

Today

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Channel that animal passion for good

SINGAPORE - It is important to channel the passion and energy of animal lovers to resolve concerns about the treatment of animals, said Minister for Law and Foreign Affairs K Shanmugam.

At the first-ever public forum in Singapore on animal welfare policies, Mr Shanmugam said: "These here today are an extremely passionate group of people. There are others who may be less passionate but, when you point out the issues to people, who's going to say, we should be less humane, we should be cruel to animals, or we shouldn't treat animals well?"

"I think it's possible to work with people, and convince them - or convince a significant section of them - that these are things we ought to do," he added.

About 400 animal lovers filled the Community Centre hall at Chong Pang, raising suggestions such as the setting up of an animal police like in Miami, micro-chipping for both cats and dogs, and mandatory caning for animal abusers.

Could this forum signal a sea change in animal welfare initiatives in Singapore?

"Something like this would have been unthinkable five years ago, but the fact that we have a forum, a full house ... yes, it is a huge step forward.

"I was told that Singaporeans (have) no compassion, no feelings ... so I hope after this, more people will come forward," said Mr Shanmugam, who is a Member of Parliament for Nee Soon Group Representation Constituency.

The forum also saw the launch of the Chong Pang Animal Welfare Programme, aimed at putting an end to cat culling in the area.

Forum organisers Animal Concerns Research & Education Society (ACRES) and the Cat Welfare Society said this was not a one-off event and they hoped to replicate such forums in other constituencies.