

Look to sense and graciousness, not law, in guide dog dispute

FROM KWAN JIN YAO

One would be hard-pressed to disagree with Mr Alvan Yap's perspectives, in "Allowing guide dogs with the blind is a right, not a privilege" (Sept 13), that guide dogs should be allowed into establishments without preconditions.

Furthermore, the lack of awareness about the significance and responsibilities of guide dogs means that public education campaigns, particularly with Singapore's recent ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, would be beneficial.

Yet, insofar as guide dogs are hy-

gienic, properly groomed and professionally trained, some detractors have raised objections that other people could be allergic to fur-bearing animals, or that they might feel uncomfortable in the presence of dogs.

Should not the rights of these patrons be respected, too? Can we, in such circumstances, prioritise these rights?

To me, a fixation on having everything and anything codified in law blinds these individuals to the importance of accommodation and compromise. Common sense and calmness should prevail in these instances.

In other words, it is not a question of which party has the greater need or



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who is right or wrong, but a matter of how we can, within these constraints, accommodate the needs of these parties in public and private facilities.

Just as it is ludicrous and offensive to turn away a person with a disability, for whom the guide dog is a source of empowerment and independence, because another might feel uncomfortable, severe medical allergies should not be trivialised.

There are no established protocols, no instruction manuals; but all it takes is for someone to step in and mediate, and for the parties to be reasonable and understanding. This, I suppose, reflects the essence of Mr Yap's message.

A gracious, inclusive society is not only one that operates within the confines of a legal framework, but one that has the sensibility to solve seemingly impossible situations amicably and respectfully. That is a meaningful vision of Singapore worth aspiring towards.

CCTV cameras in Toh Guan keep road clear for essential vehicles

FROM CHRISTOPHER LIM

General Manager (Jurong East Branch), Housing and Development Board

The site mentioned in the letter, "Rules on illegal waiting in quiet HDB estates need clarification" (Sept 9), is at Block 267A Toh Guan Road.

In response to feedback on rampant illegal parking along the service road, the Housing and Development Board installed closed-circuit television cameras in the area. This has effectively reduced instances of illegal parking.

The service road is the only access route to the residential blocks for essential and emergency vehicles such as ambulances, fire engines and refuse trucks. It is therefore important to keep it clear at all times.

On the traffic congestion mentioned by the writer, our recent inspection found the site to be clear.

Nevertheless, we will continue to monitor the site closely and take necessary steps to address any congestion in that area.

When 'No parking' means 'No waiting' and vice versa

FROM TAY KOON HUA

With reference to the letter, "Rules on illegal waiting in quiet HDB estates need clarification" (Sept 9), I wish to highlight how misleading road signs are in Singapore.

When "No Parking" is shown, it means, under the Road Traffic Act,

that one cannot "bring a motor vehicle ... to a stationary position and cause it to wait for any purpose other than that of immediately taking up or setting down persons, goods or luggage".

So, in simple language, it means no waiting. And the "No Waiting" sign means no parking.

This is confusing. The Oxford dictionary defines "parking" as bringing (a vehicle that one is driving) to a halt and leaving it temporarily, typically in a car park or by the side of the road.

Maybe the relevant authorities should engage consultants, such as English teachers, to help with the road signs.

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