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Online policy groups

Letter from Kwan Jin Yao

POLITICIANS, ministries and their various departments have been fervent users of social media and the Internet to engage with a more connected populace and solicit feedback. In particular, the virtual efforts of the newly-appointed Education and Transport ministers have won praise.

Nevertheless, it is imperative for bureaucrats to render such channels more sustainable, efficient and productive for stakeholders.

Introducing online policy study workgroups would be a good way to gather like-minded individuals with similar passions in specific departments — such as public transportation, healthcare, defence — and develop proposals for policy recommendations.

This can be especially constructive for Singaporeans who are not inclined to pursue careers

in the public service, but still remain deeply interested in providing their input on issues.

The online workgroups can take the form of micro-sites or discussion forums; through which participants would share their perspectives and collectively contemplate the various socio-economic issues.

Every Singaporean would be initially invited to contribute — with ministry or agency staff facilitating the dialogue — before more insightful suggestions are filtered out, and the more active users tasked to assess the feasibility of the assorted propositions.

Meanwhile, the national feedback unit Reaching Everyone for Active Citizenry @ Home (REACH) has endeavoured to utilise a plethora of online platforms and overtures to achieve these objectives.

However, its methods lack enough mass appeal and aware-

ness to drive spontaneity in discussions and engagement; instead, discussion threads die off with the absence of meaningful debate or exchanges.

To take the concept of engagement further — and make it more interesting — educational institutions and community partners in each constituency could be asked for representatives to participate in the discussions. Not only would students get to put into practice what they have learnt in an academic setting, they would also become more socially-aware and involved.

The conclusion of the General Election has left some virtual networks under-utilised; instead of letting these go to waste, administrative teams should work towards tapping netizens' minds to continue conversations on a variety of current affairs and policy matters.

LANE-FOR-LANE REPLACEMENT DURING MAJOR ROADWORKS

We refer to Mr Alan Lee's letter 'Reduce ERP rates if there is road work' (June 1).

The Land Transport Authority (LTA) minimises disruption to existing traffic when carrying out major roadworks by providing lane-for-lane replacement. For the on-going Central Expressway (CTE) widening works, this has ensured that the number of lanes passable to traffic is maintained throughout as compared to the situation before the works started.

Thus ERP is still applied so that that the expressway remains smooth-flowing. If rates are reduced or removed, more motorists will use the road and it will create more congestion which we do not want.

We thank Mr Lee for his feedback. LETTER FROM HELEN LIM, DEPUTY DIRECTOR, MEDIA RELATIONS, LAND TRANSPORT AUTHORITY

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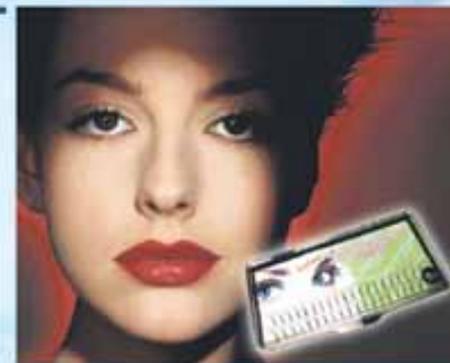
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