

VOICES

Double standards in vice control?

Letter from Leoi Boon Heng

IT IS TIME the authorities clamp down on illegal vice activities in Orchard Towers like they have been doing so actively to control vice in Geylang, Joo Chiat and Tanjong Pagar.

One visit and you can see how sleazy the place is, with vice activities being solic-

ited openly in the pubs. Even police presence outside the building does not deter girls who are there to offer their services.

Are there double standards in vice control, as Orchard Towers is patronised by tourists and expatriates? Unless the authorities officially designates it as a red-light area, it is time to clean up the place.

The Immigration and Checkpoints Au-

thority can also be more alert in controlling the entry of these girls from Vietnam, Thailand, the Philippines and Eastern European countries.

They enter on social visit passes so frequently in a year, it should signal that they are not genuine tourists or visitors.

Of course, there are frequent travellers who come for various reasons, but the profile of such young girls who enter Singapore to perpetrate vice is easy to spot. More stringent ICA checks would discour-

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age them from entering in the first place.

It is no wonder that tourist numbers have risen all these years. One wonders how many such visitors contribute to the numbers.

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Holistic approach to tackle gambling problem: MCYS

Letter from Charlotte Beck
Senior Director, Gambling Safeguards
Division,
Ministry of Community Development,
Youth and Sports

I REFER to Mr Kwan Jin Yao's letter "Re-look problem gambling approach" (Oct 31) and thank him for his suggestions. We agree that it is important to continue to monitor and assess whether the social safeguards remain effective.

The Casino Control (Advertising) Regulations prohibit the promotion of casino patronage among the domestic market. The integrated resort operators have been reminded that they must comply strictly with our rules on casino advertising and promotion.

We intend to tighten these regulations within the next few months.

The National Council on Problem Gambling's "Know The Line" campaign has created

greater awareness of the ills of problem gambling and the help available to those affected. The council also works with various partners to reach out to the community and youth.

We agree with Mr Kwan that family support is an important source of help and encouragement to gamblers.

The family exclusion process offers counselling to both the problem gambler and affected family members so that they can begin the healing process.

We will also help families to look for tell-tale signs of frequent, heavy gambling and encourage them to seek help early before gambling becomes an addiction and a serious problem.

Credit-cum-legal financial services are also in the pipeline to better equip families with the skills and knowledge to minimise the financial harm from heavy gambling and problem gambling.

Foreign workforce has a part in productivity drive

Letter from Farah Abdul Rahim
Director, Corporate Communications,
Ministry of Manpower

IN RESPONSE to a recent commentary and letters on extending training to foreign workers, the Ministry of Manpower wishes to clarify that the Government invests significant funds in the Continuing Education and Training infrastructure.

This includes the development of training standards and capabilities of trainers and curriculum developers, for the benefit of both local and foreign workers.

However, there is a distinction in training assistance given, as locals form the core of our workforce. The Workforce Development Agency provides

training subsidy only for local trainees or to their employers; foreign workers or their employers must pay full fees.

The foreign workforce is not excluded from the productivity movement. They are a part of it, and we encourage employers to send their foreign workers for Workforce Skills Qualifications training and upgrading, too.

At the same time, the Government encourages industries to raise productivity by promoting the recruitment of skilled foreign workers via a differentiated levy tiering framework. Employers are charged a lower levy when they bring in higher skilled workers.

This serves to incentivise them to upskill their existing foreign workforce.