

Don't lose sight of cultural heritage as S'pore transforms

I REFER to the report, "Marina Bay, the buzz starts here" (*my paper*, March 26).

The coming developments in the Marina Bay area – such as the opening of retail establishments like Japanese department store Parco and Marina Bay Link Mall, as well as that of integrated resort Marina Bay Sands (MBS) – are exciting.

The infrastructural **enhancements** – like the opening of MRT stations on the Circle Line's city leg – complement the developments, allowing both Singaporeans and tourists to access shopping and entertainment options in the area conveniently.

These are excellent initiatives, especially in view of how the vibe of Marina Bay differs from that of Orchard Road, which is more about shopping, making the area unique.

More specifically, the **emphasis** on arts – with year-round performances and activities held at The Esplanade and the upcoming ArtScience Museum at MBS – would add another dimension to the tourism scene in Singapore.

Such changes in the area would be beneficial to Singapore's socio-economic development.

With the Singapore Tourism Board's (STB) recent adoption of a new **catchphrase**, "Your Singapore", to replace "Uniquely Singapore", perhaps it would be appropriate if STB doubles efforts to enhance the allure of the cultural heritage and history of Singapore.

Over the years, the National Heritage Board has been active in its efforts to organise programmes in museums, which help to reach out to tourists.

Its efforts in this direction, and the museums' endeavours in planning and the executing of such programmes, are commendable.

Nevertheless, much emphasis has been placed on sensational developments on the tourism scene in Singapore.

For example, the Formula One Grand Prix and the construction and opening of two integrated resorts here have dominated public discussion.

However, it would be a good idea to focus on the fundamentals of Singapore's allure to tourists as well – our cultural, racial and religious diversity, the places that showcase these, and the huge variety of gastronomic delights that have pulled tourists here for decades.

Let's not be blinded by the glitzy transformation that Singapore is undergoing.

While we seek to make tour-

ists' experience here a more holistic and metropolitan one, we should never lose sight of our cultural heritage and history, which are **cornerstones** of the Singapore image.

MR KWAN JIN YAO

HELPPESK 我的字典

Enhancements: 改善 gǎi shàn

Emphasis: 重点 zhòng diǎn

Catchphrase: 标语 biāo yǔ

Cornerstones: 奠基石 diàn jī shí

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Ensure feeder buses are well maintained

I REFER to reports that long-distance bus services, or cross-country buses, may be a thing of the past in future.

Before action is taken to end such services, I hope the authorities will take note of the following points.

◆ Ensure that MRT trains do not break down often. Most commuters are dependent on the rail network and, when the rail system is crippled, commuters are hard-pressed to find another way to reach their destinations.

◆ Ensure that feeder buses are maintained well. Often, whenever a bus breaks down, commuters have to wait till the next scheduled bus arrives, instead of the bus-service operator dispatching a replacement bus quickly. This inconveniences commuters and leads to delays.

MS CHUA KIM CHOO

Bonus-point criteria for JC admission justified

I REFER to the letter, "Review bonus-point criteria for admission to junior colleges" (*my paper*, March 25).

The letter pointed out that the awarding of bonus points according to certain criteria, which better students' chances of entering a junior college (JC) of their choice, is not completely fair.

However, the criteria based on affiliation and first-language scores are justified, as they are based on merit.

FIRST-LANGUAGE-SCORES CRITERION

Students who score A1 to C6 in both their first languages – that is, English and a higher mother tongue (HMT) – stand to get two bonus points.

These points awarded to HMT students are not undeserved.

Firstly, pupils have to do very well in their mother tongue in PSLE in order to qualify for HMT.

Secondly, HMT students have to cope with the subject's demands. They have to take additional papers (Paper 1, Paper 2 and Paper 3, which is the oral-communication paper) during the O levels.

Higher Chinese students have to take the O-level Chinese exam at the end of Secondary 3, and the O-level HMT at the end of Sec 4, while their

peers do not need to handle such demands.

HMT is not an easy subject, so it is fair that the Ministry of Education (MOE) awards bonus points to students that work hard and score well in HMT.

AFFILIATION CRITERION

Students from feeder schools who choose affiliated JCs as first or second choices are given two bonus points.

Those secondary schools that are affiliated to prestigious JCs usually have high PSLE T-score cut-off points.

Pupils have to work hard to enter the secondary schools. In the feeder secondary schools, the students also work hard, and deserve their bonus points.

CCA CRITERION

If MOE considers doing away with the two criteria, then the bonus-point system may not be useful any more.

The letter writer pointed out that it is fair for students who score good co-curricular activity (CCA) grades to get a maximum of two bonus points.

However, all students participate in CCAs, and most can get a good CCA grade.

Since the majority can get the bonus points, there will be no difference whether students get the points or not.

MR SEAN LIM

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