Prof: Rising political awareness here natural

Political participation increases with education levels, says SMU don

By RASHMI BAKSHI
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W ith Singapore on the cusp of its next general election, contested General Elec tion 2015 is pending on a nu- meral education. But in the coffee shops, living rooms, the Internet or The Straits Times Forum pages, people are vehemently voicing their political views.

Such expression is healthy, natural and entirely in keeping with what is happening in other countries with similar lev els of education, says political economist Davin Chor of the Singapore Manage ment University (SMU).
The Harvard-educated 35-year-old assistant professor has spent the past five years studying data on the link between political participation, schooling and the economy in more than 40 countries across the world.

As Singaporeans become more and more educated, general interest in poli tics and political participation are bound to increase, he says, as is the fundamental law of social science that "you learn to increase. "It's a natural process, a fun damental desire in the human condition," he insists.

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Rising education levels foster greater political participation in spate of the "poor and less-educated" who believe that such engagements can incur costs for incumbents can be particularly expensive as a case study.

"All we are saying is that the political landscape will continue to evolve over the next 10 to 20 years, he predicts. "One does not expect that elections are a bedrock of our economic progress."

"The interesting challenge for the Govern ment through will be to continue to constructively accommodate this desire for more pluralism and political engage ment on the part of an increasingly edu cated populace, while maintaining the stability of an upcoming election."

"The Chor-Campante paper has been accepted for publication in the Review of Economics and Statistics, a respected academic journal edited by the Kennedy School."

The paper looks out for those who fear that an increase in political awareness and participation will lead to internecine bickering and foment civil unrest.

"The more educated a society is, the greater potential are its expectations on the link between economics and politics."

Dr Davin Chor, 33, is an assistant professor at the Singapore Management University’s School of Economics. He teaches and researches international trade and the political economy. His PhD thesis was on trade and foreign direct investment (FDI), with a focus on the role that institutions and country policies play in shaping trade and FDI patterns.

His interest in these issues grew out of conversations with his PhD classmates, one of whom, Dr Felipe Campante, was his co-author on these papers.

The link between economics and politics

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Q & A

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