

Publication: The Straits Times Online

Date: 28 February 2019

Headline: Parliament: Chan Chun Sing highlights qualities needed in public servants; paper qualifications alone not enough

Parliament: Chan Chun Sing highlights qualities needed in public servants; paper qualifications alone not enough



SINGAPORE - Educational qualifications remain a "valid proxy" for the skills of potential public servants, and they will not be disregarded, said Mr Chan Chun Sing, the Minister-in-charge of the Public Service, on Thursday (Feb 28).

But such qualifications are not sufficient, said Mr Chan, who is also the Minister for Trade and Industry, during the debate on the budget for the Prime Minister's Office.

Stressing the importance of diversity in the service, he said: " Going forward, when our Public Service selects future leadership teams, we will increasingly look for a combination of operations, communications, mobilisation and international exposure, beyond pure policy-making skills.

He added: "A more diverse public service is a more resilient public service for the uncertainties ahead."

Besides intellect, the Government wants officers with initiative and creative ideas, and who can work well with others, he said.

In areas like information and communications technology, the Public Service will select recruits based on their technical skills, he added.

He was responding to MPs Teo Ho Pin (Bukit Panjang) and Ang Hin Kee (Ang Mo Kio GRC) and Nominated MP Anthea Ong. They had asked how the Public Service was helping its officers adopt new mindsets and skills to remain relevant in a rapidly-changing world and meet the higher expectations of citizens.

Mr Chan said, among other things, the Public Service Division will expand the system of job postings to apply to a wider group of officers so that they can "gain wider perspectives, and grow a stronger instinct to work across agencies and with the private and people sectors".

It will also implement Public Service Cares this year, a new initiative announced last year (2018) to encourage all officers to volunteer and, in the process, learn how to communicate better with Singaporeans.

Public officers will also get more opportunities to meet and work with officials from the region to share best practices and to network.

Said Mr Chan: "Just as in the private sector, we should expect future Public Service leaders to have experiences working beyond the domestic context."