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PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

SINGAPORE

OFFICIAL REPORT

TENTH PARLIAMENT

PART II OF SECOND SESSION

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Monday, 16th May, 2005

The House met at 1.30 pm

PRESENT:

Mr SPEAKER (Mr Abdullah Tarmugi (East Coast)).

Mr Ahmad Khalis Bin Abdul Ghani (Hong Kah).

Dr Ahmad Mohd Magad (Pasir Ris-Punggol).

Mr Ang Mong Seng (Hong Kah).

Mr Alexander Chan Meng Wah (Nominated Member).

Dr John Chen Seow Phun (Hong Kah).

Mr Chew Heng Ching (East Coast), Deputy Speaker.

Mr Steve Chia Kiah Hong (Non-Constituency Member).

such as landed properties, foreigners may also purchase them, after obtaining the necessary approval.

The RPA strikes a balance between keeping landed property affordable for Singaporeans and attracting foreigners to bring their assets and families to Singapore and contribute to our economy. As with other laws and policies, we will of course review this law from time to time.

Column No : 719

FRAUDULENT USE OF NRIC

4. **Prof. Ivan Png Paak Liang** asked the Minister for Home Affairs if he can provide the number of cases in which a person used another's NRIC number came to police attention in 2003 and 2004 and, in each case, (i) the disposition of the case; and (ii) how the person acquired the other person's NRIC number.

Mr Wong Kan Seng:

In 2003, six cases were reported which involved the fraudulent use of someone else's NRIC. In 2004, three such cases were reported. In these nine cases, the offenders commonly used someone else's NRIC card fraudulently to apply for handphone lines or to gain entry into pubs and bars. In many instances, the NRIC cards were stolen by the accused persons or found and picked up at public places. In a few cases, the I/C holders had handed their NRIC cards to acquaintances, either for some otherwise lawful purpose or with the knowledge that the latter would use it to commit an offence.

For five out of the nine cases committed between 2003 and 2004, the accused persons were sentenced to imprisonment for periods ranging between two months to six months. In three out of the nine cases reported between 2003 and 2004, the accused persons were administered stern warnings in lieu of prosecution. As for the remaining case, investigation is still in progress.

Any person who without lawful authority or reasonable excuse, knowingly obtains or is in possession of a forged identity card or an identity card other than his own is guilty of committing an offence under section 13(2)(b) of the National Registration Act, Chapter 201, and is liable on conviction to a fine not exceeding \$10,000 or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 10 years or to both. Singaporeans should take good care of their NRIC cards and not to allow others to use them. Loss of NRIC cards should be promptly reported to the authorities. By taking such measures, the risk of someone using another's NRIC card for fraudulent purposes can be reduced.

Column No : 719

INVESTMENT IN RESIDENTIAL PROPERTY

5. **Dr Amy Khor Lean Suan** asked the Minister for Trade and Industry if he will allow at least a percentage of the capital invested in a residential property in Singapore to be considered as part of the investment required for grant of permanent residency status, since those who wish to sink their roots will require a residential property.

Mr Lim Hng Kiang:

The Permanent Residence for Investors Scheme is intended to attract entrepreneurs to set up and conduct businesses in Singapore. Hence, the requirement is to invest at least S \$1 million in a new business start-up to promote enterprise creation. Other permissible investments include the expansion of an existing business operation, or investing in a venture capital fund, or a foundation or trust that focuses on economic development.

As the Scheme aims to attract individuals who have a strong track record as an entrepreneur or businessman, and who are investing to directly generate more economic activities here, we do not consider investing in residential properties as an appropriate investment.

Column No : 721

EXCHANGE VISITOR SKILLS LIST

6. **Prof. Ivan Png Paak Liang** asked the Minister for Manpower if he will review the US State Department Exchange Visitor Skills List for Singapore, requiring particular Singapore Exchange "J" Visa visitors to return to Singapore, according to our current national skill needs as the Skills List for Singapore has not been reviewed for some years and is over-encompassing.

Dr Ng Eng Hen:

Under the US Immigration and Nationality Act, **exchange visitors to the US on a J1 Visa** have to fulfil a two-year home residency requirement before they can return to the US on a non-tourist visa or apply for permanent residence in the US. This home residency requirement can be waived by the US State Department if the J1 Visa applicant is able to obtain a formal letter of "no objection" from his/her home government.

MOM is the agency responsible for vetting requests for letters of "no objection". MOM has been issuing such letters liberally as the Government has no desire to hold back Singaporeans from honing their skills and knowledge overseas on exchange programmes. The experiences and skills that Singaporeans acquire globally will help enrich our skill base and experience when they choose to return to Singapore. MOM has reviewed this practice and decided to do away with it. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs will therefore approach the US State Department to inform them that Singapore has no objections to any Singapore citizen renewing their J1 visa. The Exchange Visitor Skills List will then no longer be required.

APPENDICES