

TODAY

WE SET YOU THINKING

EDITOR
WALTER FERNANDEZDEPUTY EDITOR
CARL SKADIANASSOCIATE EDITORS
LOH CHEE KONG
JASON TANDIGITAL EDITOR
MAE LYNN TANVISUAL EDITOR
MUGILAN RAJASEGERANSPORTS EDITOR
GERARD WONGVOICES EDITOR
DERRICK A PAULOFEATURES EDITOR
CHRISTOPHER TOHSPECIAL PROJECTS EDITOR
ARIEL TAMCORPORATE SERVICES • ROSALIND PNG
CIRCULATION • SUNNY ISSAC
EDITORIAL SUPPORT • DOREEN SABAIMEDIACORP PRESS LTD
today@mediacorp.com.sg
www.facebook.com/todayonline
www.twitter.com/todayonlineCaldecott Broadcast Centre,
Andrew Road, Singapore 299939
Tel: 6236 4888 | Fax: 6534 4217NEWS HOTLINE 6822 2268
CIRCULATION HOTLINE 1800 698 6329
ADVERTISING HOTLINE 6333 9888

Trading price floor has done little for local bourse

FROM **NARAYANA NARAYANA**

The letter “Analyse how much lost by minimum trading price rule” (Oct 29) urges the Singapore Exchange (SGX) to suspend the 20-cent minimum trading price introduced this year.

The writer’s considered opinion is that the rule has proved ineffective, or at least has not succeeded significantly in improving the quality of the Singapore stock market.

The writer of “Wasteful to analyse money lost because of SGX rule” (Oct 30) emerges again to support the exchange, which is arguably capable of defending its policies.

Critically examined, the issue centres on the quality of counters listed on the SGX, with pointed emphasis on the cheap stocks introduced from early last decade, apparently to make stocks affordable and draw the small man into the market.

Going by the increased turnover/value that followed, the move was successful enough, leading eventually to numerous S-chips being listed, all affordably priced but of doubtful intrinsic investment merit.

At an early stage, I voiced concern that it was difficult for average lay investors to make meaningful comparisons, as par values of the new stocks were noticeably absent.

A corporate honcho shot me down, saying that “par values are no longer relevant in today’s changed economic climate, what matters is earnings”.

Small punters were tempted to dabble in the penny stocks on offer, with the mindset of “how much can I lose?”. To their dismay, they discov-

“A pithy South Indian saying goes, “donkey dung is available by the basketful”, which could apply to those penny shares that regularly account for a substantial volume of daily turnover on the local bourse.

ered that it could add up to a pretty penny, and even all their invested capital.

Their exodus from the scene was inevitable. Subsequent measures by the SGX to woo them back have proven futile. Punters once bitten are predictably twice shy.

The minimum trading price can be said to be a continuation of renewed efforts to attract retail traders, but it does not seem to have translated into the hoped-for investment in blue-chip stocks.

The average price of stocks traded on any given day hovers around 50 to 60 cents, scarcely quality material. A pithy South Indian saying goes “donkey dung is available by the basketful”, which could apply to those penny shares that regularly account for a substantial volume of daily turnover on the local bourse.

Apart from some cosmetic camouflage, will the minimum trading price change the shares’ inherent content?

Last year, a senior financial journalist commented that getting rid of the cheap Mickey Mouse image from having “ultra-penny shares among top actively traded stocks each trading day” would take a long time.

Has that perception changed?

Population size not a hindrance to a country’s sporting prowess

FROM **MANORAJ RAJATHURAI**

I refer to the commentary “Change of ways led to All Blacks’ triumph” (Nov 4). If Singapore sport, especially team sport, is paying attention, there is a lesson to be learnt here.

New Zealand, with a population of just over 4.5 million people, swept to a third Rugby World Cup — one for the record books as the first team to do so, and also twice in a row.

It is a bit like Jamaica (2.7 million people) dominating the sprints in athletics. So why not Singapore? What is required for sure is that indomitable spirit all these athletes embrace.

Not only did the All Blacks win in style, their team effort was second to none. They have struck fear in many an opponent even before the start of the game. Their ancestral war cry, the haka, certainly helps.

Combining the dance and challenge of the Maori people can be intimidating, but when embodied in a warrior spirit on the field, it becomes an awe-inducing, fiery display of one of the greatest team efforts, especially in the face of adversity.

Then comes the game itself, with their flowing, calculated strategy. But it is the technical prowess and discipline built into them over the years that has ensured they have now stamped their power and mastery on the sport. Throw in the sportsmanlike conduct, while playing in that fast, efficient way they normally do, and the crowds lap it up, as the capacity crowd of over 80,000 at Twickenham did.

Having coaches who have come through the ranks and the system has not hurt either. This is something Singapore sport should endeavour to emulate. Bringing in a technical expert or two from overseas to oversee a sport may help for now, but the onus must eventually lie with locals to see the sport ascend. Singaporeans must step up to make this happen.

Winning a World Cup or title may be too much at first, but winning a regional or Asian tournament would be a start. Then, perhaps, qualifying for the football World Cup, as did Trinidad and Tobago (1.3 million people), may not be a pipe dream; or doing as Japan did by beating South Africa in rugby may not be that far-fetched.

There is a long road ahead. But is population size a criterion for success in sport? I doubt it. Quality rather than quantity matters, and determines whether we have what it takes to reach the summit.

Shareholders losing money because of SGX rule

FROM **GARY TEO TECK CHYE**

I refer to the letter “Wasteful to analyse money lost because of SGX rule” (Oct 30).

The writer viewed it unnecessary for the Monetary Authority of Singapore or the Singapore Exchange (SGX) to analyse the money lost because of the minimum trading price rule and deemed it a waste of resources.

As he pointed out, smart investors know that stocks with poor fundamentals and weak prospects lead to falling share prices. Often, post-consolidation prices continue to fall in the absence of good fundamentals.

By implementing the minimum

trading price, further downside has been created. It is therefore market-negative, rather than market-neutral. An analysis would not be wasteful if it proves that shareholders’ monies were lost.

I missed out on one point in my letter “Analyse how much lost by minimum trading price rule” (Oct 29). The problem with this rule is compounded by indiscriminate and excessive share consolidation.

Instead of meeting the minimum trading price, many of the companies over-consolidated and created a big-downside for prices to fall.

The rule does nothing to improve the quality of mainboard listings.

“Does having stocks higher than 20 cents a share mean that a fundamentally poor company’s quality has improved?”

Does having stocks higher than 20 cents a share mean that a fundamentally poor company’s quality has improved?

On its website, the SGX said that higher-priced shares have better liquidity. If its policymakers were to analyse the volume of shares traded, it would be obvious that the liquidity of post-consolidated companies is pathetic.

The writer missed my point about confidence in the SGX or its reputation. It is not about the fall in share prices affecting this confidence. It is the non-performing policies, such as the minimum trading price, that affect its reputation.



The Eco-Link@BKE is a reminder of the environmental blunder we had made for the nation's progress. In contrast, the measures taken to preserve offshore landfill Pulau Semakau have been outstanding. However, the landfill is projected to last only until 2035 and there are no more islands like it. PHOTO: WEE TECK HIAN

Limits to waste output a must for sustainable S'pore

FROM CHEONG KAR LAI

The National Parks Board has announced that it will conduct guided walks along the Eco-Link@BKE ("Nature-conservation bridge to open for guided tours"; Nov 5).

The S\$16 million bridge was opened in 2013 to restore the ecological connection between the Bukit Timah Nature Reserve and the Central Catchment Nature Reserve.

Although it came with a hefty price



Can Singapore, an island with an increasing population and hardly any land, still afford to waste?

tag, that cannot compare with the cost of losing the unique biodiversity in the reserves. I therefore applaud the move to engage members of the public and increase awareness of Singapore's diverse species.

While the Eco-Link@BKE is a reminder of the environmental blunder we had made for the nation's progress, the same cannot be said for our offshore landfill, Pulau Semakau. The measures taken to preserve the island's unique biodiversity have been

outstanding.

I was privileged to have taken a guided tour of Semakau last month. The corals around it have been brought to Sisters' Island. Fish that were in sections of the lagoon to be converted to landfill were caught and released carefully into the surrounding waters.

More impressively, 400,000 mangrove saplings were planted to replace those destroyed when a 7km bund was constructed. The mangroves play an important role as a biological indicator that gives early warnings if toxins leak into the sea.

With S\$610 million having been invested in the landfill, it was projected to last Singaporeans until 2045. That deadline has been brought forward, however, and Semakau is now projected to last until 2035.

Evidently, Singapore's waste problem is costly, and landfills are not a sustainable solution. Our efficient waste management on the mainland has made us disconnected from the amount of waste we consume as individuals.

Despite rhetoric on the three Rs (reduce, reuse, recycle), our household recycling rate remains at 20 per cent.

With 8,338 tonnes of solid waste being disposed of per day, Singapore risks fouling its own nest unless we acknowledge the problem and stop our culture of disposables. Singaporeans want many things and convenience is one of them.

Can Singapore, an island with an increasing population and hardly any land, still afford to waste? Perhaps our only hope is to follow in the footsteps of Sweden to reach zero waste.

There are no more islands like Semakau, and the price we would have to pay for environmental damage would be higher than if we did our part to segregate our rubbish into recyclables and non-recyclables.

Green cover count should exclude man-made spaces

FROM DARREN TEO QIN WEI

Singapore prides itself on being an environmentally conscious metropolis whose green history can be traced from nascent policies of the 1960s Garden City movement to the current vision of a City in a Garden.

Today, Singapore heralds its track record in green land use and commitment to biodiversity conservation on a global scale, with active partnerships regionally and internationally, a prominent one being the United Nations' Convention on Biological Diversity.

The National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan, launched by the National Parks Board in 2009 to fulfil its biodiversity commitments, states that Singapore increased its green cover from 35.7 per cent to 46.5 per cent between 1986 and 2007.

Close to 10 per cent of the total land area is set aside for parks and nature conservation. Short of being a rosy situation, herein lies the issue: What exactly classifies as a green space?



How many cities can boast of a primary rainforest in the middle of its concrete jungle?

As Singapore is densely populated, with no hinterland, the Government and its agencies have adopted a pragmatic approach to balancing development with preserving biodiversity.

Included in the statistics for green cover is manicured man-made greenery such as golf courses, roadside plants and high-rise greenery. These are part of practical yet innovative efforts to integrate greenery into our urban environment.

Including those areas in the count, however, tends to be misleading, by stretching the definition of greenery, which may result in complacency regarding conservation.

Currently, the remaining forest reserves occupy only 2.5 per cent of the land area. These primary and secondary forests are isolated, dwindling patches scattered across the island.

This raw and relatively untouched form of greenery has been proven scientifically to be the richest in biodiversity, given its conduciveness for wildlife, many species of which are

endemic to Singapore.

Given the time required for its proliferation, much of this nature cannot be replicated; once it is gone, it is gone.

The good news is that with more conservation awareness, propelled by social media, people are awakening to the value of wild nature.

Moreover, the Government has recently been undertaking a more consultative stance towards conservation, with more public engagement than in the early decades.

This progressive posture comes partly with recognition of the need for more green spaces in the light of the rising population and the subsequent need for more green recreational outlets to counterbalance the relentless urbanisation.

It is imperative to continue protecting, and not overlook, whatever is left of these wild shades of green, treasure troves of nature.

After all, how many cities can boast of a primary rainforest in the middle of its concrete jungle?

Quantify outcomes of intervention for at-risk youths

FROM KWAN JIN YAO

I refer to the report "New Triage System offers 'targeted intervention for at-risk youths'" (Nov 5).

The new system — with 12 officers who will provide advice and introduce arrested youth to relevant programmes or agencies — looks promising, though the research and outcomes of the intervention should be quantified.

For instance, over the past decade, how many youths up to 19 years of age in Singapore have been arrested and investigated for minor offences?

A six-month pilot of the initiative may have shown "positive results, with 95.7 per cent of 452 cases being diverted from the criminal justice system", but what are the implications?

How do these numbers compare with numbers in the past, and how was the triage designed in the first place? Information on previous police investigations and types of sentencing would be useful too.

Effectiveness of this thorough assessment is premised upon strong partnerships between stakeholders. In this vein, besides determining whether the 12 officers across six locations will be adequate, the engagement of the non-profit organisations should be ascertained.

What is the network required for the targeted intervention, as well as the information-sharing practices that would be promoted? Against the backdrop of a many-helping-hands approach, agencies may also be involved in different capacities.

The second of the three initiatives — a longitudinal study involving about 3,300 youth offenders and their primary caregivers over a period of 10 years — will be of great value.

Policy recommendations can be designed in response to the structural challenges faced by at-risk youths, while social workers can craft strategies for their beneficiaries. In turn, the performance of the non-profit organisations can be measured and managed in the long term, in terms of how effective their programmes may be for the youths.

**LETTER
HAZE
BROUGHT OUT
THE S'PORE
SOLIDARITY**

Scan the QR code using the reader app on your smartphone, or you can visit bit.ly/ltrhaze1110 for the letter from Yang Jiemian.

