Why I Think the PAP Is Still Far From Perfect

Description

As a follow-up post to my previous opinion piece on Why the opposition still isnâ??t good enough for my vote, hereâ??s Budget Babeâ??s take on why I feel the PAP is still far from perfect as well.

For obvious reasons, the PAP is not a perfect party.



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But is there even a perfect government in this world? I doubt so.

Here are some of the issues I have with PAPâ??s policies, and where I hope they can improve.

Population White Paper



I have to agree with WP when they argue against PM Leeâ??s Population White Paper â?? our infrastructure isnâ??t ready yet.

Looking at the number of transport breakdowns that have occurred in the last 2 years alone, it is safe to say we still have a lot of upgrading work to do. But on the other hand, Iâ??m not completely against bringing in foreigners, even as we try to raise the local birth rate.

My appeal to PM Lee is, **please slow down the rate of bringing in foreigners**. Your team needs to first address the problems highlighted by everyone else with regards to whether our current infrastructure can handle the inflow.

Foreign talent influx: ensure quality over quantity

MOM and another government agency got flagged out when they were found hiring foreigners who were eventually caught with fake degrees.



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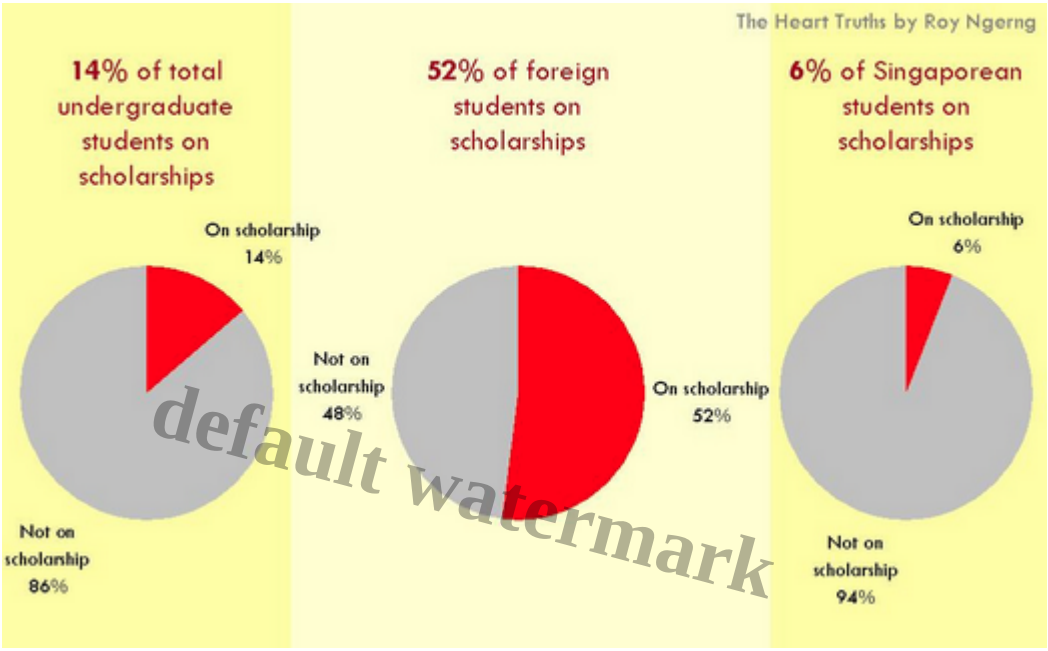
While measures have been put in place ever since, in the form of tightened background checks, I still question the types of provider MOM is using. According to AsiaOne, MOM paid $100 per check previously with an Indian firm in New Delhi.

My questions are:

â?? Why did MOM not check every candidate? Why was action taken only after such cases were caught? How many foreigners did you bring into Singapore based on fake degrees which you did not bother to check? How many of them are still working here today and have yet to be caught?
â?? Why was the job given to India (Dataflow), and not someone based in Singapore?
â?? Why did you pay $100 for the check, when I submitted a quote for much less?



While I was studying in NTU, I saw much unhappiness among the locals towards the foreign students. Many felt too many scholarships were being given to the foreigners, when Singaporeans ought to get greater priority.



I donâ??t know if Roy Ngerng got his facts right in his infographic, but if the numbers are true, then we really need to question â?? do these foreign students deserve the scholarship more than local Singaporeans?

Other than MOM, **I hope that the PAP can make it compulsory for government agencies, universities and all employers to thoroughly check the backgrounds of all foreigners who come to work or study on a scholarship in Singapore**. Checks should not just be limited to education, but also checking whether they have any prior criminal records as well as any other reputation issues. Checks should also be conducted in the local country language in order to ensure you do not leave any stone unturned.

I welcome foreign talents, but please at least make sure they truly are talents, and not false imposters. My all-time favourite story is on a former NUS professor who got called out for his fake credentials only after he landed a prestigious job in the U.S. The question is, shouldnâ??t NUS have checked for this before they hired him to teach their students?

The story of **NUS Professor Anoop Shankar,**

described by NBC *as*

"an imposter who built a career on a base of lies"

" He seemed like the Doogie Howser of India, able to crack the country's best medical school, and work there as a 21-year-old doctor. Anoop Shankar later claimed to add a Ph.D. in epidemiology and treat patients even as he researched population-wide diseases. He won a "genius" visa to America, shared millions in grants, and boasted of membership in the prestigious Royal College of Physicians.

But there was a problem: Shankar isn't a Ph.D. He didn't graduate from the Harvard of Page 3 He didn't write dozens of the scholarly publications on his resume, and as for the Royal College of Physicians, they've never heard of him. He does have a master's degree in epidemiology from the University of North Carolina and an Indian medical degree, but

But the publication date wasn't 1996, the year Shankar claimed to have finished his degree. It was 1976, the year after Shankar was born.

Rockett's first find led to more. Some of the problematic entries were dated incorrectly, he says. Some didn't seem to exist at all. **None were authored by Anoop Shankar.**

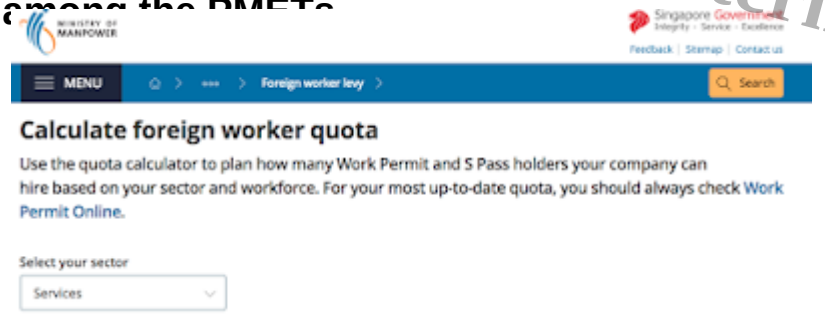
Some of the sharpest inconsistencies regarded where Shankar went to school. **He claimed to have gone to medical school at All India Institute of Medical Sciences** in New Delhi, but his medical license, not to mention online photos of him with friends, placed Shankar at Kottayam Medical College, more than 1,600 miles away.

He also claimed to have gotten a Ph.D. in epidemiology at Mahatma Gandhi University, where he later claimed to serve as an assistant professor of preventive medicine. **But the institution doesn't have a department of preventive medicine—or, for that matter, epidemiology**. There also is no Anoop Shankar among the school's 1,116 Ph.D. dissertations from 1988 to 2009.

Source:
http://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/ivory-tower-phony-sex-lies-fraud-alleged-w-va-university-n199491

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Enforce higher levels of employing Singaporeans over foreigners, especially among the PMETs



Implementing a foreigner to local worker ratio is a good step forward, but I think more can be done among the PMETs. If you take a walk down the CBD today, youâ??ll realize that the majority of professional executives are still foreigners. In my previous company, the ratio of foreigners to locals was extremely high (I donâ??t have exact figures).

I do appreciate the hard work that the foreign workers are doing for Singapore, including taking on the jobs that most Singaporeans are too snobbish to do. However, with the rise of an educated generation, the **government should now look at helping Singaporeans get the right opportunities to excel in the professional space.**

If employers discriminate against locals and pass them over for a promotion in favour of foreigners, then the government really should step in. There should also be a system in place for employees who are affected by such a situation to alert the government about their plight.

Otherwise, just quit the company and go to another company where youâ??ll be valued instead.



Cut Singlish some slack

When our founding father Lee Kuan Yew forced the entire nation to learn English, most people hated it, but we have him to thank today for making a decision that was unpopular but necessary.

However, I disagree with the PAP ministers who have tried to curb Singlish, and I personally think their worries that we will not be able to master good English are exaggerated. Most of us today are able to switch from proper English (in the workforce) to Singlish (with our fellow Singaporeans in everyday life) without much trouble.



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See, even BBC likes the language.

So I say to the government, cut Singlish some slack, and let us **embrace Singlish as part of what makes us uniquely Singaporean**.

After all, didnâ??t PM Lee just use Singlish in his lunchtime rally yesterday too?

Be more transparent about Temasek & GICâ??s investments

There has been much talk about how Temasek and GIC makes their investments. The Reform Party even calls for giving Singaporeans a stake in both entities. (Oh please, no.)

GIC
TEMASEK

As a retail investor, I do think that Temasek and GIC probably has more resources to make better investment decisions than us average folks. I also happen to think that they should be employing me to do their due diligence on investments for them, but thatâ??s another matter.

There is no need to tell us every single action that Temasek and GIC takes, but I do agree with the opposition when they argue that there needs to be more transparency on how Singaporeansâ??

monies are being handled. Singaporeans have the right to know.

How much should Temasek and GIC disclose?

Iâ??ll leave that for the experts to answer.

Flexible CPF and education

While I disagree with the opposition when they argue for lump sum withdrawals, it might be worth examining flexible CPF withdrawals for savvier Singaporeans who wish to handle their own retirement monies. This has to be done carefully to ensure that retirement nest eggs do not get squandered recklessly such that the government has to come in and support that ~~stupid~~ person for the rest of their life at a later stage.

Also, the CPF Board could do more on educating the average person on how the CPF works, together with its benefits. Iâ??ll share more on this in a later post, but for now, let me make it clear that I think the CPF is a great scheme. Can it be improved? Certainly. But it is still one of the better schemes, if you asked me, in contrast to what other countries have.

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The government can also encourage Singaporeans on taking responsibility to save for their own retirement. Look, if you were counting solely on your CPF to see you through your golden years, donâ??t blame the government later when you donâ??t have enough money.

Everyone should be saving and planning for their retirement now. Thatâ??s partly why this blog, Budget Babe, exists to tell you how important this is, and how to go about doing it.

Donâ??t hold the government wholly responsible for your own retirement. You need to take the lead. It is YOUR life after all.

Reduce the cost of housing



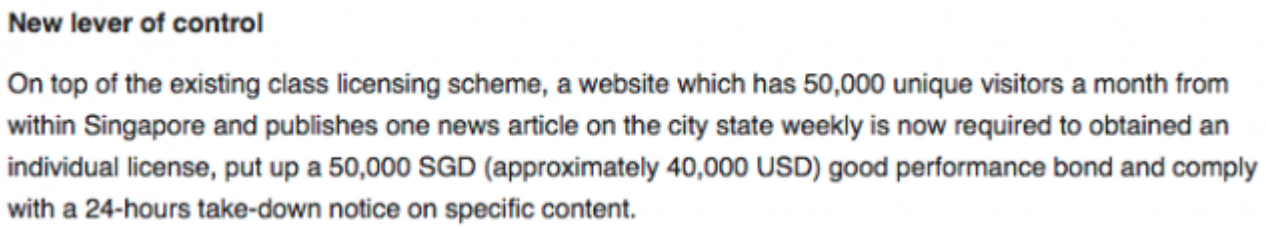
I understand that there is a price to pay for the limited land in Singapore, but I also feel that the prices can be made more affordable, given that wages have largely stagnated despite inflation.

For instance, in my own situation right now, my boyfriend and I are discussing about getting a house,

but we have insufficient funds, even if we use our CPF. Thereâ??s an upcoming BTO that we really want to apply for, but we canâ??t, because it is still too expensive for us.

I donâ??t think the oppositionâ??s idea of letting us pay cost price for our flats is a good one, but I do think **the PAP could consider giving more subsidies, especially to young couples who are trying to build a family and still donâ??t have a house to call their own.**

Less censorship, more diverse debate



New lever of control

On top of the existing class licensing scheme, a website which has 50,000 unique visitors a month from within Singapore and publishes one news article on the city state weekly is now required to obtained an individual license, put up a 50,000 SGD (approximately 40,000 USD) good performance bond and comply with a 24-hours take-down notice on specific content.

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I was quite shocked that our local Mothership.sg was recently mandated by MDA to pay $50,000, especially given the fact that they do not charge their readers for their content.

Many have benefited from their articles, especially their comprehensive and articulate coverage of the General Elections 2015. $50k is not a small sum to them, especially given their limited team and resources in contrast to SPH and Mediacorp.

Who will forget about how PM Lee sued Roy Ngerng over a blog post not too long ago as well?

While everyone has a right to defend their reputation and stand up for themselves in the face of false allegations, **I personally feel the government can also afford to relax their grip on the media scene** â?? be it offline or online.

If everyone is too scared to say anything bad of the PAP or any other political party just because they are afraid to be fined till bankrupt (a very valid fear) or put behind bars, I donâ??t think that is a very healthy environment to encourage open discussion and ideas about Singaporeâ??s politics. I was also quite sad to see Professor Cherian George leave for Hong Kong, as his essays on Singaporeâ??s political scene were quite a worthy read.

Yes, we must balance and weigh individual freedoms against national security, racial harmony, social security, blah blah blah. But not to the extent of cutting out all alternative voices altogether, please.

I was quite upset when TheRealSingapore was shut down. I quite liked some of their articles, even if some of its articles felt to me like it was rubbish at times.

Unhappy Singaporeans and high stress levels

SingFirst states that â??Singaporeans are unhappy, they work the longest hours but wages have stagnated, stress levels are high.â?• For the record, being happy and managing your stress levels is everyoneâ??s individual responsibility, not the government.

Our perspective and attitude is not something the government should be held responsible for.

Nonetheless, there are some ways the PAP can help. Look at the causes of unhappiness and stress, and see if there are policies that can help ease the pain.

Is the problem that of mindset, or the external environment?

On high stress levels, I do also feel that more can be done in reshaping our education system. It just doesnâ??t seem right that children nowadays are so tied up in endless tuition classes and homework that never seems to end.

My 14-year-old English student seems to be even busier than I am!

I **certainly donâ??t wish for my future child to grow up having such a stressful childhood. Let the children play.**

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Low-income earners who have fallen through the gaps

Many of the opposition parties claim that the PAP are not doing enough to help the elderly and the low-income workers. If you read Roy Ngerngâ??s blog or follow his Facebook, youâ??ll know how he has been repeating this on numerous occasions, especially during the last few weeks of campaigning.

They also claim that the PAP is â??out of touchâ?• and do not know what the low-income workers are facing, given their ministersâ?? high salaries.

Iâ??m not in a good position to comment whether this is true or false. However, I do think that it is unfair to say the PAP has not done anything either. They are reaching out and trying to help, but things cannot be resolved overnight either.

Should the PAP resolve this issue faster and give more support to the lower-income earners? I think so.

Can the opposition parties do that without compromising on our current and future reserves, and without taxing the rest of the population at higher rates?

Iâ??m not sure.

But on that note, why should we wait for the PAP to help? If you feel so strongly about helping the poor and elderly, why not donate, or help them in a personal capacity?



It could be as simple as donating cash, clothing or even delivering food to them. If you know of a poor family, you can also help them, or alert welfare groups about their plight.

Instead of always pushing everything to the government, let us be the change that we want to see in Singapore.

If the PAP is truly with us and for Singapore, I also hope to see some of the positive changes being implemented regardless of the result.

May the best party win, and may Singaporeâ??s future burn bright.

Category

1. Family

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