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i say GE2006

THEY DESERVE A THUMBS-UP

HO KONG LOON

SINGAPOREANS go to the polls on May 6. It is crucial that they see the macro in absolutely clear perspective.

The recent abrupt decision by the Malaysian government not to build the "Half or Scenic Bridge" has a vital lesson that voters must take full cognizance of, before putting X to party.

The Singapore negotiation team that faced their Malaysian counterparts were thorough in their preparations, resolute in the face of constant Malaysian pendulum swings and, what is most important, rebutted with facts, unimpeachable points of law and irrefutable references, historically and contractually.

It is representative of how a First World nation should conduct itself vis-à-vis its neighbours regionally – or globally – even as the cyber discussions in Malaysia decried the pathetic efforts put up by their own representatives.

If we bellyache about governmental high-handedness and perceived arrogance, should we not also give them the thumbs-up for a job brilliantly done for the past four decades?

What has this got to do with the 2006 General Election? Lots. That Singapore is ranked very competitively in this brutal global stampede for investments and scarce resources, is consequent to its long-term goals and strategies.

Our children's future pivots critically on the direction our leaders focus on: One which is progressive, highly-adaptable, flexible and nimble.

Admittedly, flaws in the execution of national policies have frayed local nerves and caused displacements. Our leaders who spearhead our nation's thrust into the uncharted, treacherous vagaries of international finance, commerce and trade have their work cut out for them.

If we bellyache about governmental high-handedness and perceived arrogance, should we not also give them the thumbs up for a job brilliantly done for the past four decades?

The writer is a 59-year-old retired teacher in the Holland-Bukit Timah GRC.

A secret vote for the disabled too

RON CHANDRAN-DUDLEY

Honorary Secretary and founder president, Disabled People's Association & Member, Political Development Feedback Group

AS POLLING Day draws near, we at Disabled People's Association are excited about voting as we care for Singapore – its security, development and standing in the world.

While we feel all of these, we are also concerned about the accessibility to the voting centres and about the accessibility within the centre and the exercising of our much cherished vote.

Temporary parking, drop-off and pick-up points near the entrance would be most helpful for disabled people who drive or are driven.

We are assured, by Parliament and the Elections Department in the Prime Minister's Office, that we shall be assisted within the centre by the Presiding Officer.

My fellow citizens with disabilities and I strongly feel that trust must not only be exercised, it must also be seen to be exercised – not only by our fellow citizens who are non-disabled – but also by the sceptics around the world.

The Parliamentary Elections Act states: "The Presiding Officer, on the application of a voter who is incapaci-

tated by blindness or other physical cause from voting in the manner prescribed by this act, shall mark the ballot paper of the voter in the manner directed by the voter, and shall cause the ballot paper to be placed in the ballot box".

This Act raises the all important "Right" or the "Privilege" of the freedom of choice. In this instance, we wish to be trusted with the choice of who we would prefer to assist us.

While thanking Parliament, the Elections Department and the to-be-assigned Presiding Officer, my colleagues and I wish to reserve the right and privilege of choosing either a trusted member of his or her family or a friend and/or the Presiding Officer.

Our disability should not, and must not, be the cause of our ballot not being secret – notwithstanding the assurance by the State that the Elections Officer has been sworn to secrecy.

It is not that we do not trust the State's assignee less, but only that we are more comfortable and more familiar with a family member or friend.

It is the Association's ardent hope that, finally, the umbrella of inclusiveness, which our Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong has raised, will cover us citizens with disabilities as well, thus enabling full and equal participation.