

Give the aged less strenuous jobs



By KWAN JIN YAO

REFER to the report, "MM: Work as long as you can" (*my paper*, July 29).

The subject of **retirement** and the change in the retirement age from 62 to 65 in 2012 are interesting issues, because of Singapore's struggles with an ageing population.

Given our country's demographics, declining birth rate and evolving workforce, the number of years that the elderly spend working would have a significant impact on the nation's future socioeconomic outlook.

Minister Mentor Lee Kuan Yew said that older workers need to be productive, and that he does not think there should be a retirement age.

It is true that the continued

contributions of old workers – especially white-collar employees – would be beneficial to the country's productivity.

However, it would not be fair to assume that all elderly workers would benefit from staying on in their jobs, in terms of their ability to stay engaged and feel fulfilled.

White-collar and other workers in advisory positions would be able to contribute to their companies, after **handing over the reins** to younger co-workers.

With reduced responsibilities, and no work that requires physical strength, many such workers would be more than happy to remain in their jobs.

Regrettably, the same cannot be said for workers in other positions.

It is unfortunate that some individuals continue to work long hours in physically demanding jobs, sometimes under tremendous pressure.

It is not uncommon to see old workers clearing plates at food centres, as well as cleaning public areas and offices, to make ends meet.

Because of their probable lack of education, lack of access to privileges since young and the spiralling costs of living, they are subject to a lifetime of work to feed their families and themselves.

Perhaps the most ideal way to deal with an ageing workforce would be to facilitate the **retention** of workers through a process that would meet their needs.

Convince employers to engage elderly staff in less strenuous work, and introduce flexible working hours so that they can work in conditions that are optimal for them.

More importantly, there needs to be more coordinated assistance programmes to provide support to the senior citizens who are genuinely in need.

Having an official retirement age is positive, because it serves as milestone that marks a time for individuals to rest, after decades of economic contribution.

Without it, elderly workers might push themselves to keep working, instead of enjoying the rest they rightfully deserve.

Ultimately, the choice to retire depends on the individual. He will have to consider a **plethora** of concerns, such as his ability to support his family, his capabilities and his health.

But he should not be forced to bow to the pressure to keep working.

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

HELPDESK 我的字典

Retirement: 退休 tuì xiū

Handing over the reins: 移交权力 yí jiāo quán lì

Retention: 保留 bǎo liú

Plethora: 过多 guò duō

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SSC values sports-hall users' feedback

I THANK Mr Ong See Fong for his letter, "Sports-hall users call for better design" (*my paper*, July 26).

We regret that Mr Ong and his friends had a less-than-enjoyable experience at the multi-purpose sports hall at the Clementi Sports and Recreation Centre, due to sunlight affecting their badminton game.

As part of our continuous efforts to improve our guests' satisfaction with our facilities, we invite Mr Ong to contact our Centre Manager on 6872-9183 or the Singapore Sports Council Quality Service hotline on 1800-344-1177 between 9am and 6pm on weekdays, so that we can better understand his concerns and address them accordingly.

We look forward to hearing from him and his continued patronage of our sports facilities.

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