

Parliamentary reply by Min Josephine Teo on compulsory programme to integrate foreigners

THIRTEENTH PARLIAMENT OF SINGAPORE
ORAL ANSWER
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Mr Patrick Tay Teck Guan:

To ask the Prime Minister whether the Ministry will consider implementing a compulsory induction/orientation programme covering topics such as basic laws, social norms and security awareness for foreigners who are residing in Singapore for a longer period such as those on work pass, long-term pass, dependant's pass and student pass so as to better integrate them into the local community.

Mrs Josephine Teo (for the Prime Minister):

Mdm Speaker, there are a number of programmes and initiatives that seek to better integrate foreigners working or living in Singapore with the local community.

For example, upon their arrival in Singapore, all new work-permit holders receive guidebooks that cover Singapore laws, employment regulations, and social norms. In addition, all new foreign domestic workers attend a Settling-in Programme, and new foreign workers from the Construction, Marine, Process and Metalworking sectors attend Safety Orientation Courses, both of which cover aspects of Singapore laws and our social norms. Annually, these compulsory programmes cover close to two-third of all new work permit holders coming to Singapore.

Other pass holders can easily access online resources that help them appreciate local laws and norms. In addition, the National Integration Council also partners the Singapore National Employers Federation (SNEF) to offer the Workplace Integration Programme which provides training on supervising multicultural teams.

Our schools, polytechnics and autonomous universities also organise numerous activities that facilitate integration of international students in our educational institutes. These include orientation programmes, buddy schemes, and host family programmes. Through the Character and Citizenship Education curriculum in schools, foreign students also learn about our values and norms.

Security awareness is equally important for locals and foreigners. Through activities in the neighbourhoods, schools and workplaces, the aim is to promote widespread awareness and vigilance among all residents, both local and foreign.

The various on-boarding programmes have helped foreigners better understand and adjust to living in a multi-cultural, multi-racial and multi-religious Singapore. However, integration takes time and cannot be achieved through one off programmes. We will need the continued support of Singaporeans and foreigners across all parts of society, to work together to foster social cohesion and integration.