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YAACOB CLEARS THE AIR ...

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■ CORRECTION

In the report "GST will not be increased for at least 5 years" (April 24), we quoted Finance Minister Tharman Shanmugaratnam as saying that "at least for five years, there's absolutely no reason to raise the GST because this was the whole idea — we strengthen our revenue base in time". This is incorrect. Mr Tharman had used the word "strengthened", in reference to what did happen after the GST was last raised. We are sorry for the error.

## Opposition's loan dilemma

Letter from Kwan Jin Yao

FOLLOWING the Singapore People's Party (SPP) loan of three of its members to the Reform Party (RP) as potential election candidates, there have been rumbles from the ground, and from the People's Action Party (PAP), contending that such a move undermines the democratic process — especially when such movements are not transparent.

These sentiments are similar to the argument that changes in party memberships — through resignations of members who then join another party — only confuses voters and could reduce support for the respective parties.

The ramifications of "loaning" are evident. First, how can the candidates convincingly reconcile with the differences in values and goals of the new party after making last-minute switches? Second, if the cadres are running as teams in group representation constituencies (GRCs), would the relatively short run-in and campaigning period be sufficient to develop team dynamics?

Most importantly, the minimal exposure to the ground — especially if the individuals have not been engaged in the communities they are contesting — would compromise their abilities to relate to specific bread-and-butter concerns.

At the same time, it is worth contemplating why the parties have undertaken such endeavours, which some have asserted as being tantamount to political suicide.

There is the inherent fear and stigma that comes with joining the Opposition, especially since the PAP has constantly reiterated the "change from within" maxim for those interested in politics. This has made it difficult for Opposition parties to recruit members.

The number and sizes of GRCs today have also made it difficult for the Opposition to form credible teams to contest effectively. Its dilemma is apparent; perhaps in the long-run, gradually reducing the size and numbers of GRCs (and potentially doing away with the scheme altogether) might be the panacea.

## If 'not ready' party wins ...

Letter from Jolly Wee

SINGAPOREANS have heard the Opposition parties say that they are not ready to form the next government.

So just imagine if the prevailing sentiment among many voters is to have an Opposition in Parliament to check the Government, and the next day Singaporeans wake up to find a "not ready" Opposition party as the new government.

Who is to take responsibility for such an outcome? The voters or the Opposition parties that fielded candidates in all wards and won enough constituencies to form the next government?

My fellow Singaporeans — voters and politicians alike — please think more of country above self or party, as one day is more than enough in an election to change the fate of a country.

In saying that 'if the Workers' Party made a wrong judgement with candidates, the consequences would be less serious than if the PAP did the same', the WP acknowledges that it cannot flawlessly judge all candidates. Wrongly judging candidates is a more serious matter for the PAP since as the ruling party it will appoint some of these candidates as Ministers, while Opposition members can only be MPs.

Tan Saw Bin

## She has earned the support

Letter from Laremy Lee

I REFER to the letter "Experience that counts, not looks" (April 23). I, too, will not be able to vote in Marine Parade GRC. However, I would be offended if the writer is implying that most Singaporeans are unthinking when it comes to assessing the suitability of political candidates to represent them.

From my observations, the support that Ms Nicole Seah has received thus far has been mainly on her own merit. She has been suc-

cessful in demonstrating her honesty and reliability in offline interactions with friends, colleagues and ordinary Singaporeans prior to her foray into politics. This is evident from the high regard which people hold Ms Seah in when they narrate anecdotes about her principled beliefs and professional work ethos.

Videos of Ms Seah speaking in interviews have been circulating on social media networks. Her intelligence, clarity and persuasion in these videos have been critical in convincing Singaporeans that Ms Seah is a credible candidate.



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