

## Expose trainee teachers to more kinds of schools

Letter from Kwan Jin Yao

IN his letter, "Best teachers for the weak" (Jan 28), Mr Tang Li's suggestion that Singapore's brightest academic staff should spend their formative years in worst-performing schools could backfire. The answer lies in strengthening the education and training of our educators.

It is a mistake to assert that it is easier to engage students in top-performing schools. Primarily because of these students' intelligence and quick receptivity

to knowledge or information, educators must be cognizant of sensitivities in moral education, intellectual development and non-academic activities.

Good all-round educators must be trained and prepared holistically, such that they would have the ability to shape their teaching strategies to their students and ultimately decide for themselves which academic setting they would best function in.

To-be educators should be exposed to a plethora of learning styles, so that

they comprehend how different students receive or process information under varying circumstances. Trainee teachers should be attached to more schools of different backgrounds.

Finally, there is the fact that a handful of students within a class might need closer or more dedicated guidance, especially in their formative education years.

An educator's ability to handle these assorted scenarios — particularly if a child's sub-par performance is compounded by family problems — should be strengthened.

## Don't cut immigration ...

Letter from Ng Ya Ken

IN THE commentary "How to secure our future" (Jan 28), Mr Ngiam Tong Dow seemed concerned that we might not persevere in the acquisition of knowledge to secure our future but might revert to the old low-wage industrial structure instead.

Knowledge-based industries need a deep foundation in research, design, production and other support services. Many skill-based workers are needed in the process. There is no shortcut for knowledge accumulation. Even if we possess the know-how, we must have the comparative edge to turn it into a success.

In turning their economies knowledge-based, growing cities must first be able to attract manpower of all levels — including the skill- and brawn-based.

Places like Silicon Valley and Shanghai are able to achieve success in such a short time because of their ability to attract large numbers of internal and external immigrants. Their immigrant figures are much higher than ours.

Booming cities need plenty of brawn-based foreign workers for constructing roads, houses and offices, cleaning the city and serving food in eateries. Without them the cities would be lifeless and soon skilled workers would leave.

Yes, the number of permanent residents here has increased quickly in recent years. But to refer it as a knee-jerk reaction by the



Migrant workers at the The Migrant Workers Talent Quest 2010 concert last year. TODAY FILE PHOTO

Government to our low birth rates is unfair. Would it have been better that we turn away businesses outright and wait until sufficient number of babies are born and educated in universities before we approve companies to expand or invest here?

Also, some of our immigrants could well be working in knowledge-based industries now or nurturing our citizens for challenges in these industries.

It may take us a hundred years to become "One People", said Mr Ngiam. But if we were

to stop immigration now, our 3 million or so citizens could decline to 1.5 million in less than 100 years — with a third aged 60 or older.

Once there are signs that Singapore is on the decline, cities around us will take away our businesses bit by bit. In 20 to 30 years, we will lose our status as a regional hub and as a modern city decades later.

To suggest that we should compete with the world on knowledge-based industries while urging a clamp-down on immigration is contradictory and unrealistic.

### ■ SHOULD I HAVE BEEN ALLOWED BACK?

I am a frequent visitor to Singapore and sometimes my bags have been screened.

On Jan 26, I arrived on Air Asia from Bali at 3.30pm, collected my bag and went through the 'No Goods To Declare' exit as usual.

No baggage screener told me to put my bags in the machine.

After I exited and paused, to decide whether to take a taxi or MRT into the city, one of the baggage screeners came out and told me to go back inside to have my bags screened. I was surprised, as was the guard at the exit who said it was not allowed.

The screener insisted, however, and I complied in order not to cause trouble (this happened a day after the Moscow airport bombing, incidentally).

I realised, though, that this was probably not legal as I had already entered the public area and should not have been allowed back into a secured area.

The screener was not doing his job and I believe the guard was wrong for letting me back inside. LETTER FROM GARRETT CHIMING KAM

### ■ CASE OVER CHARGES SETTLED, SAYS STARHUB

We refer to the letter by Mr Aw Chon Wai on charges for his cancelled i.Mail account (Jan 27).

StarHub has contacted Mr Aw and closed the matter with him. We have confirmed that his i.Mail account is closed with no outstanding balance and clarified that his personal credit rating status will not be affected.

We would like to thank Mr Aw for his kind understanding and continued support of StarHub. LETTER FROM CAITLIN FUA, ASSISTANT VICE PRESIDENT, CORPORATE COMMUNICATIONS, STARHUB

### ■ HDB RULES ON KEEPING CATS RESPONSIBLY NEEDED

A friend who volunteers to assist her town council in resolving complaints about cats was recently asked to "remove" a cat that defecated outside a flat. Otherwise the cat would be rounded up by the town council's pest controller to be surrendered to the Agrifood and Veterinary Authority (AVA) where it would be killed.

My friend spoke to the cat's owner but he stubbornly refused to keep the cat indoors, citing the lack of HDB rules binding him to do so.

Most owners are responsible but rules are needed to control the few black sheep. I plead with HDB to listen to feedback from residents, the Cat Welfare Society and the SPCA — to successfully reduce the complaints that arise from irresponsible cat ownership, regulations that include compulsory sterilisation, keeping cats indoor and micro-chipping are needed.

Even the AVA, after all, has information on how to keep cats responsibly in flats. LETTER FROM TAN CHEK WEE

## Letter arrives 13 days after stamped date

Letter from Patricia Andrea

I AM wondering about mail service standards at SingPost, considering the small size of Singapore and the shrinking volume of mail due to the greater use of information technology.

A letter containing a notice for a meeting conducted on Jan 24 reached me only on Jan 27. The letter, which was sent to my

home, was dated Jan 12 and SingPost had date-stamped the envelope on Jan 14.

Luckily, I was also e-mailed regarding this meeting so I could attend it. But what if it was some other urgent mail requiring action, such as bills with a deadline? Who would take responsibility?

I was also expecting a letter sent on Jan 20. It should have reached me by Jan 25, even taking into account that there

is now no delivery service on Saturdays but it didn't.

On several occasions, letters meant for another address have been placed in my mailbox by mistake. I understand that human error does occur but for it to happen so many times is frustrating. I would appreciate it if the relevant authorities address this matter, as I believe I am not alone in being disappointed by our mail service.