

To save sharks, focus efforts on youth dialogue



By KWAN JIN YAO

I READ with great interest the report, "Seafood guide fails to dent demand for shark's-fin soup" (*my paper*, April 30).

It presents an intriguing dilemma between **conservation** and culture.

Increasing affluence has boosted demand for shark's-fin soup - a **delicacy** in Chinese feasts and banquets.

The dish has come to be viewed as a standard item in Chinese-restaurant functions, especially as it is considered a symbol of one's good status.

A hard-handed approach to

getting Singaporeans, especially Chinese families, to stop consuming shark's-fin soup might not be effective, given that it is a dish with cultural significance.

Aside from the Singapore Seafood Guide released by the World Wildlife Fund, conservation groups should seek alternative ways to gradually reduce the demand for the dish.

In this day and age, when the environmental-awareness message is often played, younger people see incentives for developing an **ecological** conscience.

Hence, environmental associations should focus their efforts on them, by advocating discussions about how the over-consumption of shark's fin has a detrimental impact on shark species.

The younger generation should not be afraid of bringing the subject to the table, even if it means facing **dissent**.

This approach might seem confrontational, but honest exchanges on the sustainability of food sources among families and friends can be held.

Dialogue is an extremely pertinent step in acknowledging that sharks are endangered, and an equilibrium has to be struck between overfishing concerns and cultural sensitivities.

◆ *The writer is a full-time national serviceman who blogs about current affairs at <http://guanyinmiao.wordpress.com>*

HELPDESK 我的字典

Conservation: 环保 huán bǎo

Delicacy: 珍馐美味 zhēn xiū měi wèi

Ecological: 生态学的 shēn tài xué de

Dissent: 反对 fǎn duì

AVA has stringent rules for bird shops

WE REFER to Dr Tan Chek Wee's letter, "Culling pigeons the easy option" (*my paper*, April 20).

Dr Tan commented on a bird shop which had cages crammed with birds, and cage floors covered in faeces and feathers.

We wish to explain that the Agri-Food & Veterinary Authority (AVA) licenses all pet shops, including bird shops, to ensure that they comply with stringent conditions on animal management and care.

To safeguard animal welfare, bird shops must provide sufficient space for birds to spread their wings and move freely and comfortably within cages. Perching birds must have adequate perch space.

Bird shops must also comply with specific cage dimensions for birds of different sizes.

In addition, cages must be clean and in good condition.

AVA conducts regular in-

spection to check that pet shops comply with our licensing conditions. Action is taken against shops that breach any condition.

The public can also help to ensure that pet shops maintain their standards. Anyone with information on errant pet shops can contact AVA on 6471-7198.

We would appreciate it if Dr Tan could provide AVA with more information on the bird shop so that we can investigate and take action.

MR GOH SHIH YONG
DEPUTY DIRECTOR, MEDIA DIVISION
FOR CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
AGRI-FOOD & VETERINARY AUTHORITY

WRITE TO US AT MY PAPER.
E-mail your opinions to myp@sph.com.sg
Please include your full name, address and a telephone contact number. We reserve the right to edit letters for clarity and length.

Free 1-hour parking now from 9am to 5pm at MacRitchie

PUB, the national water agency, thanks Mr Chin Kee Thou for his letter, "Allow free parking for two hours at MacRitchie" (*my paper*, April 30).

The sheltered carpark at MacRitchie Reservoir Park was constructed to improve the parking facilities in the park, together with other new facilities - such as the amenities centre and new landscaping - under PUB's Active, Beautiful, Clean (ABC) Waters programme.

With these improvements, we hope to bring people even closer to water, so that they can become stewards of our water resources and help to keep the waters clean.

This is important as two thirds of Sin-

gapore will become water-catchment areas by next year.

We are pleased to inform Mr Chin that the carpark charges at MacRitchie Reservoir Park were reviewed recently.

The one-hour free parking will be extended from 11am to 5pm, to 9am to 5pm on weekdays, taking into consideration carpark-usage patterns and operating costs.

The public can contact PUB's 24-hour call centre on 1800-2846-600 should they have feedback.

MR TAN NGUAN SEN
DIRECTOR
(CATCHMENTS AND WATERWAYS)
PUB

NTUC Income can improve further

I AM among the 746,000 policyholders with NTUC Income who are looking forward to the \$415.5 million in bonus payments from the insurer.

The bumper payout was possible, said chief executive Tan Suee Chieh, because of the "company's philosophy as a social enterprise that distributes very little to shareholders...and maximises value to customers, consistent with sound practice".

NTUC Income is a pioneer in the life-insurance industry, as it advertises the annual yields of endowment, life and other policies to enable its policyholders to benchmark its performance against that of competitors.

Moving forward, I suggest that NTUC Income simplifies the terms and conditions of its policies.

This will make it easier for agents to explain a policy to customers, especially its exclusion clauses. This would allow customers to add a rider if they wish, for better protection.

It would also be helpful to put up policies' terms and conditions on NTUC Income's website, so that customers can weigh the policies' benefits against those of other insurers.

Although NTUC Income has done well, it should strive to serve policyholders better.

MR CHIN KEE THOU

Cut & Win!

Funtastic Horse Carriage 5

Princess Victoria

Named after Princess Victoria in the 1830s, the Victoria was an elegant French Carriage that was popular amongst wealthy families in the good old fashionable London days.