

## Dual citizenship? No, it could dilute S'porean identity: DPM Teo

YAHOO! NEWS



By Jeanette Tan | Yahoo! Newsroom – Thu, Mar 7, 2013



DPM Teo Chee Hean explained the government's take on dual citizenship, among other matters on population and immigration. (AFP file photo)

Deputy Prime Minister [Teo Chee Hean](#) said Thursday that allowing Singaporeans to hold more than one citizenship could likely dilute national identity, and so should not be done.

He was responding in Parliament to a question submitted by Nominated Member of Parliament and law lecturer Eugene Tan on the conditions necessary for dual citizenships to be possible, given the rising numbers of international marriages taking place in recent years.

“Singapore is a small and young nation,” he said. “It is all the more important that we are clear that our citizens have a long-term commitment to building a future here. Allowing Singaporeans to retain or acquire a second citizenship is unlikely to enhance that commitment but could dilute it.”

Foreigners are granted Singapore citizenship only if they are committed to being here in the long-term as well, he added, and should therefore be willing to give up their birth country's nationality.

“We should not have dual citizenship, but we should always keep an open mind,” he said.

### **Improving the citizen approval process**

As the parliamentary debate on the Budget continued on Thursday afternoon, a number of MPs made suggestions on ways to enhance the citizenship approval process for permanent residents who are seeking Singapore citizenship.

Jurong GRC MP Ang Wei Ng tabled the idea that Singaporeans should be involved in evaluating citizen applications, and also take on meaningful roles in community naturalisation of new citizens.

In his speech, Ang proposed that PRs could be required to collect endorsements from 10 Singaporean “community assentors”, who could be either from the applicant’s workplace or neighbourhood. He noted at the same time that this initiative would not be a new one, given that Switzerland also practices it.

For his proposal to work, however, Ang qualified that rules, guidelines and safeguards would need to be implemented to prevent instances of bribery and malpractice in securing the necessary endorsements.

Others such as NMP Eugene Tan and Pasir Ris-Punggol GRC MP Zainal Sapari called for a more stringent selection process, with Tan adding that enhanced social integration begins with this.

### **WP MPs call for more transparency**

Workers’ Party MPs Pritam Singh and Sylvia Lim also questioned the lack of transparent information with regard to the make-up of Singapore’s population as well as criteria on citizenship applications.

Pritam noted that the Immigration and Checkpoints Authority (ICA) does not reveal its reasons for rejecting citizenship applications, which in his view frequently affects foreign spouses who are here on long-term visit passes.

“Singaporeans don’t have any idea how each of these factors are evaluated or whether one is weighted more heavily than the other, to say nothing of subjective criteria like ability to integrate,” he said, while acknowledging previous explanations of the set of criteria used to evaluate applicants for citizenship.

The Aljunied GRC MP also called for a more transparent system that allows foreigners to be more well-informed about their PR or citizenship prospects before they apply.

“Such a system would also streamline not just the selection process, but the appeals process as well, and reduce insecurity especially for Singaporeans married to foreign spouses and applicants in general,” he added.

Lim asked for further elaboration on the government’s concerns with releasing more detailed information on the make-up of the country’s population — the numbers of PRs living in Singapore from specific countries each year, for instance.

“Singaporeans have an interest to know who lives among us and in what numbers,” she said, noting that questions posed in parliament in the past frequently either went unanswered or were answered with broader regional figures.

Responding to Pritam, DPM Teo said that the government does not reveal specific criteria because it does not want prospective citizens or PRs to provide false information when applying.

He also said, in response to Lim, that some information on Singapore's population is available in the public domain, but in other cases, revealing aggregated information might create sensitivities and have greater implications.

### **Foreign spouses on long-term visit passes increases**

Separately, Second minister for Home affairs and Trade and Industry S Iswaran said that the number of foreign spouses on long-term visit passes has risen from 9,400 each year between 2008 and 2010 to 11,736 by the end of 2012.



**Publication: Yahoo! News**

**Date: 7 March 2013**

**Headline: Dual citizenship? No, it could dilute S'porean identity: DPM  
Teo**

The number, said Iswaran, includes foreign spouses who were granted the new long term visit pass-plus, which permits them to stay longer than a year, work without a work pass and also entitles them to hospitalisation benefits that are on par with PRs.

He also added that in last year's group of foreign spouses on long-term visit passes, 30 per cent stayed in Singapore for less than a year, 19 per cent were here for between one and two years, 14 per cent for between two and three years and 37 per cent for more than three years.