable", he said.

Last year, the Political and Economic Risk Consultancy ranked the Republic as the least corrupt in Asia for the 18th straight year. Singapore was also deemed the fifth least corrupt country in the world by Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index.

But Mr Teo noted that because this was a perceptions index, the recent high-profile cases "may have affected" the way people perceive corruption in Singapore. Among these



Mr Teo: *Allowing a second citizenship could dilute Singaporeans' identity*

cases are the corruption trials of the former chiefs of the Singapore Civil Defence Force and the Central Narcotics Bureau.

"It is important to deal with these cases properly. I have confidence that the public and international community sees that we deal with these cases in an open and transparent way, and that we will continue to have high confidence in our anti-corruption stance in Singapore," said Mr Teo.