

FORUM

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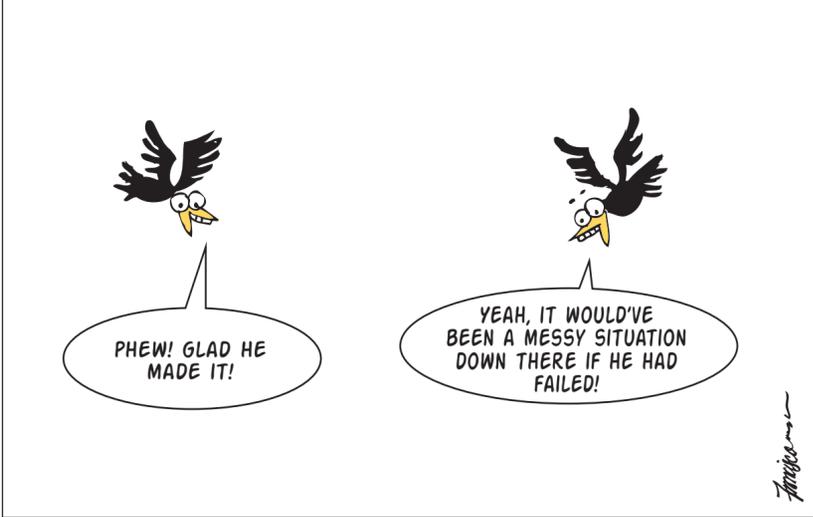
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Francisco's TAKE

US SKYDIVER MAKES 7,600M JUMP FROM PLANE - WITH NO PARACHUTE



'Live' support from home can spur our Olympics contenders

The view that our Olympians do not promote social values, culture and heritage to help build Singapore's identity, encourage racial and religious harmony, as well as stimulate knowledge and learning is woefully short-sighted ("State should not fund live telecast of the Games" by Mr Francis Cheng; last Thursday).

How many Singaporeans have the opportunity and capability to contribute to drama on the world stage, and bring glory to their nation?

If an unknown swimmer from Suriname, Anthony Nesty, could beat giants like Matt Biondi and Michael Gross in the 100m men's butterfly event at the 1988 Seoul Olympics, so can Singapore's Joseph Schooling against Michael Phelps and Chad le Clos at the same event in Rio.

I am amazed that so few local corporations, cooperatives and government agencies have seized this chance to associate their brands with a potentially historic moment for Singaporean sports as well as with our Olympic class of 2016.

Instead of spending millions on a weekend event at Marina Bay, for instance, could these organisations not work with the rights holder and Mediacorp to create a series of sponsorship clips – comprising the performances of our athletes and other world-class ones at the Games?

These "key performance highlights" could be broadcast on all digital platforms, including their corporate websites.

Our athletes can do with the psychological boost of "live" support from their fellow Singaporeans.

A Schooling victory in his pet 100m men's butterfly event will be a first for Singapore and Asia.

Acing a race that is often won by the world's swimming superpowers is a big deal for a tiny nation like Singapore.

One can reasonably argue that more local eyeballs will be feasting on the exploits of our swimmers in Rio than, say, the Games' closing ceremony.

Is a programming swop feasible?

Can the programme offering be sliced and diced to suit the budget and needs of the local market?

I hope all parties can transcend the inertia of "penny wise, pound foolish" over the next few days and showcase what may well be an important milestone in our sports history.

The ability of human skills, spirit and sportsmanship to bridge parochial differences should not just be a function of dollars and cents.

Toh Cheng Seong

WriterOfTheWeek



Mr Lee writes to the Forum page on issues of public interest. His wish for Singapore is that for the next 50 years, it would be an even better, more enjoyable place to live in. PHOTO: COURTESY OF LEE KWOK WENG

Who: Lee Kwok Weng, 64, a lawyer.

My family: Married with three children – a son, aged 29, and two daughters, aged 24 and 19.

My home: A flat in Marine Parade.

My passions: Walking and observing happenings around me.

I started writing to the Forum page....: I started writing to the paper in 1969.

What I write about: Any issue of public interest.

Why I write: To share my views and observations.

I read the Forum page because....: I would like to know what other readers have to say.

My wish for Singapore: That for the next 50 years, Singapore would be an even better, more enjoyable place to live in.

Mind the effects of misogynistic words, actions in risque games

I applaud the tough action taken by the National University of Singapore (NUS) to crack down on inappropriate risque games on its campus ("NUS: Risque games completely inappropriate"; last Wednesday).

Such games tacitly condone sexism and misogyny at an impressionable age.

During orientation, young women are, at times, subjected to games where they play victims, and young men generally play the aggressors.

Sexist words used during this time may, at best, be careless or thoughtless, but are inappropriate in a university setting and can even cause mental stress to our vulnerable young women.

These misogynistic words and actions may, in time and without due attention, subtly enter our everyday parlance, become acceptable in general discourse and potentially lead to violence – whether verbal, mental or physical – against women.

It is not only the women who are victims. Less enthusiastic young men are also at times pushed into aggressive conduct with taunting words and abusive language.

Most of these young undergraduate men are just mimicking generations of seniors before them – never giving thought to their actions as anything beyond having some fun.

That is why it is important for tertiary institutions to fully reflect, honestly review and concretely revamp orientation activities.

There must be a stop to what has evolved over all these years – a form of overt, institutionalised bullying, acceptable over the course of a week or two before the start of the academic year.

I hope that future generations of women undergraduates are treated with the respect and civility that should be accorded to them after fighting so hard for a place at a venerable institution of higher learning.

Trina Liang-Lin (Ms)
President
Singapore Committee for UN Women

Parents can be first line of defence against teen suicide

Empowering parents to watch out for warning signs of suicide can be helpful in reducing teenage suicide risk ("Teen suicides 'highest in 15 years but overall rate falls'"; last Tuesday).

People tend to associate suicide risk with visible adverse life events such as the death of a loved one or debilitating illness. More often than not, teenagers who are contemplating suicide can appear very normal – unless one pays closer attention.

The emotional warning signs of suicide risk can include increased anger, irritability, moodiness, boredom, hopelessness and low self-esteem.

Behavioural warning signs may come in the form of reckless or self-destructive acts; loss of interest in school, sports and hobbies; decreased personal hygiene; changes in eating or sleeping habits; talk about death and suicide; and isolation from people.

Sometimes, even rebelliousness may be an external expression of an internal pain or struggle.

If parents suspect a suicide risk in their teenager, it is advisable to seek help immediately from a trusted help professional, while closely monitoring the teen's emotional state and physical whereabouts.

Demonstrating love in the form of physical touch, like a hug, can help their teen to feel assured.

Above all, remain calm and positive.

Research indicates that a sense of parent-family connectedness is one of the most effective preventive measures against suicidal behaviour among young people.

A safe and open environment at home would encourage children to communicate their thoughts and feelings, allowing their concerns and struggles to be raised.

Show them that they are loved and valued – regardless of their performance or behaviour – and show them how to handle stress in a healthy manner.

Avoid being overly demanding or reactive, lest it breeds excessive self-criticism, which might result in a higher risk of anxiety or depression ("Kids of pushy parents 'face higher risk of depression'"; June 22). Affirm teenagers in their unique talents and strengths, and cheer them on to pursue their own passions in areas other than just academic.

If parents are given help to recognise and address the early warning signs of suicide in their teenagers, they can be an effective first line of defence against teenage suicide.

Larry Lai
Principal Counsellor
Focus on the Family Singapore

Delisting a new strategy in firms' arsenal

Once, firms aspired to have an "exit strategy".

Many business founders courted investors to help grow their seeds of ideas.

Once the seeds grew, founders and investors alike would harvest the fruits of their labour or capital.

This was when the company's shares were publicly traded on a stock exchange via an initial public offering.

Now, we witness a counter-trend of sorts.

More companies are delisting their shares, either out of choice or circumstance.

When the economy slows, companies find it difficult to deliver high returns to shareholders.

Delisting frees a company from this mission.

Listed companies are strictly regulated, which puts pressure on executives to deliver short-term results at the expense of long-term development. Board members are scrutinised for diligence on their part. Hence, companies may delist to regain control.

Lack of interest in the company's shares, thin trading volume and the inability to meet the minimum trading price can also make exiting sensible.

In lean times, companies consolidate. Companies merge or are acquired by another, which makes delisting necessary.

Financial markets match suppliers and demanders of funds quickly with price information.

With delisting, the process of valuating companies is slowed. Investors may be hard put to determine the fair value of a prospective business.

Industrial benchmarks and historical transactions may be helpful.

With fewer counters on the stock exchange, investors have fewer choices, but the remaining counters may benefit from more liquidity.

But a stock exchange must also be a good gauge of market sentiments for various industries in the real economy.

Investors could then look at overseas stock exchanges.

Companies come and go in a free-market economy. Financial markets are no different.

When interests are not served on either side, participants exit. It is part of the process.

Lee Teck Chuan

FORUM ONLINE

- MR GURMIT SINGH KULLAR:** Sport is about passion and pride, not just numbers.
 - MR LIEW ENG LENG:** Sports fans must accept that there are no more freebies.
 - MR RAYMOND ANTHONY FERNANDO:** Involve suicide survivors and caregivers.
 - MR SHERMAN GOH KENG HWEE:** Important to remember we do not suffer alone.
 - MR SHAIK KADIR:** Good to open more doors to Muslim travellers.
- MORE LETTERS ON**
www.straitstimes.com

Ministry, Case to enhance consumer awareness of prepayment risks

We empathise with consumers who have made prepayments to businesses which have closed down and are unable to recover their money for services not yet consumed ("California Fitness gym closures: Get firms to insure packages over \$500" by Mr Christopher Low Kin Siong; "Bar all package deals" by Dr Michael Loh Toon Seng, Forum Online; and "Tighten rules against firms collecting advance payments" by Mr Chua Boon Hou, all published on July 21).

Prepayments are a common business practice, where the business collects upfront payment for a package of services to be consumed over a period of time.

The consumer may, in turn, enjoy a discount off the total package price.

However, there is an inherent risk associated with prepayments.

In deciding whether to opt for prepayment, the consumer should consider carefully the advantages and potential risks associated with such an arrangement.

There have been a number of suggestions on ways to protect prepayments, such as insurance, escrow and trust accounts.

As the nature of businesses and consumer transactions vary widely in practice, mandating such requirements across the board would have a bearing on the operation of businesses and financial institutions. It could impose onerous compliance and administrative costs, which may be passed on to consumers.

It is worth noting that overseas jurisdictions, such as Australia and Hong Kong, also do not impose broad-based requirements for prepayments to be protected.

There are businesses that provide prepayment protection. Those that do so are able to differentiate themselves from their competitors by safeguarding their customers' interests.

There are currently more than 700 CaseTrust accredited retailers which provide prepayment protection, from various sectors such as motoring, renovation and spa and wellness.

We encourage businesses to be CaseTrust-accredited, and for trade associations to work with the Consumers Association of Singapore (Case) on accreditation schemes.

Consumer education also continues to be important. We will work with Case to enhance consumer awareness of the risks involved in prepayments.

Cindy Keng (Mrs)
Director
Corporate Communications Division
Ministry of Trade and Industry

WRITE IN: Letters should be meant for exclusive publication in The Straits Times. They should be no longer than 400 words and must include the writer's full name, address and phone numbers. The Forum editor reserves the right to edit the letters. For women, please indicate Miss, Ms, Mrs or Madam. Please e-mail your letter to stforum@sph.com.sg. Readers can also respond to letters via Facebook and Twitter.