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## Watch those prices

Middle class has most to fear about rising cost of living

Letter from Kwan Jin Yao

I READ the report, "The rising cost of living" (June 15) with great apprehension. The administration must remain cognizant of the ramifications should Singapore continue to be one of the costliest cities to live in.

The rising cost of living presents an assortment of challenges to the ordinary Singaporean, and these challenges would be further exacerbated if the rising prices are not complemented by a corresponding increase in wages for workers.

There are catered programmes for social support and assistance for lower-income households, while top wage-earners do not experience the disproportionate wage-price increases as acutely as the middle-class. So middle-income earners, who constitute a considerable proportion of Singapore's population, are most likely to feel the squeeze as the "sandwiched" class.

Furthermore, the rapidly-ageing population presents notable difficulties for the

elderly. The decision to focus on increasing productivity and efficiency has been a key strategy employed by the administration, but there are genuine instances where increasing productivity or enhancing skills are not viable options, because the Singaporeans involved do not have the ability to work.

Some from lower-income households might be confronted by linguistic challenges, while the older generation may be too sick, old or frail to rejoin the workforce. What are the alternatives in such cases?

In the event where citizens simply cannot remain employed to draw better salaries there must be enhanced depth and flexibility in our social safety net to provide diverse, workable options.

Seemingly slight increases in the prices of food, utilities and housing might seem insignificant in the grand scheme of economic development, but the consequences can be dire, such as widening income inequalities and more evident disgruntlement. Rising prices cannot simply be ignored.

■ CORRECTION

In our report "Wet, wet Wednesday" (June 17) we captioned a picture of a flooded underground car park as that belonging to Thong Sia Building. That is incorrect.

The flooded car park was at Tong Building. We apologise for the error.

■ CORRECTION

In our report "Orchard Road underpass to get makeover" (June 15), we stated that the tender for the work has been awarded to CapitaLand and its Hong Kong partner Sun Hung Kai Properties. That is incorrect. The tender for the work has been awarded to McConnell Dowell South East Asia Pte Ltd.

We also reported that the project is a joint venture between both companies.

When completed in 2014, the upgraded underpass will be managed by Ion Orchard, a joint venture between CapitaLand and Sun Hung Kai Properties. We apologise for the error.

BUDGET TAI-TAI: NOT JUST A  
RAILWAY STATION

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