

DAMNED IF YOU DO, DAMNED IF YOU DON'T

IT'S a surefire sign the economy is improving when the local press, presumably running low on real news, takes another pot shot at expatriates. One of the local English-language papers ran a "commentary" recently which once more perpetuated the myth that we (expatriates) are overpaid and over here (no mention of the oversexed bit this time, though). What was most telling from the commentary was the opening line, which referred to the rumblings of Singaporeans who feel like second-class citizens in a country of a million foreigners (and rising). It strikes us as curious that certain commentators have such limited memories. In a country which was built on foreign talent and labour (only a few generations back), such an attitude seems a little ungrateful and almost parochial in these days of globalisation. And the risible suggestion that expatriates in Singapore view their packages as a hardship benefit beggars belief. Tabitha Wang's suggestion that if employers feel the need to compensate their expat employees, they should "factor that into their pay thus bumping up their pay packet into a another category and force them to pay higher taxes" conveniently overlooks two things: that fact that the benefits they receive are also taxable and by earning more, they are already contributing more.

I can't help but think of Singapore's obsession with the English Premier League. At the start of the 1989-90 season, leading clubs like Arsenal and Manchester United boasted just one or two regular first-team players who were born outside the United Kingdom. Now, Premier League teams have, on average, 13 foreign-born stars within their ranks earning astronomical salaries. Presumably as they are paid in a lump sum rather than salary plus expatriate benefits, Ms Wang would have no objection. But you hear few complaints. Why? Because they're deemed worth it. Like you.



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