

Hold Series Of Public Debates Between Parties

TODAY Online

I REFER to the report "CNA: 'No Attempt To Discriminate Against SDP'", (March 3). The frustrations of the Singapore Democratic Party at being omitted from the programme are understandable, given the fact that the assorted Opposition parties are constantly seeking avenues to increase their exposure and expound on their manifestoes or policy recommendations.

Given the significant interest on the ground over the imminent General Election, it would be constructive to organise a comprehensive public debate.

Taking into consideration the numerous parties and diversity of themes involved, the debate could be carried out in series.

The benefits of such debates are many. First, the electorate would be more informed of the issues at stake, and can rationally decide, based on the answers, which party or individual offers the most productive solutions or courses of action.

Second, in line with the ruling party's desire to get young or first-time voters more engaged as stakeholders in Singapore, the steady exchange of perspectives - which would require debate participants to think on their feet - would get them more excited. Viewers who thereafter pen their perspectives on blogs would add to this synergy.

Communication and rhetorical ability are important traits for any politician. His or her spontaneous responses could also reveal the extent of his or her grasp of sentiments at the grassroots.

To reject such debates on the basis that they are more style than substance is ludicrous - if organised seriously, they could add life to the oft-pedantic approaches of the parties and politicians, and give Singaporeans a greater sense of stake in the process.

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