Minding the gap between THE PINK & THE BLUE

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Leena Akash HUSSAIN

The PINK or the BLUE - you have to take your pick. The 2004 elections saw a wave of votes for the PINK, without a view on your red, white and blue or purple loyalties. A sea of red, white and blue as the result of nearly 90% votes for the PINK, together with a wave of red and white to boot.

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Make citizenship more appealing to PRs

E-mail, SMS your views

WHAT suggestions would you make to draw a sharper differentiation between citizens and permanent residents? What can be done to allow citizens’ concerns about the rising number of newcomers? E-mail your views to strpl@spothits.com.sg or send an SMS to 6027-7514. For SMS messages, type obj: followed by space, your name and then your message.

Global city or country?

Most major cities around the world today have large populations that are not born in the country. Take New York, where 40 per cent of the population is not born in the United States. A similar ratio applies here.

But the key difference, explains sociologist Sharad Kulkarni, is that Singapore is both a city and a nation. Many see this place as one or the other. The fundamental issues for Singaporeans is whether an individual considers Singapore a city or a nation, or just a city.

“For those who follow the ‘Singapore is my country’ route, the identity, perks and obligations of citizenship are vital. For those who consider Singapore primarily as a city, the freedom to leave, to move on, to see this as one place on a global cosmopolitan continuum, will prevail, whatever passport one carries,” she says.

“ ‘We should never forget that Singapore is a city and a country in its own right. Perhaps our policymakers need to reflect more carefully on this.’”

For Prof Sng, the focus should remain on growing the pie even larger – as both a global city and as a country – so that there is enough to satisfy everyone. At the end of the day, the effort to reassure citizens and entire PRs must pitch citizenship in a broader perspective.

As Dr Danny Ong tells tonight: “In a globalised world, locals from anywhere can live overseas and yet create mutual benefits for their home and host countries.”

The challenge for Singapore, as it reevaluates the distinctions between citizens and PRs, is that a matter like winning more new citizens cannot be all about material inducements.

PRs must continue to feel they have a place here, as they would otherwise leave for more welcoming shores, to Singapore’s loss.

But citizenship has to also appeal to them, just as it has to mean more to those born and bred here, beyond the bread-and-butter concerns and monetary advantages.

As Prof Sng says it up: “Being Singaporean means membership in a sovereign state that is socially, politically and economically stable and secure, where people from different races can live together in harmony, and where our respective residents can be practised together.”

“If we continue to advance Singapore as a city-state where you can raise your family in a wholesome, vibrant city governed by efficient and unbiased policymaking, backed by a social risk-sharing health-care system, and where basic needs of citizens are met, I think that would elevate the prestige of Singaporean citizenship.”