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Caldecott Broadcast Centre, Annex Building, Level 1,
Andrew Rd, Singapore 299939
Tel 6236 4888 | Fax 6534 4217
Circulation Hotline 1800 698 6329

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Weekly day off: Have faith and flexibility, not micromanagement

Letter from Kwan Jin Yao

I REFER to the report "Have clearer guidelines on mandatory day off, say maid agencies" (April 7). The weekly day off for domestic workers here is a tremendous step forward. Amid some ground discontentment and opposition, it is positive to see some agencies expressing genuine, sustained concern for the long-term welfare of these workers.

In particular, the proposal for a mediation mechanism for disputes is well-intentioned. Such a platform could be beneficial for both parties, especially to clarify major disagreements or address grievances.

Nevertheless, it is unnecessary for laws to be defined to address the smallest of details. This could potentially heighten the propensity for micromanagement and increase the possibility of conflict between workers and employers.

Enforced, pedantic adherence to such stipulations could make interactions or conversations more awkward, as many employers

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view the worker as a member of the family.

Based on the postulation that most households have the ability to competently manage these relationships, additional legislation could be out of place.

It seems cumbersome and counter-intuitive to have further discussion on legalistic definitions of what a "day off" represents because I would think that employers know where and when to draw the line.

Some employers I know have always given their domestic workers a weekly day off, so the impending change is simply perceived as a formality. They have established

flexible arrangements and a long-term, constructive relationship with their workers.

This faith does not come immediately, but through years of give and take, this developing trust could be immensely advantageous.

Naturally, any mediation mechanism should only be for extreme deviations or when either party takes advantage of this conviction and flexibility without being completely cognisant of the ramifications of their actions.

In essence, it seems more logical and favourable for stakeholders to progressively strike equilibrium between idealism and pragmatism.

Broad recommendations could be communicated to new workers, but it would be more meaningful to allow both parties to work plans out – based on commitments, special occasions, unforeseen circumstances, etc – on a private, individual basis.

This approach could continuously strengthen relationships and make for a more conducive working and living environment for all.

Trains at optimal two-minute frequencies during rush hour

Letter from Bernadette Low
Senior manager, Corporate Marketing and Communications, SMRT Corporation

WE WISH to share with Mr Marcus Wei, who asked "Why the train congestion during rush hour?" (April 7), and other TODAY readers that trains are now running at optimal two-minute frequencies during rush hour.

We remain committed to improving our train service for commuters where we can.

With the high train frequencies during

rush hour, any delay can cause congestion. For example, at a busier station, heavier commuter traffic can delay the train departure.

So could activation of an in-train emergency communication button for assistance or medical attention and cautious driving on rainy days along above-ground tracks on the North-South and East-West lines.

We encourage commuters to allow for extra time during peak-hour travel, especially on rainy days. Commuters with smartphones can follow our Twitter account @SMRT_Singapore for train service updates.

Here's a few more indicators to gauge our graciousness

Letter from Jeffrey Law Lee Beng

THE Singapore Kindness Movement's survey to gauge the level of graciousness among Singaporeans is commendable.

Equally heartening is the finding reported in "Baby boomers still most gracious S'poreans, but youth improve" (March 29) that our latest standing is at 61, a notch up from last year's 60.

However, such a survey should not only cover behaviour on the road, on public transport or at retail outlets.

Factors such as cooperation and

understanding in the workplace as well as respect for schoolteachers should be considered.

How members of the public behave in libraries, fast-food joints and the neighbourhood could serve as a barometer of our level of graciousness.

The state of our families' well-being is also an important indicator of graciousness, especially when elders are revered by the young.

Being gracious is everyone's business; we should strive to cement this moral responsibility of caring and sharing.

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