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# Boost feedback from NSmen

FROM KWAN JIN YAO

It has been intriguing to read the letters — including those by Mr Ivan Goh (“Can we do more for our NSmen?”, June 12) and Mr Leonard Loo Kok Swee (“NS should stay as 2 years”, June 21) — discussing pertinent issues concerning National Service (NS) in Singapore. But what happens next after a few moments of contemplation?

These letters have brought about two observations: First, there are National Servicemen (NSmen) who have a strong desire to voice their opinions about our military establishment after two years of intensive service. Second, there is a possible dearth of feedback channels provided by the Ministry of Defence (MINDEF) to consolidate the former.

Hence, I strongly assert that it is time to open up effective feedback channels for NSmen.

I sent an email on April 9 to MINDEF’s feedback unit about my concerns and was assured through a reply on April 24 that there were ample platforms for the articulation of perspectives.

Unfortunately, another email on May 13 postulating the plausibility of

long-term memorial initiatives for fallen soldiers did not get a response. A follow-up message weeks later on June 7 also yielded no response.

I understand that the suggestions — submitted on a daily basis — could be overwhelming and that lapses are inevitable.

But, to me, it makes good sense to render the present mechanism more efficient and effective.

We, as NSmen, are not just here to reinforce criticism or to demand for change to be introduced without question. Neither do we provide recommendations for the sake of doing so.

Instead, we want to be part of a movement which recognises there can be improvements to the status quo and that enhancements will bring about benefits, and we want to do so in a constructive manner.

MINDEF should perceive us as partners in this process.

Dialogue and discourse are integral for the institution of NS. Our NSmen have experience and on-the-ground exposure, advantages our regular counterparts do not possess and which can be harnessed.

During these discussions, participants and policymakers may not

necessarily see eye-to-eye, but the sessions would allow individuals to appreciate policy trade-offs and would spur them to think of more innovative — and feasible — proposals to address predicaments or circumstances.

Take, for instance, the contentions over remuneration. Proponents are idealistically committed to the concept of conscription and staunchly believe that NS is a form of inevitable sacrifice by male Singaporeans.

Opponents contend pragmatically that the opportunity costs of NS are significant and the associated disadvantages — financially especially — are becoming more evident vis-a-vis the trend of immigration. This complication is unprecedented, since the massive influx of foreigners within our midst is a relatively new development.

Should we then incentivise NS through higher allowances and welfare benefits, or are there other methodologies the administration could contemplate?

We should find a middle ground instead of ignoring the arguments — assuming these undertakings are not a tall order for MINDEF.

If done competently and sincerely, the possibilities are genuinely endless.



**LETTER TIME TO INCREASE PAY FOR NSMEN?**

Scan the QR code using the reader app on your smartphone, or you can visit [tdy.sg/upnspay](http://tdy.sg/upnspay) for the letter from Gerald Yeo.

## Customers must agree to terms to get data roaming

FROM NG SOOK FUN

Director, Corporate & Marketing Communication, Infocomm Development Authority of Singapore

We refer to Mr Heng Zhao Weng’s letter “Telcos must help us to understand data options” (June 21).

Mobile operators are required to obtain customers’ explicit consent be-

fore providing them with a roaming service, with the prices, terms and conditions disclosed clearly so that consumers can make an informed choice on whether or not to subscribe for the service.

To help consumers minimise “bill shock” arising from the use of roaming services, the Infocomm Develop-

ment Authority (IDA) also requires operators to provide consumers a service to suspend data roaming when their usage charges reach S\$100 every month.

Some operators offer additional options for consumers to manage roaming charges, which are beyond the IDA’s requirements.

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