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No room for negotiation

I TOTALLY agree with Mr Tan Kin Lian, who suggested keeping rents stable to support small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Singapore ("Keep rental rates stable"; March 14).

As an SME owner, I run a logistics business with a warehouse in Jalan Buroh Warehouse Complex, whose landlord is Jurong Port.

We first started renting the warehouse in 2008 and after much hard work, we managed to bring in some business with good customers supporting us.

However, when the lease was due for renewal after two years, the rental shot up by almost 65 per cent. We were told that this was following the "market trend".

We still renewed the lease as we had invested in equipment for the business. But the rent continues to rise every term by at least 30 per cent.

The latest occasion was last month - which saw another 35 per cent increase - when we were told by the landlord that one-year leases were the new policy. We were also told that rent would probably increase by another 30 per cent to 40 per cent next year.

What I am most disappointed with was that there was no room for negotiation with the landlord, which simply would not consider helping an SME or at least supporting the Government's move to help SMEs in Singapore. The landlord told me as it was privatised now, it has its own guidelines.

In our industry, we face stiff competition every day along with rising labour costs.

It is not easy for us to hire Singaporean workers as our work often involves physical labour, handling heavy cargo and long working hours.

Hopefully we can see some measures to stabilise commercial rental soon.

Andeline Wong (Ms)

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