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CITIZEN PROACTIVENESS

Speak up as a group

Letter from Kwan Jin Yao

I REFER to "Engaging the public online" (Dec 23) by Mr Leong Wee Keat.

The new media provides a plethora of opportunities in policy development and formation, and can bring engagement to unprecedented levels. However, individuals who want to be involved in policy-making processes should not remain passive and hope that communication channels and feedback mechanisms will be automatically installed.

Even without such platforms, genuinely motivated citizens should not be afraid to speak up. In Singapore, the chief problem is not just about the purported "stone-walling" and lack of avenues, but also about the absence of pro-activeness.

Instead of fielding dissipated online comments or commentaries — which can be mistaken for complaints because of anonymity and lack of concrete evidence or suggestions — the formation of interest groups is a viable option.

Concerned citizens can band together and subsequently initiate proposals which would

encompass greater breadth and depth.

Coupled with awareness campaigns and capacity-building programmes, attention on such feedback would then snowball and provide the natural impetus for change.

Government institutions should not be too hasty in utilising the new media; it would only result in a barrage of channels that might leave the public confused and overwhelmed.

It would become increasingly difficult for agencies to respond to each comment or feedback. Reach has proven to be an effective medium for exchange and feedback and should be given the space to grow.

Since it takes two hands to clap, Singaporeans too should take the next step in making the online engagement process a wholesome one.

Citizenship is a personal choice

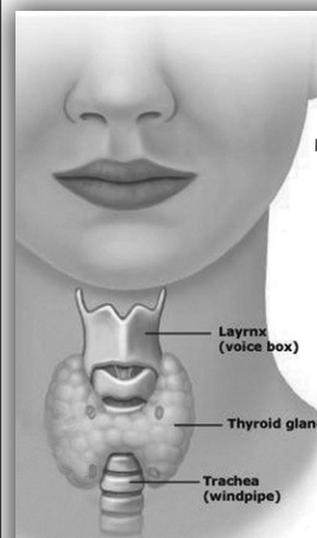
Letter from Chan Yeok Kwan

I HAVE been a Singapore Permanent Resident (PR) for 15 years. I understand that citizens should enjoy more benefits but I hope the government recognises the fact that some of us spend our prime years here contributing to the skilled workforce. Singapore gains by having young professionals from different cultural backgrounds and with a diversity of view points.

It is a personal choice as to why some PRs do not take up citizenship. It is not so much dictated by incentives, but by internal and external circumstances. A few friends of mine have returned to their home countries due to family commitments such as ageing parents who need constant medical care.

Singapore will not lose if PRs choose to leave — it can keep on attracting young, new talent.

Your Thyroid The Forgotten Gland



The thyroid is a soft, butterfly shaped gland that lies in the lower neck that produces thyroxine, a hormone essential for the normal function of many organ systems. Diseases of the thyroid relate to hormone production, either too much or too little, or to nodular disease, where the glands contain single or multiple discreet nodules within them, commonly called a goiter.

Thyroid nodules, the most frequent presentation of nodular disease, is a common clinical problem occurring in between 4-7% of the population, predominantly in females. While the majority of nodules are benign, 1 in 20 will eventually be diagnosed with thyroid cancer.

The normal thyroid gland is not visible to the eye. Any part of the thyroid gland that can be seen or felt, or which moves on swallowing represents enlargement of the gland, and needs to be further evaluated.

DR RANJIV SIVANANDAN
MBBS, MMED (SURGERY), FRCS(ED), FAMS



Dr Ranjiv Sivanandan is a Specialist Board Certified General Surgeon who has devoted the last 12 years of his professional career to the practice and development of Thyroid and Head & Neck Surgery. He received his advanced training in Head and Neck Surgery at Stanford University, USA. Upon completion of his Fellowship with the American Head and Neck Society he was appointed Assistant Professor of Surgery and a full time faculty member at Stanford University. He spearheaded research into squamous head and neck cancers at the Stanford Institute of Stem Cell Biology and Regenerative Medicine, and was the first worldwide to publish on head and neck cancer stem cells in 2007.

Dr Ranjiv was previously Senior Consultant and Chief of the Head and Neck Service at the Department of Surgery, Singapore General Hospital.

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