

## Perspectives swapped on impact of S'pore's population challenges

By Kimberly Spykerman | Posted: 07 March 2013 21:03 hrs



Organised by the Behavioural Sciences Institute of the Singapore Management University, the conference was a forum for participants to share their thoughts, that included the Population White Paper.

**SINGAPORE:** How can foreigners better integrate into Singapore society? And, what more can be done to ensure their commitment to Singapore is more than just a cost-benefit one?

Perspectives on these topics were exchanged on Thursday at a conference on Singapore's population challenges - organised by the Behavioural Sciences Institute of the Singapore Management University.

The conference - attended by some 250 people - was a forum for participants to share their thoughts that included the Population White Paper.

The institute said it's important to ensure social and psychological issues associated with changing population profiles aren't left out of the debate.

Director of the Behavioural Sciences Institute, professor David Chan said in his welcome address: "The population debate has rightly focused on issues of economic implications, liveability and quality of life due to the mismatch between population growth and infrastructure support.

"But we need to give more attention to other equally important issues associated with changing population profiles. Many of these issues are social and psychological in nature, inextricably tied to how people think, feel, and act in the changing socio-political contexts through which population matters evolve.

"This means that policy design and execution needs to seriously take into account the science of cognition, emotion, and behaviour."

Members who fronted the panel discussions were a diverse lot that included not just academics, but those from the public and private sectors.



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This included Managing Director of Channel NewsAsia, Debra Soon; Managing Director of Ernst & Young Associates, Mildred Tan; and the Ministry of Social and Family Development's Senior Director of Elderly and Disability, Charlotte Beck.

On topics like healthcare infrastructure, the effects of crowding on stress and fertility, as well as the changing Singapore identity, professor David Chan said: "Population matters matter, and it matters to all of us. And so at BSI, we decided to do this conference because we think that the problem or issue cannot be solved by government or any particular segment or party alone.

"You need a whole-of-society approach to address the issue since no one has monopoly over the wisdom. The purpose of organising the conference is to really understand the population policies in terms of its purpose, what are the priorities and the perceptions which are very important. Because perceptions are often the reality."

- CNA/ck