

A need to redefine success, encourage creativity to drive social mobility in Singapore: panel

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BESIDES defining success by how much money a person has, other forms of achievement should be recognised too, such as one's contributions to society. This would in turn help to improve social mobility in Singapore, said DBS chief executive officer Piyush Gupta on Thursday (Nov 28).

He was speaking at a panel titled "Bridging Gaps: Empowering Social Mobility for a Resilient Singapore" at the Singapore Institute of Management's (SIM) SIM60 Learning Festival, alongside Richard Eu, chairman of Eu Yan Sang International.

Over the last century, society has typically placed greater emphasis on more technical skills, such as "linguistic skills and numeric analytical skills", said Gupta.

However, there are other proficiencies that contribute to society, such as musical and interpersonal skills. A "broader definition of intelligence" and "giving greater credit" to recognising these skills could build a more inclusive Singapore, he noted.

"If we can figure out a way to recognise and give enough incentives to pro-

vide people with a decent level of living while letting them express their individual skills, we might get the shift that we want in society," the CEO added.

Eu also encouraged the pursuit of creative expression, as the "needs of society have changed".

"Sixty years ago, Singapore was struggling to survive... We had to train people to do the work, so that we could be a good place to do business. Moving on, we are now a first-world country," he said, adding that jobs nowadays should be less "rigid" and "shouldn't be so structured".

Citing gig workers and influencers as examples, he pointed out that there is now a greater variety of jobs to cater to the shifting demands of society.

Gupta added that with recent developments in technology and artificial intelligence (AI), education should focus more on creative thinking and problem-solving.

Eu agreed, noting that institutions encourage people to be innovative, an aptitude which machines and AI do not have.

Multiple stakeholders need to work together to provide a "conscious helping hand" to make education more accessible for everyone, Gupta said, add-

ing that public policy can play a role in this.

SIM's initiatives

The SIM60 Learning Festival was held in conjunction with the institution's 60th anniversary. It aimed to bring together educators, industry leaders and learners to address issues such as social mobility.

SIM group chief executive Poon Joe Keen said: "Social mobility is a cornerstone of a fair and equitable society, and

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Piyush Gupta, CEO, DBS

education plays a pivotal role in enabling individuals to improve their socio-economic outcomes and maximise their potential."

He added: "By discussing social mobility, we highlight the importance of removing barriers to learning and skills development, which are critical for fostering resilience, inclusivity, and long-term societal progress."

On Thursday, SIM also announced the launch of its S\$60 million SIM Impact Fund, which will benefit some 10,000 learners over the next 10 years, starting from 2025.

Besides the fund, SIM also has several initiatives that address the issue of social mobility.

One is the Enabling Pathway Programme, a collaboration between the SIM People Development Fund, SG Enable, the Institute of Technical Education and transport operator SBS Transit. It aims to provide long-term employment opportunities for persons with disabilities.

Another is the Dr Richard KM Eu-SIM Social Entrepreneurship Centre, which will fund research and offer postgraduate and professional development courses in the social service sector.

"These efforts are designed to ensure that learning remains accessible to all, aligning with Singapore's social compact, of which one of its key focuses is the need for every child to have access to quality education, regardless of their background," said Poon.