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21 Dec 2006

The Editor  
The Straits Times  
Forum Page

100 High Street  
#07-01 The Treasury  
Singapore 179434  
[www.psd.gov.sg](http://www.psd.gov.sg)

Dear Editor

In "Why that charge of elitism in a meritocracy" (ST, 16 Dec 2006), Mr Teoh Chin Leong claims that personnel practices in the Civil Service are creating a sense of elitism and undermining meritocracy.

The Civil Service has no interest in operating a system based on elitism and undeserved privilege. Its mission is to provide the best public service for Singapore, and this depends on building the strongest possible team of officers, which in turn depends critically on meritocracy. If any personnel policies or practices fail to achieve this, we will change them.

Contrary to Mr Teoh's impression, civil servants are not rigidly classified according to their educational levels. The Service uses academic qualifications only for an initial assessment of a person's abilities at the point of recruitment. For mid-career recruits, relevant work experience is as important as academic qualifications. Once the person joins the Civil Service, career progression is not based on academic record, but strictly on work performance and the potential to do higher-level jobs. The system is flexible, and encourages cross-flows from one scheme of service to another.

The Service also provides many opportunities for training and development. Every civil servant is entitled to 100 hours of training per year. The Public Service Division (PSD) has customised training programmes for civil servants at different levels. This ensures that officers with lower academic qualifications can take courses appropriate to their needs to upgrade and improve themselves.

Mr Teoh also questions the basis in which Civil Service salaries are determined, especially for the better-educated officers. But all salaries in the Civil Service are benchmarked to the private sector. Regular adjustments ensure that the Civil Service remains a competitive employer. In addition, unlike officers in the junior schemes of service, graduate officers do not enjoy the certainty of fixed annual increments to their monthly salaries. Instead, they receive variable increments that depend upon their performance. All officers who have done good work are also paid performance bonuses, regardless of their schemes of service and educational background.

Yours sincerely

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