

TODAY

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Understand, address reasons for recidivism to lower rate

FROM KWAN JIN YAO

The recidivism rate has increased to its highest since 2003, and with more inmates relapsing into criminal behaviour, questions should be asked of the rehabilitation and aftercare service provided.

The phenomenon has unfortunately persisted, despite efforts by the Singapore Prison Service, the Singapore Corporation of Rehabilitative Enterprises (Score) and the Yellow Ribbon Project to facilitate training and reintegration.

Member of Parliament Denise Phua could be right that the rehabilitation period may have to be strengthened and lengthened, as this is the period where re-offence is most probable. (“Fewer inmates land jobs before release, as recidivism increases”; Jan 24)

How, though? The recidivism rate was 23.3 per cent for inmates re-

“Do former prisoners commit other offences or relapse into the same criminal behaviour? If the latter is more prevalent, what are these types of crimes?”

leased in 2010 and 27.5 per cent for the 2012 batch.

However, fewer people were sent to prison in the same period, which could account for a lower absolute increase in the number of re-offenders.

Be that as it may, the prison service and parliamentarians should take a long, hard look at the profiles of these re-offenders before determining the efficacy of present measures and the crimes that deserve more attention.

Do former prisoners commit other offences or relapse into the same criminal behaviour? If the latter is more prevalent, what are these types of crimes?

Based on demographics and socioeconomic backgrounds, which individuals are more likely to be incarcerated again?

Beyond quantitative analyses, what do qualitative exchanges with these inmates yield? Are there trends in their narratives or struggles?

Some people may insist that prisons are meant for punishment and deterrence, though they would be hard-pressed to disagree that focusing on education and rehabilitation is especially helpful for the disenfranchised. These benefits are shared by everyone.

That more employers are now registered with Score — 4,433 last year, up from 3,876 in 2013 — reflects a commitment to this cause.

We could take solace that our recidivism rate is relatively low.

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime reported in 2012 that rates could reach 70 per cent or more, including in some prisons within the United Kingdom.

If we continue our focus on understanding and addressing the reasons for recidivism and helping those who have relapsed, we could perhaps match the rates of the best countries, such as Norway, at 20 per cent.

Plunging oil prices have not helped consumer

FROM NARAYANA NARAYANA

Even without the benefit of hindsight, the report “Public transport fares may drop next year: Lui” (Jan 20), could have been taken as a hint that there will be no drop for the present.

In the event, it was reported that “Public transport fares to rise by 1 to 10 cents” (Jan 22).

The report mentioned that fares will stay unchanged for more than 1.1 million commuters, presenting the corollary that the remaining others will pay more.

In the context that the hike is 2.8 per cent from April 5, it may be poor consolation that fares could fall

by about 1 per cent next year.

Any such revision would still result in higher fares than at present, the steep fall in oil prices notwithstanding.

While experts see no apparent anomaly in the situation, many commuters may wonder, at a basic level of understanding, how the Bus Service Enhancement Programme is beneficial here. (“Increases expected as costs still weigh on operators, say experts”; Jan 22)

The projected subsidy appears not to have trickled down to commuters. At nearly all levels, end users in Singapore may feel that the short end of the stick has been reserved for them.

“The present-day oil price of S\$50 has not translated into comparable reductions of scale in pump prices to benefit motorists.”

The present-day oil price of S\$50 has not translated into comparable reductions of scale in pump prices to benefit motorists, while bottled gas for homes is priced the same as it was when oil prices were around S\$115.

That trite phrase, consumer is king, sounds hollow when there are aces to trump him.

**LETTER
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Airlines should take advantage of lower fuel prices to sell more seats

FROM RICHARD YAP GEOK ENG

I refer to the report “AirAsia scraps fuel surcharges as oil prices fall” (Jan 27), and applaud AirAsia’s announcement, which recognises that travellers should not be taken for granted.

Critics may take this as a countermeasure to its recent setback, but it bodes well, showing that it is keeping up with the times, as the surcharges were introduced when crude oil prices skyrocketed.

In recent months, when the prices plummeted, airlines complacently and conveniently took the surcharges to be steadfast. Airport taxes and fuel surcharges, when combined, cost more than the ticket itself for numerous flights.

Airlines should make good use of current oil prices and take prudent steps to hedge their forward fuel prices to sell more seats, at least for this year and perhaps the next.

I shall look forward to a flying start to the year.

Why subsidise half-day childcare centres, but not kindergartens?

FROM JAKE GOH

Principal, The Montessori Playroom Kindergarten

I hope the Early Childhood Development Agency (ECDA) can clarify some queries regarding the report “NTUC to launch new kindergarten programme,

10 pre-schools this year” (Jan 22).

Why are childcare centres allowed to run kindergarten programmes, which are typically four hours or fewer per day?

If these centres cater to parents who need only half-day programmes, what kind of parents should kindergartens cater to?

The Government now subsidises such half-day programmes in commercial childcare centres, but not in commercial kindergartens.

What is the rationale for this difference in treatment? Both are run-

“Parents who need only half-day programmes should thus send their children to kindergartens instead of childcare centres.”

ning “kindergarten” or half-day programmes.

If childcare centres can run half-day programmes and receive subsidies, parents who send their children to kindergartens should receive the same level of subsidies in all fairness.

The ECDA should set clear preschool guidelines: Childcare centres can only run full-day programmes, while kindergartens can only run half-day programmes. Parents who need only half-day programmes should thus send their children to kindergartens instead of childcare centres.