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# npTribune

The Student Voice of  
Ngee Ann Polytechnic  
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OCTOBER - DECEMBER 2008

# NP45

## THE CELEBRATIONS OF THE PEOPLE AND HOW FAR WE HAVE COME SINCE 1963

(P7, 8, 9)

## BUSINESS GRADS WAIT OUT GLOOM

With a shaky world economy and a shrinking job market, business graduates say they are going for degree courses instead

**Kenneth Cheong**

Business graduates in Singapore are feeling the chilling effects of the global financial crisis with the onset of a gloomy job market, with some deciding to go for further studies to wait out the downturn.

Ng Sze Chun, 23, a Business Information Technology student who graduated with a 3.1 grade point average, had wanted to apply for a job in the finance industry after finishing National Service in September. "I was sending out a flurry of emails to companies I saw in the papers that were interested in hiring people," he says.

Two months later, the prospect of a job is still bleak. He now intends to sign up for a degree course at the Singapore Institute of Management and is hoping to graduate with majors in Finance and Economics.

Finance and banking multinational companies in Singapore recently cut jobs to cut costs, according to news reports in October and November.

Among the list of afflicted companies are DBS Bank, axing more than 450 staff locally; AIA

Singapore, retrenching 20; Merrill Lynch another 20; while Standard Chartered is cutting 35 jobs.

It comes as no surprise why students like Ong Jieying, 20, an Accountancy student now in a private school, would "rather study than work", despite a \$9,000 tuition fee.

### WHAT WE CAN DO

Mr Phillip Lau, the Director of the School of Business & Accountancy, remains optimistic that Singapore will be able to pull through this recession.

He brings up factors such as the nation's "strong reserves" and "diversified investment portfolios".

Advising students to also diversify in terms of expanding their various fields of expertise, he also recommends that they "build up knowledge and practical skills to better prepare for the demands of the future."

• **Online BA student Alan Goh shares his thoughts on** [theurbanwire.com/nptribune](http://theurbanwire.com/nptribune)

• **Inside** Some students are still spending like there is no tomorrow, grooming amid the gloom. P13



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## NGEE ANN KONGSI DONATES \$5.7M

The Ngee Ann Kongsi presented a \$5.7 million cheque to the polytechnic for student-related initiatives and programmes.

Among those who graced the presentation were Rear-Admiral (NS) Lui Tuck Yew, Senior Minister of State, Ministry of Education and Ministry of Information, Communication and the Arts, the Ngee Ann Kongsi's Vice-President, Mr Lim Kee Ming, and the Ngee Ann Council's Chairman, Mr Tan Hup Fui.

Due to the parliamentary amendment to the Ngee Ann Kongsi (Incorporation)

Bill last year, the Kongsi no longer contributes all 75 percent of its annual income to Ngee Ann Polytechnic.

It instead splits 10 percent among charities and donates another 40 percent to other educational institutes.

The remaining 25 percent is donated to Ngee Ann Polytechnic.

Since 1972, the Kongsi's income has streamed steadily to the polytechnic. This year's presentation brings its total contribution to \$174 million.

- LAU LIANG TONG

### FMS OFFERS NEW 'O'-LEVEL SUBJECT

Students from Paya Lebar Methodist Girls' School, Singapore Chinese Girls' School, and Kuo Chuan Presbyterian Secondary will be able to take Media Studies (EL), a new subject for the 'O'-level examinations from January next year.

They will learn to analyse media texts and create a short video project. Classes will be taught by lecturers from the School of Film & Media Studies.

Since last January, eight other secondary schools have partnered three polytechnics to offer Applied Subjects, namely Creative 3D Animation, Fundamentals of Electronics, and Introduction to Enterprise Development.

### SCIENCE OF BEAUTY

Secondary schools from all around the island competed in the Science of Beauty Competition on Oct. 24 at the Convention Centre.

The competition got 240 students to research on, and develop botanical ingredients into skincare products by applying scientific principles.

Hai Sing Catholic clinched the first prize of \$500 cash and \$200 worth of beauty products sponsored by L'Oreal.

- BRIAN CHEONG

### INTERNATIONAL NIGHT

Ticket sales were down at this year's International Night on Nov. 1.

Yet 330 international students, predominantly Burmese, Malaysian, Vietnamese, and Chinese nationals attended the four-hour event.

- JEREMY BOO

### BA HOMECOMING

When Mr Michael Lim, 50, first met his wife Michelle at an English remedial class in school, it was love at first sight.

He says, "I felt a strong bite from the love-bug when she sat beside me."

The two Business Studies graduates married after 10 years of courtship.

They were among 170 alumni and staff present at the School of Business & Accountancy (BA) inaugural Homecoming Dinner on Sept. 6, which saw the pair win the BA couple award.

- ALFRED CHUA

### TRAVLEASY OPENS

TravLEasy, a student-initiated travel agency, opened on Nov. 10.

It aims to promote student entrepreneurship, and make travel easier for students and co-curricular activity groups. The travel agency will be able to handle leisure trips, expeditions and community service trips to neighbouring countries.

Tour Asia (S) Pte Ltd will guide the students and mentor the venture.

- SUJITH KUMAR

### HP CHALLENGE

Business Information Technology students have won the Hewlett-Packard Total Care Challenge 2008—Youth Category.

They walked away with \$15,000 on Oct. 18.

The H team, comprising Jacqueline Zheng, Ngoh Him Lim, Tan Hui Mian and Huang Zhi, competed against teams from Nanyang Polytechnic, Temasek Polytechnic, and even the University of Las Vegas.

- LIN ZI CHENG



ILLUSTRATION: LEE KOW FUNG, CHINESE STUDIES LECTURER / TEXT: RYAN SCOTT INGRASSIA, FILM, SOUND & VIDEO LECTURER / INITIATED BY THE LIEN YING CHOW LIBRARY

## SALE OF DUCK PLUSHIES RAISES \$17,000 FOR SICK CHILDREN



NPT / LEE XIAN JIE

As part of YMCA's Youth for Causes programme, a team of three students and an alumnus raised \$17,000 in support of the Make-A-Wish Foundation for children with life-threatening diseases.

Jasmine Tan, 18, second-year Business Studies student (third from left), says her

team, Project AuctionLove, used ducks because it is British slang for darling.

They hope "every child can be treated like darlings who have the right to be loved, to be sheltered and to harbour hopes and dreams for a bright future".

- JEREMY BOO

### ONE SHOW WORKSHOP

The best advertising students from around the region will be meeting here from Dec. 13 to 15 to attend The One Show Southeast and South Asia Workshop.

Participants will be working with award-winning digital creative directors from across the world to refine their digital advertising ideas for their client, MasterCard, in the three-day workshop.

Mr Ziggy Soh, a lecturer at the School of Film & Media Studies (FMS) says co-hosting the prestigious awards workshop "promotes FMS as an international media school".

- ALFRED CHUA

### BERLIN WALL WINNER

Alvin Lee, 19, a third-year Banking & Financial Services student, never expected that he would win the top prize in The Kings of Freedom Project on Facebook.

Alvin impressed the jury with his idea of building 10 walls around the four existing panels of the Berlin Wall, on which are graffiti paintings of the Kings of Freedom, at Bedok Reservoir Park.

He beat even professional architects to win \$15,000 in prize money.

- EUNICE NG

### TALENT DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME HUDDLES

The Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Trade and Industry, Mr Peter Ong, chatted with 34 students from the Talent Development Programme (TDP) on Nov. 18 about Singapore's competitiveness. He also discussed how Singapore can cope with the global economic turmoil.

In the inaugural TDP Huddle at Loft@94 on Oct. 24 and 25, 46 students had discussed Singapore's national interests with Ambassador Ong Keng Yong, who was the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Secretary-General from 2003 to 2007. He is also the Director of the Institute of Policy Studies.

- BRIAN CHEONG

### DIVERS PROTECT PULAU AUR CORALS

In a marine conservation project near Mersing, Malaysia, 16 from the Divers' Club built artificial reefs to protect corals.

Even though they had injured their fingers while sawing pipes, Janice Oo, 21, a second-year Electronic & Computer Engineering student said, "It is important to preserve corals for future generations."

- EUNICE NG

### BA OLYMPIC FEVER

Sharing gossip behind the scenes at the Olympic Games was unforgettable for six third-year Business & Accountancy students who interned in Beijing in August.

Diane Lim, 19, says she was "very blessed to have met journalists from all over the world". The Intercontinental Hotel Beijing intern adds, "People were standing outside the in the Olympic Green, wishing they could come in!"

- EUNICE NG

### A TALE OF TWO CITIES

The contrast between modern and old was evident at a photo exhibition held at The Arts House in October.

Kee Ya Ting, 20, a Film, Sound & Video graduate, captured the distinction between old and new Beijing in one of her photographs. "On one side of a lake was a cosmopolitan Beijing while the opposite were old hutongs," she says.

Her photographic works and that of others who went on the Beijing and Chiang Mai study trips this year, raised \$1,612. The sum was equally split between the Business Times Budding Artists Fund and the School of Film & Media Studies' Pocket Money Fund.

- ALFRED CHUA



Do you clear your trays? Have your say: [theurbanwire.com/nptribune](http://theurbanwire.com/nptribune)

## NEWS

# Tray-return campaign stagnant; students blame 'peer influence'

Students do not return trays for fear of being seen as 'weird'. **CHRYSTAL CHUA** finds out if students in other institutions feel the same

One in two students do not return their trays because of peer influence. A third do not bother because of the presence of cleaners in the canteens.

This is according to a npTribune poll, which asked 35 third-year students for reasons they do not return their food trays at the campus canteens.

Anderson Koh, 19, a third-year Accountancy student, says, "I don't return trays because I don't see anyone else doing so. I don't want to be the oddball. Besides, we have cleaners in the canteens."

## FEW WANT TO BE BOLD

For years, banners encouraging students to return their trays have been hung around canteens.

Few have paid heed.

Recently, polytechnics were criticised in The Straits Times Forum for not getting students to clear their own trays.

The forum article also referred to the "Be Bold, Be Distinctive" banners in our polytechnic's canteens as ineffective.

However, school officials said students should not be blamed completely. Mr Mui Cheng Hock, Director of the Estate Management Office, says, "For today's youth, taking initiative or being socially gracious may

not be a top priority. It's just societal culture and the way it's been developed in Singapore."

Even the Environmental Rangers Society (ERS), which put up the banners, told npTribune it did not know when the banners were put up originally.

Muhammad Yusri, 19, ERS President says, "Succeeding members did not see to follow-up or re-launch the campaign because it was not well-received initially."

John Yow, 18, ERS Vice-President, suggests there "could be tray-return stations set up where students could return their utensils. This could in turn, be cleared by the canteen helpers".

But cleaners would have none of it. Mr Say Lip Buck, 69, who has been working here as a cleaner for a decade, says, "Having a station could mean congestion and more mess that we will have to clear."

Mr Say's concerns may be unfounded, as a check on other tertiary education institutes' canteens suggests.

## OTHERS RETURNING TRAYS

At Temasek Polytechnic (TP) and the Nanyang Technological University (NTU), tray-return initiatives have been set up in some canteens.

People who do not return trays there are seen as the odd ones out.



NPT / SAM WU

Mr Wu De Sheng, 66, is employed full-time at Canteen One as a cleaner. He says in Mandarin, "It's hard to clean all these tables. There are so many tables, and so little time."

## WHY DO YOU NOT RETURN YOUR TRAY?

**50%**

"No one else is doing it."

**35%**

"The cleaners can do it."

At NTU, two main canteens require students to return their trays and utensils to stipulated counters. One canteen even has stickers stuck onto every table to remind canteen patrons to return their trays.

During lunch hour, canteen cleaners are stationed at the counters to clear utensils and they move around only to wipe tables.

At TP, a similar system is implemented in all canteens, except at the air-conditioned food court at its Informatics &

Information Technology School.

Students return trays and utensils to marked containers assigned to each stall and scrape off their unwanted food into trash bins beside the counter.

Foo Jiawen, 19, a third-year Apparel Design & Merchandising student at TP, says, "I think it's a matter of school culture."

She adds, "No matter how lazy I am, I would probably still return my trays and plates because it has become a habit. I'd be stared at if I don't return my trays."



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Wella Ong & Yeo Kai Wen

Highly-skilled maritime professionals will graduate in two years' time from the new collaborative specialised degree programme between Newcastle University, Singapore Polytechnic and Ngee Ann Polytechnic to fill the demands of a growing industry.

The Bachelor of Engineering in Naval Architecture with Honours degree will be awarded in the name of Newcastle University.

As the first full-time degree course in Naval Architecture in Singapore, the programme was

oversubscribed with 118 submitted applications for 62 places.

One of the students, Hong Fengxia, 20, signed up despite her parents' concerns.

"Many people do not know about this course, and my parents were afraid. But this is how I can craft out a bright future."

Mr Michael Chia, Executive Director of Keppel FELS Limited and President of the Association of Singapore Marine Industries, says, "The industry is still very much in the growth phase and has been doing very well in the past three years."

Successful applicants will have

access to facilities on campus, which includes the only ship model tow tank here in Singapore.

Ms Amanda Brooks, Deputy High Commissioner and Director of Trade & Investment of the British High Commission Singapore, expressed her full support for the degree programme.

"Each year we have about 3,000 students in the United Kingdom who come from Singapore. We are determined to produce the best graduates in the region," says Ms Brooks.

Through a partnership programme under the Ministry of Education's Polytechnic-Foreign

Specialised Institution (Poly-FSI) initiative, modules will be delivered by Newcastle University under the administration of the polytechnic.

This Poly-FSI tie-up is special because it involves the collaboration of not just one, but two polytechnics with a partner university, as well as the local maritime industry.

Professor Ehsan Mesbahi, Director of Newcastle University Marine International, says, "We see great demand for our graduates' skills. They will have all the necessary skills to start as junior engineers and proceed to senior positions within the

industry because of the knowledge and skills required here."

**BOOMING INDUSTRY**

The marine industry in Singapore has been experiencing strong growth, achieving a total output of \$9.8 billion in 2006, a 30 percent increase over 2005.

Mr Tan Chye Kiat, a Harbour Pilot in the maritime industry, notes that his pay rose from \$6,000 to \$10,000 within six months.

Strong support has been shown for the programme, with 21 students getting \$800,000 worth of scholarships from marine and offshore companies.

# Co-op prices are perceived to be 'too high'

Yet a price check across all polytechnics reveals that the Ngee Ann Polytechnic Co-operative Society prices items fairly

Jeremy Boo

An npTribune online straw poll found almost two-thirds of its 100 respondents saying prices in the NP Co-op @5 and @73 stores are too high.

However, a check reveals the Co-op stores' prices are low compared to other polytechnics.

"It is impossible to have prices as low as NTUC Fairprice

because we are not as big, but we do try to keep our prices low," says Co-op Manager Lily Wong.

Ms Wong says that prices for items, such as stationery, are kept low by buying in bulk.

Increasing the number of temporary workers and reducing full-time employees has trimmed overheads.

The Co-op has also worked out an agreement with the polytechnic: 10 percent of its

surplus is contributed to the NP Scholarship & Bursary Fund, in exchange for not increasing rent for the last 10 years.

Ms Wong says that there are plans to revamp the stores at the Atrium.

Proposed ideas include merging the two eateries and bringing in more food choices.

*Additional reporting by Kyle Leslie Sim*

Items	NP	TP	SP	NYP	RP
Ice Mountain/Alpheus mineral water (500 ml)	\$0.70	\$0.75	\$1.50	\$1.00	\$1.10
Twisties Chickenator (70 g)	\$1.10	\$1.45	\$1.70	\$1.40	\$1.10
Kinder Bueno (2 wafers)	\$1.40	\$1.35	\$1.80	\$1.65	\$1.20
Pilot G-Tec blue pen (0.4mm tip)	\$2.80	-	\$2.70	\$2.80	-
Foolsap pad (100 sheets)	\$2.70	\$0.70	-	\$2.05	\$1.10
Whisper regular flow wings (10 pads)	\$2.70	\$2.75	-	\$2.15	\$3.40

The table above compares prices across all five polytechnics.



# Upcoming digital hub encourages creative learning

**Muhammad Siraj & Ong Chong Ern**

Want to make your own movies, compose your own songs or make your own cartoons?

Check out the Digital Lifestyle Hub, slated to open in April next year.

The \$832,000 Hub at Block 23 will feature a television studio, a dance studio, a voice recording studio, and a jamming studio, as well as a LAN-gaming centre.

The aim, says Ms Ang Sin Sing, Manager of the iMedia Centre, is to bring fun to what she calls "serious learning".

"Here we want students to have 'serious fun'," she says.



**From April next year, School of Film & Media Studies students will not be the only ones who can experiment with music.**

*"Here we want students to have 'serious fun'."*

**Ms Ang Sin Sing**  
Manager, iMedia Centre

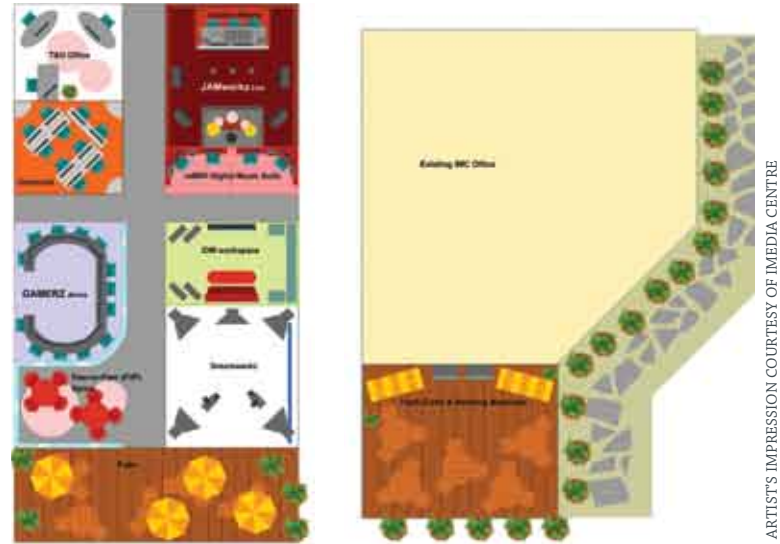
"Teachers nowadays", adds Ms Ang, "are no longer the sole providers of information, but have become more like facilitators."

Ms Ang says the Hub will serve to "bridge the learning gap between academic and creative learning, as learning should not stop at the classroom."

"When students are outside the classroom, the learning must continue."

The cutting-edge computers in the LAN-gaming arena will power games like Spore, Guitar Hero World Tour, and Little Big Planet, which promote creative involvement.

"Who knows, we might even be able to help encourage the next big songwriter or two," Ms Ang says.



**The Digital Lifestyle Hub at Block 23 will feature a jamming studio, voice-recording booths, a LAN-gaming centre, a video production studio, and will come along with a snazzy alfresco study area.**

ARTIST'S IMPRESSION COURTESY OF IMEDIA CENTRE

## NEW TECH

# Scrawl on virtual paper, then share notes online

A new software makes learning a dream

**Ong Chong Ern**

Learning can be like a cinematic experience, thanks to its highly visual and fully customisable interface. Expect a more colourful experience than the flat and boring MeL.

"This could revolutionise learning," says Mr Ng Weng Cho, 49, who is the Director of iMedia Centre.

He was referring to Dream, an experimental software that could render textbooks redundant, do away with lecture notes, and make home e-learning a highly practical affair.

Created by software developer Aleph Labs to enhance the existing MeL interface, Dream promises to create a "visually and graphically intense way of learning," says Mr Ng.

"The interface is visually attractive. It looks and feels good," said Ms Diana Toh, a courseware developer at iMedia Centre.

Another feature—a highly accessible annotation function—is something students will love with Dream. The function helps students to take notes easily during lectures. For example, students can add notes, drawings, charts or even Youtube videos to their virtual notes.

The Collaboration feature allows students to wirelessly share their notes spontaneously, and makes class discussions a breeze, even when working from home.

Best of all, it is easy to use these features. Ms Toh says, "Dream's easily adaptable for students and the learning curve isn't high."

It will only be available next January for beta testing.

Sharon Seah, 17, a first-year Accountancy student, was fortunate enough to see a live demo. "It looks awesome," she says.



**New features allow students to collaborate and annotate virtual notes like on a real book.**

## CHOOSING THE QUICKER, ILLEGAL WAY TO SCHOOL



**Caught in the act: A student alights with breakfast in hand.**

NPT / JUSTIN TAN

**Daryll Nanayakara**

It is an illegal alternative escape from the morning peak-hour traffic along Clementi Road.

But for some motorists, dropping passengers off along the Pan-Island Expressway two-lane slip road behind campus is worth the risk. Although they run the danger of causing an accident while their passengers alight, the idea of not having to endure the

long wait to make a U-turn near Maju Camp is a temptation errant drivers find too hard to resist.

Stopping on the shoulder or verge of an expressway can cost drivers a \$130 fine and four demerit points.

When approached by npTribune last week, passengers who alighted from the vehicles declined comment. Only one of them, a second-year student, agreed to explain the rationale behind her actions,

on condition of anonymity.

She says, "The jam along Clementi Road is terrible. Sometimes it takes close to 20 minutes just to make a U-turn near Maju Camp."

An npTribune check one morning found more than 30 vehicles pulling over to allow passengers, some of whom are lecturers, to alight.

The situation worsens closer to 9 am, when most classes and lectures start.



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45 YEARS ON

# THE POLYTECHNIC THAT ALMOST NEVER CAME TO BE

*“Policy rift halts Ngee Ann College extension”, “Ngee Ann Board of Governors quit in protest”, “Ngee Ann students start two-day boycott of classes”, “Ngee Ann Students reject the Thong report”, “Jail for all 7 Ngee Ann students”, screamed the headlines of the 1960s. Even as we celebrate our 45<sup>TH</sup> anniversary, we chronicle how Ngee Ann was born.*

**1956** Nanyang University, better known as Nantah, is set up with donations from Chinese of all walks of life, who had the common dream of a Chinese university for Chinese throughout Southeast Asia. Mr Lien Ying Chow was one of the founders.

**1961** Some of the professors and leaders at Nantah start to realise that their dreams were far from being accomplished. Academic performance was poor, donor millionaires struggled for power, and communist elements had set in. Dr Lien Ying Chow, Professor Liu Yin Soon, and other senior staff break away from the university to establish Ngee Ann College.



Ngee Ann College at the Ngee Ann Kongsi's Tank Road Teochew Building.

**1963 May** Ngee Ann College is inaugurated and is meant to be an alternative to Nantah—an institute of higher education for the Chinese not controlled by communists. The 1,000-strong student population started classes in the temporary Tank Road campus, and shared it with Tuan Mong School. Space at the Teochew Building was so tight, only three lectures could be given each day. Yet the Board of Governors, at that time, had hoped for the College to develop into a university: Ngee Ann University.

**1964 Oct** Work on the College's Department of Technology begins at Clementi Road. The Ngee Ann Kongsi was divided on the construction. But the head of its Board of Governors, Mr Lien Ying Chow, pressed on with the expansion programme.



Dr Lien Ying Chow, Founding Chairman

**1965 May** Construction work is suspended. The College's Student Union holds a protest meeting in the College's auditorium to persuade the Kongsi to resume work, and called for the College to be developed into a full-fledged university as soon as possible.

*“The building projects mean life and death to us. If we don't have our own buildings, we will eventually stifle to death.”*

— Mr Chua Ah Foh

Student Union Chairman  
(The Straits Times, June 5, 1965)

**1965 June** All 1,000 students boycott classes for two days in protest over what they called the Kongsi's “evasive attitude”. After a three-hour emergency meeting, the Kongsi decided to proceed with the construction. Students held a victory meeting, but just two weeks later, said the Kongsi was “insincere” and declared an indefinite boycott on lectures. Their second boycott lasted 27 days, and during this time students tried to protest outside the Ministry of Education.

**1966 Oct** The Thong Saw Pak Report recommends that the College be re-organised under its own council, and not restrict itself to Chinese as the language of instruction. According to The Straits Times, Oct. 11, 1966, the students said: “The recommendations are retrogressive, and if implemented will cause the degradation and demotion of the college into a junior college.”

**1964 Nov**



Ngee Ann College students marched to City Hall to protest against the Thong Saw Pak report.

**1967** The College accepted the Thong Saw Pak report and decided to redirect its focus to diploma-level technical programmes.

**1968** The College moved from Tank Road to its current Clementi Road campus, with over 10 hectares of land donated by the Kongsi (today the campus stands on over 60 hectares). It was also renamed Ngee Ann Technical College (now Ngee Ann Polytechnic).



The Council of Ngee Ann Technical College at the entrance in 1968. Block 73, to be demolished next year to make way for the Arts Hub, was the first building on campus.

Researched and compiled by Lee Xian Jie, Editor.  
Photographs scanned from The Ngee Ann Story, The First 25 Years (1963-1988). With thanks to the Singapore Press Holdings Information and Resource Centre.

## 845 REGISTER FOR BLOOD DRIVE, BUT ONLY 500 TURN UP

**Kristie Michelle Chiew**

Just 500 bags of blood were donated this semester although 845 people registered.

“The wait to donate was long, and it might be why some people left the queue,” says Red

Cross Humanitarian Network, Ngee Ann Polytechnic Chapter President Adora Yeo, 20.

This blood drive was held in conjunction with the 45<sup>TH</sup> anniversary celebrations.

Cheryl Lim, 20, organiser of the blood drive, says, “It's the first time that we opened our doors to

the public for the blood drive. The response, both in school and at our other venues has been good.”

The team had worked with McDonald's outlets to publicise the drive in the western region of Singapore.

Leon Leong, 17, a Jurong Junior College student noticed

the Student Union's efforts in promoting the blood drive. “I saw it, and came right in,” he says.

Others sacrificed classes to donate blood. “We didn't expect the waiting time to take so long, but it's for a good cause,” says Ravindranath, 19, a second-year Mechanical Engineering student.

His friends, all members of the Rugby team, donated because they they egged each other.

Ian Law, 17, a second-year Logistics and Management student, flushed when asked why he donated. “To impress her,” he says, referring to a girl whom he is wooing.



# NEWS NP45

## THE EVENT

# A GREEN, GREEN NIGHT IT WAS



NPT / SAM WU



NPT / YEO KAIWEN



Nothing could hide the sinister smile of the Joker there to greet students at the NP@45 Green Party.

NPT / YEO KAIWEN

### Eunice Ng

A mysterious Joker at the rainforest-themed NP@45 Green Party at the Convention Centre on Oct. 31 injected new life into the week's celebrations, much to students' delight.

The Green Party was part of a series of events held from Oct. 29 to 31 to commemorate 45 years of teaching and learning at the polytechnic, as well as to promote environmental awareness.

The Joker, played by compere Joshua Simon, 18, a second-year Film, Sound & Video student, delivered the line, "Why so serious?" amid shouts of "I love you!".

Joshua had decided to surprise the Green Party's organisers with "something different" because the celebrations coincided with Halloween.

He says, "The organisers had no idea I was going to dress up as the Joker. I'm glad they didn't fire me on the spot when they saw me!"

Joshua was even approached by students asking if he was the mascot for the celebrations.

Also at the event was DJ KoFlow, who had opened for rapper Kanye West's concert two nights earlier.

Although DJ KoFlow did not manage to get all students up on their feet and dancing to the beat, students present said they came for his well-known music. "I admire DJ KoFlow. Sometimes

I go to Zouk just to listen," says Goh Xing Jun, 19, a second-year Aerospace Technology student.

### NP STUDENT AID FUND

Held on Oct. 28 and 29 at the Atrium, the Green Bazaar raised \$1,758 for the NP Student Aid Fund with games, a flea market, and the Ngee Ann Polytechnic Student Union's Wishing Tree.

The fundraising efforts during the celebrations netted \$52,284 in total. The cheque for the sum was presented to Principal Mr Chia Mia Chiang on Oct. 31. The polytechnic has pledged to match these contributes dollar for dollar.

Staff, students and alumni also planted 45 trees around the campus the same day. Recent

graduates and even alumni from the 60s' were invited to the event. Mr Hon Fook Khong, a lecturer from the School of Engineering helped plant one of the trees near the Sports Complex.

He said, "Everyone's talking about the environment. By planting trees, I hope we can help reduce carbon emissions too."



### ABOVEANDBEYOND

Students from the School of Film & Media Studies have created a coffee-table book with over 100 pages of full-color photographs about the polytechnic's overseas programmes.

"These experiences have changed the lives of students, staff, and also the people in the countries they have visited," says Mr Robin Yee, Deputy Director for External Relations at FMS. A total of 1,500 copies have been printed, but only 200 will be for sale. The first 100 copies are priced at \$30 each, and the next 100 at \$40 each. Place orders with Mr Yee at yxp@np.edu.sg.

Proceeds will go toward the NP Student Aid Fund.

### OUR ALUMNI

## "ONLY ONE RAMA, THE OTHERS ALL DRAMA"

That was the tagline his teachers had for him when he was in school.

KYLE LESLIE SIM reports

He fights for a cause that few bother about, let alone support, yet this has not dampened Roy Ramanathan's belief in saving the environment.

He insists that "helping the environment is neither a commitment, nor a task, but rather, it is a part of who I am".

Inspiring indeed, but with so many other more pressing issues out there, one might ask why he chooses to fight for the environment.

Ironically, he took up the cause because environmental issues were so unimportant eight years ago when he started. "I felt it was a bigger challenge to me to try and do something for nature rather than the disabled, or visually handicapped. They had enough people fighting for their cause as it was."

He has clearly been hard at work putting the world to rights, participating as the National Youth Achievement Award (NYAA) Youth representative to the United Nations Environment Programme

Tunza-South East Asia Youth Environment Network.

As recipient of Eco-friend Award last year for his contributions to the environment, this over-achiever has won a host of other awards and accolades from organisations such as the NYAA, Bayer and the National Environment Agency for his environmental work.

A graduate of Ngee Ann Polytechnic's Diploma in Marine Offshore Technology, Ramanathan, 26, who was invited back here for

*"I felt it was a bigger challenge to me to try and do something for nature rather than the disabled, or visually handicapped."*



## OUR ALUMNI

## Finding her feet in a sea of chaos

## SAILING AT THE EXTREME

Ong Chong Ern

She's tanned, she's muscular, and she looks like someone you do not want to mess with.

But Ms Elaine Chua, the first Asian to race a yacht around the world, likes to think of herself as a vegetable.

"I think I'm like a carrot," she said. "Brightly coloured, yet tough as a nut. When it comes to racing, I'm raw, hard, and uncooked. With people, I can be a soft, boiled carrot."

Ms Chua, 31, a former Business Studies student, returned for the 45<sup>TH</sup> anniversary celebrations.

The self-proclaimed average student is now living her dream and working with the best sailors around the world.

She is a project manager for ONE15 Singapore Ocean Race, the company that is organising the landmark Volvo Ocean Race in Singapore.

According to the Singapore Sailing Federation, the republic will make history as the first Southeast Asian stopover in the prestigious race.

In 1999, Ms Chua sailed around the globe in the 10-month BT Global Challenge ocean race, an incredibly gruelling race stretching from Buenos Aires through the Cape of Good Hope, and all the way to Wellington.

The thrill and excitement of sailing around the world attracted the then-amateur sailor, even though everyone else thought she was crazy.

"It was utterly ridiculous," she

admitted, "I had no prior sailing experience whatsoever. I also had to fork out £25,000 (\$59,000) for the ship's docking fee."

She decided to go for it, and it turned out to be the most memorable 10-month adventure of her life.

Even after training in England for nearly a year, nothing could prepare her for the unpredictability of the ocean.

"At sea, you can't expect what's coming next."

The sea tested her resolve and opened her eyes to the challenges of a long voyage.

She braved wicked storms, oncoming winds and waves twice as high as her ship.

"It made me grow up," she said.

"When it's smooth sailing, everyone's friendly to one another. But when the storm hits, when the going gets tough, you start seeing people's true selves. You learn how people really are."

Her biggest challenge was when she had a near-death experience.

"We were going against the wind and currents. I was sent up the mast to adjust the sail," she said.

Ms Chua fought to keep her hands around the mast, which was too big for her arms to grip properly.

She tried to time her movements with the heaving deck. Down below, the ship pounded into a double wave.

Ms Chua slipped and swung away from the boat 20 metres in the air, hanging only by a thin rope attached to her waist.

"I thought that was it," she said. "I was just swinging around



COURTESY OF ELAINE CHUA

Ms Elaine Chua forked out \$59,000 for her around-the-world sea voyage from Buenos Aires, Argentina, via the Cape of Good Hope, South Africa, all the way to Wellington, New Zealand, in 1996. She has been sailing since.

*"It was utterly ridiculous. I had no prior sailing experience whatsoever."*

and smashing into things."

By the time the crew lowered her, she was battered, bruised and had to take painkillers for a week.

After that incident, she gained a deep respect for the sea.

"Man thinks he rules the

world, but it's nature that really does. If you've no respect for the sea you'll be wiped out by the next wave," she said.

"The big waves and howling winds make you realise what a small insignificant speck you are."



COURTESY OF ELAINE CHUA

the 45<sup>TH</sup> anniversary celebrations, is now pursuing a degree in environmental engineering at the Nanyang Technological University. "Ngee Ann gave me the platform and opportunity to grow," he admits. "I went for the first three months at a junior college and decided that I did not want to be caged up in a classroom."

Where most of us have trouble juggling our CCA and studies, Ramanathan defies convention by not only being a member of the Ngee Ann Track & Field team and the Indian Cultural Society, but also becoming the Vice-president of both the Environmental Rangers Society and Marine Offshore Technology Society, and the Chairman of the Ngee Ann Students Union.

But Ramanathan's journey has not always been smooth. When he had problems settling in during his first semester, it was only with the support of his friends and advisor, Mr Subrata Chandra, that he managed to persevere.

Going to polytechnic gave him a chance to experience the real world. At Ngee Ann, I was given those opportunities", Ramanathan says.

He plans to continue his activism by using education and diplomacy to push policies which will benefit the environment both at home and eventually, on a global scale.

When asked if there was anyone special in his life to distract him from his work, Ramanathan admits that he has no time for girls, saying "when the time is right, I will find someone, but for now, I want to do things one at a time, to focus on what's important, because time is precious, and we should use it well."

But now he has bigger things on his mind than finding the right girl. He wants to change the apathy surrounding environmental issues.

With a rueful grin on his face, he quips, "All I can do is to be the change that I want to see in the world."



NPT / SAM WU

Roy Ramanathan, previously Ngee Ann Student Union chairman, is currently studying environmental engineering at the Nanyang Technological University.





## EDITORIAL

## Bus and train concessionary fares should be relooked

**T**RANSPORTATION is expensive, with bus and train fares climbing steadily, but polytechnic students are still paying adult prices up to 89 percent more than what their pre-university counterparts pay. Three years ago, a Ngee Ann student created an online petition calling for a fare reduction. More than 27,500 signatures have been collected since, but nothing has changed. In 1977, students from Singapore Polytechnic and the then Ngee Ann Technical College petitioned Singapore Bus Services (SBS) to charge pre-university and polytechnic students the same fares. SBS answered: "If we grant the concession to Poly and Ngee Ann students, we might have to extend this to the universities. This will mean a loss of \$3 million to \$4 million a year. Straightaway, we would run in the red." Last year, SBS Transit and SMRT Corporation posted a combined profit of more than \$200 million. Can they still justify the price difference? Concessionary fares should be standardised for all pre-university and tertiary students.

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## FORUM

## New 'Quiet Zones' at the Library

I refer to Benjamin Lim's letter from the last issue of npTribune, "Library not so quiet anymore". We thank him for his feedback.

The Library is demarcating two Quiet Zones on Level 3 for those who need a particularly quiet environment to study and do research. These Zones will be ready in mid-November.

However, we still require students to be civic-minded to minimise the noise levels.

The Lifestyle Library is intended to create an environment to inspire and motivate students to explore, read and enjoy.

Students may converge to take a break, relax, and re-energise in a comfortable environment, while still being immersed in mentally stimulating pursuits to expand their horizons.

The design concept of the Lifestyle Library facilitates social networking and positive interaction. Open discussion is allowed. For the Academic Library, we strive to maintain a pleasant and conducive learning environment for study and learning.

Our Library Security Officer (LSO) patrols the premises at regular

intervals to control the noise volume. Warning notices are issued for violation of library rules.

As the LSO may not be at particular hotspots at the required time, we require help from students to inform our library staff of the location with excessive noise level so that immediate action can be taken.

We look forward to students' co-operation so that every user can be proud of the Library.

**Agnes Ng**

*Circulation Manager  
Lien Ying Chow Library*

## Can creativity be taught?

Creativity and Applied Thinking Skills (CATS) is a compulsory module for all students.

But can innovation and creativity be taught at all? Many students like me feel that CATS is a silly module.

A vibrant and innovative economy is needed for

Singapore's survival, but the education system still produces an army of rigid thinkers and conformist workers.

A perspective change is needed, especially with CATS classes.

Can't policymakers see the paradox of teaching

CATS in a classroom with a fixed syllabus?

It asks us to "think out of the box". Those who advocate creativity should first step out of the box.

**Tay Xiong Sheng**

*Third-year Molecular  
Biotechnology student*

## IS replies: CATS goal not to produce 'cookie-cutter creativity'

I refer to Tay Xiong Sheng's letter, "Can creativity be taught?".

The notion that creativity can be 'taught' would indeed be paradoxical if it's taken to mean that one can simply impart knowledge to produce creative students.

The goal of the CATS module is not to produce 'cookie-cutter creativity' but to promote an environment for different creative ideas to be given a voice.

The syllabus provides a framework in which tutors are empowered to exercise a great deal of flexibility and freedom in how they conduct their classes.

The fact that creativity is

introduced in a classroom within the design of a fixed syllabus does not make it inconsistent with the intent to foster creativity.

A case in point would be how one would also find 'fixed syllabi' for classes which teach the visual arts, music, the performing and applied arts, all of which are creative disciplines.

A practitioner in the creative industry, Miss Tang Wai Wah, has this to say: "To live in an environment where there are no boundaries, one has to understand first the confines and limits. The classroom environment and its syllabus is the first

of a definition of a box, a boundary. Within this platform, the student is encouraged to innovate and create—in short—to cross boundaries."

For learning to take place, there has to be an open-minded attitude and a willingness to explore for an enriching experience, as opposed to a 'silly' module.

Perhaps a way to go about improving the module is for Xiong Sheng to give us some idea as to what he would like.

**Chong Claramae**

*Lecturer/Academic Manager  
School of Interdisciplinary  
Studies*





Have your say on the npTribune website: [theurbanwire.com/nptribune](http://theurbanwire.com/nptribune)

# VIEWS

## ARE WE REALLY GREEN?



**Sujith Kumar**

"Ngee Ann is never doing anything about the environment. They are wasting money on traffic lights and building an underpass that nobody uses," says Shah Nair, 19, a third-year Banking & Financial Services student.

Shah is not alone. He is just one of many who say the polytechnic can do more about environmental education and policies.

Being green is more than planting trees and bizarre bazaars. It is more than hosting campaigns calling for students to switch off unused appliances.

But the polytechnic has moved beyond ad-hoc projects and has some environmentally friendly initiatives.

It even clinched the Public Utilities Board Watermark Award in August.

Mr Alfred Tan, the chairperson of the 23-member Campus Green Team, says, "The award

shows we are a water-efficient institution."

But we seem focused on cutting cost, with the environment used as a convincing premise.

This fixation on cost belies a belief that environmental conservation is about dollars and cents, and less about climate conservation.

A senior-level school official had defended the lack of energy-efficient appliances in a previous interview with npTribune. He said, "We must not pay money to save money."

The official also said such appliances "may take up to eight to 10 years to recover costs"—interesting considering we paid \$5.1 million in utility bills for financial year 2007/2008—a rise of \$1.1 million from 2005/2006.

However, he did say that the campus looks at environmental impact caused by new building projects.

Students fare worse. They seem apathetic.

Few, if any, know what carbon offsetting means, or

what environmental organisations are fighting for.

The Environmental Rangers Society has failed miserably. Even its President, Muhammad Yusri Bin Mohd Hanif, 19, a second-year Horticulture and Landscape Management student, agrees, saying, "We have a bad record. It has been challenging, especially with our small membership."

To his credit, Yusri and his committee have succeeded in shaking the club out of limbo.

The club is currently working with Wildlife Reserves Singapore.

The polytechnic can take its first steps in creating a greener environment by adopting some pointers suggested by People & Planet, a United Kingdom-based student environmental lobby group. These steps include employing a full-time environmental manager, conducting an environmental audit, drafting an environmental

**\$5.1  
MILLION**

*The poly's  
utility bill for  
financial year  
2007/2008*



*We seem focused on cutting cost, with the environment used as a convincing premise.*

policy, and publicly showing its support of environmental goals.

The University of Cambridge and the University of Exeter are ranked highly in a survey commissioned by the group. These universities have hopped onto the green bandwagon, realising that public perception on their progressiveness is crucial to their reputation.

In the United States, at least two universities have substantial plans to go green.

The Oregon Institute of Technology announced in August that it would be the world's only school to be powered solely by geothermal energy. The University of Oklahoma also announced that its main campus would run entirely on wind energy.

I wonder—Will we grow beyond cost savings to real concern for the environment?

Will Ngee Ann ever walk in the footsteps of its overseas counterparts?

I guess we will just have to wait and see.

*The author interned at Greenpeace Australia Pacific for three months during the recent semestral break.*

## What kids need to know about dollars and sense



**Jananitha Sri Rengarajoo**  
Guest Writer

I have been a private tutor for four years now. I teach kids from as young as Primary Two all the way to Secondary Three. They pay \$80 each month for the two hours I spend with them every week.

Many people have advised me to increase my fees and stop giving tuition for free to students from poorer families.

Teaching these kids has been a roller-coaster ride. They may not be the brightest of the bunch, but they make my Saturdays worthwhile.

However, the idea about money and finances set me thinking. As much as I know that the main purpose of education is to impart knowledge and

comprehension, I know that these students have so much more to learn than what they have to memorise from their textbooks.

I then decided to impart some financial common sense to my students so that they will not fall into any potential traps. Maybe then, armed with such knowledge, these kids will be better able to break out of the poverty cycle.

What's more with the fall of Wall Street causing a tsunami of economic instability, shouldn't I be teaching my students a thing or two about finances?

I gave my Secondary Three students, who all moaned and groaned, a sheet of paper enclosed with five simple financial questions.

Some questions were as simple as "I increase my savings when I receive a salary increase; True/False" to something a bit more challenging, for instance "In general, what happens to bond prices when interest rates go up? a) Bond prices rise b) Bond prices fall c) Bond prices neither rise nor

*Shouldn't financial education begin earlier than at the polytechnic?*

fall. One of them scored 1 and the other, 2.

Honestly, how many of you know the answer to these questions?

It was very obvious that the young lack basic knowledge when it comes to financial education.

To tackle this problem, financial counseling avenues are available for one's perusal. It is indeed plausible that there is an avenue that one can turn to when in debt.

But is there anything that is being done to prevent them from getting into debt?

Shouldn't this then be, the focus of the parents, or the government, or schools?

Recently the Lien Ying Chow Library announced the opening of the Wealth Creation InfoCentre.

Armed with Virtual Investments Rooms and working closely with collaborative partners such as SGX, OCBC Securities and other Wealth Seminar Specialists, the library aims to educate students about finances.

Our students will have a great chance to learn about finances and financial literacy. But the real question is—should such education be taught at this age, or at an earlier stage?

After all, the idea of 'success', according to the youths nowadays, is measured not in terms of how hard you have studied, but instead in terms of material objects such the size of car, property, the bank account, and so forth.

Shouldn't financial education begin earlier, rather than at the polytechnic?

How about going back to the POSB Squirrel Savers' Club?



# GLOBAL

## “NO SUPERHEROES PLEASE”

Nur'atqah Ali

“If you’re expecting to be a Superman and save the world, this trip is not for you”, said Mr Paul Ng, lecturer-in-charge of Serve Cambodia 2008, in a matter-of-fact manner to the 60 student enthusiasts from the School of Business & Accountancy (BA).

He explained that the prime objective of the trip, held between Sep. 25 to Oct. 9, was to learn from their hosts, the Solid Rock Baptist Church and the Full Gospel Assembly Church, about the Cambodian culture and society.

The 20 students, handpicked from 60 applicants, soon found out that going on this trip would not be a breeze.

For a majority of these students, this was their first mission cum cultural trip.

For starters, they learnt basic Khymer. “The younger ones couldn’t communicate in English. So it was beneficial to learn their language so I can interact with them better,” says Rastus Chow, 18, a Banking & Financial Services student.

Students also put their first aid skills to use by attending to minor wounds of the Cambodian children as well as their own peers.

### LASTING IMPRESSIONS

While the students enjoyed working together to build roads to improve access and paint murals in the Bright Arrows Children Centre in Kampong Thom, it was the local children who left a lasting impression.

“It’s not as etched in our hearts as mingling with the Cambodian children,” shares Rastus’ twin, Rasmus Chow,

who attends the same course.

In the two weeks, they experienced rural life, helping out at two children’s centres by educating the children on basic hygiene and dental care on top of teaching them English, Chinese and mathematics.

They also helped to remove head lice from the children’s hair with treatment shampoo.

Serve Cambodia 2008 is organised annually by BA CARES, a BA community outreach committee. During these trips, students are encouraged to be committed members of society.

Lum Feng Lim, 18, a second-year Business Studies student, was so touched by the gentle and gracious nature of the Cambodians that she, together with the rest of the student volunteers, hopes to take a trip back there again to meet their very much missed Cambodian friends and engage in more volunteer work for the communities.



A Cambodian man washes a water buffalo along a stream. The villagers also do their laundry, bathe, and get their drinking water from the same river water which flows from Southeast Asia’s largest freshwater lake.

### CAMBODIA AN INCREASINGLY POPULAR DESTINATION FOR EXPEDITIONS

#### SCHOOL OF LIFE SCIENCES & CHEMICAL TECHNOLOGY

Together with two lecturers from the School of Life Sciences & Chemical Technology and BA students, 24 student volunteers reached out to a Cambodian home for orphans and widows in September. The health-and-hygiene mission under the Youth Expedition Project (YEP) saw these students armed with anti-worm tablets and bottles of treatment shampoo for head lice. For two weeks, students travelled an hour from Phnom Penh to the home to donate fresh medical supplies.

#### SCHOOL OF ENGINEERING MECHANICAL ENGINEERING

Mechanical Engineering students travelled to the island of Kom Rumdual, 20km south of capital city Phnom Penh, with two of their lecturers, from Sep. 22 to Oct. 6.

The 19 students laid foundations for the construction of walls to surround a school.

They also helped to refurbish the rundown hut of a disabled Cambodian widow on the island.

Using Service-Learning methodology, students learnt about different cultures and lifestyles in Cambodia.

#### SCHOOL OF ENGINEERING ELECTRONIC & COMPUTER ENGINEERING

Alongside Mechanical Engineering students, students from the Electronic and Computer Engineering division were involved in various community projects in Cambodia from Sep. 15 to 28.

The 29 students who went on the trip conducted English classes for local Khymer children, set up computers for them, and also taught computer lessons.

The students had also visited the homes of local families to learn about how locals live.



Floating communities in Chhnoktrou Commune directly use the lake water to cook and to drink. This lady is a grocer.

## The water and sanitation crisis through the lens of six students

Nur'atqah Ali

Imagine living in a community where sanitation is a nightmare: villagers fish and defecate in the same place.

There, a fifth of the children will die before their fifth birthday because of water-transmitted diseases.

That was what six students from the School of Film & Media Studies

experienced when they went to Cambodia from Sept. 1 to 11.

In their visit to the Tonlé Sap, a drinking water source for Cambodians, students gained a better understanding of the scarcity of clean, safe water.

“We even had to bathe with arsenic-contaminated river water,” says Chiam Sing Wei, 25, a third-year Film, Sound & Video student.

Together with two Lien Aid staff, the six students produced

three short documentaries about the non-governmental organisation’s water and sanitation programmes in three different provinces: Kampong Chhnang, Kandal and Kampong Speu.

They also captured stories of these villagers with photography and radio capsules to raise awareness about the chronic problems. In turn, they hope to inspire other Singaporean youths to improve

the situation in Cambodia.

“Although solving the crisis in its entirety is impossible, we hope we will be able to help them with our work,” says Yeo Kai Wen, 19, a third-year Mass Communication student, who is also npTribune’s Photo Editor.

Mr Craig McTurk, the lecturer-in-charge says he was impressed with the students’ willingness to overcome language and cultural barriers.

### VIVOCITY EXHIBITION

“The Demon in the Water” photographic exhibition, will tell the story of water and sanitation issues Cambodia faces.

It will be held from Nov. 27 to Dec. 3 at Vivocity. The exhibition will also include toilet seat art by students from the Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts and LASALLE College of the Arts.



See the lives of the Cambodians through the eyes of npTribune Photo Editor **YEO KAI WEN** during an FMS reporting trip to Cambodia



Every Cambodian family is unique in their own way. This family sells an important staple: rice.



A cow grazes by the river as a group of fishermen set out to work. Each fisherman catches about 2 kg of fish each day.



A boy baths in the arsenic-contaminated river in Chroy Takeo Commune, Kandal Province.



COURTESY OF JEREMY TOH

Students who went on the trip travelled using different modes of transportation. They are photographed here on a ferry, but they usually travelled around on shuttle buses, and even public buses.

## Lecturer shows motherly love for students in trip to Wuhan

**Candice Lee**

"I barely understood a single word," Kenneth Chan, 18, says, referring to the fast and furious pace in which the Chinese natives spoke.

"Even the African exchange students spoke more fluent Chinese than the bunch of us who were ethnically Chinese," he added sheepishly.

"The bunch" refers to 20 second-year Mass Communication students, who were in Wuhan, Hubei province during the semestral break.

They left for Wuhan on Aug. 23 accompanied by their lecturer, Mrs Sng Poh Yoke, and spent six weeks at Wuhan University, one of China's top 10 universities.

The students were required to take a core module, Feature Writing, taught by Mrs Sng, as

well as two Interdisciplinary Studies modules—Chinese Political System, and Chinese Culture and Society. Both modules were conducted by Wuhan University lecturers.

Joshua Tan, 18, one of the student photographers for the trip, thought the modules were helpful to him as President of the Ngee Ann Debating Club.

"We really loved learning about calligraphy and spending a few hours with a Taichi instructor there," says Apple Ong, 18, who also gushes about all the shopping and eating they did over there.

Fun aside, Mrs Sng thought that Wuhan was a great learning environment especially since it is "not as well-known as Beijing or Shanghai, so the students really had to immerse themselves in the environment."

The immersion resulted in two magazines put together by the

students: Trippers and EXcapades. Future students going to Wuhan will be able to refer to their advice and stories in the magazines.

### MRS SNG'S DINNERS

When asked about challenges, Kenneth recalls, "The toughest part would have to be learning to be independent in a foreign land."

"We literally built a home for ourselves in six weeks," adds Jesley Zheng, 18. Her fondest moments include the dinners that Mrs Sng whipped up for the group whenever time permitted.

Lecturer and students stayed next door to one another. Jesley recalls Mrs Sng being like a mum—anyone who needed to speak to her was welcome to knock on the door at all hours.

Indeed, the 20 students returned with stronger bonds, and definitely better Chinese-speaking skills.

*"Even the African exchange students spoke more fluent Chinese than the bunch of us who were ethnically Chinese."*

**Kenneth Chan**, 18, second-year Mass Communication student





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# NPEOPLE

# They come here in hope of freedom

The Burmese community in Ngee Ann is 200-strong, and growing. **JEREMY BOO** finds out more about their community and how they live

For 20-year-old Tint Htoo Aung, home is a rented Bukit Panjang flat shared with five other Burmese friends.

It is past 11 pm and the second-year Mechatronic Engineering student has just reached home after his part-time cashiering job.

The Myanmar national is one of 7,000 Burmese who have come to Singapore to study, according to The Straits Times (ST) on Oct. 11.

In their four-room apartment, handwritten signs in Burmese remind them to switch off the lights. Beneath a portrait of the Buddha, free weights rest near the doorway where sneakers fan out untidily. A small coffee table, a sofa, and television set fit snugly in the living room.

Htoo's speciality is soup. He prepares traditional Burmese fish soup with ingredients his mother had sent him from

Myanmar, while his classmate Htet San Wai fries corn.

At 21, "Grandpa" San Wai is the oldest and handles rental and billing issues.

Most of them come from Yangon, Myanmar. The six met each other when they arrived in school here more than two years ago.

They have been sharing this apartment for about a year to keep expenses low.

By midnight, supper is ready. Dishes are laid out on a table that doubles up as a study desk.

## BURMESE BOND IN NP

According to the president of Ngee Ann Polytechnic Myanmar (NPMM) President Zayar Min, there are about 200 Burmese students in the polytechnic, many of whom are members.

NPMM is a student-initiated group that encourages social



Htet San Wai, Zayar Phyto Kelvin, and Pyae Phyto Aung (from left to right) share a rented four-room flat in Bukit Panjang with three other Burmese friends.

bonding among Burmese students.

The ST report also said middle-class families in Myanmar are taking out all they have to send their children to Thailand, Malaysia and Singapore to study.

Two decades ago, the military government divided major universities into smaller schools across the nation when students protested against them.

The revolution, which happened on Aug. 8, 1988, is known as the 8888 Uprising.

Rangoon University, once the most prestigious university in Southeast Asia throughout the 1940s and 1950s, now lies in tatters.

"The junta wants people to be uneducated," says Owain, 18, a second-year Business Process and Quality Engineering student, who declines to disclose his Burmese name for fear of reprisals against his family.

"I feel sad thinking about my country," says NPMM Vice-president Zayar Phyto Kelvin, 20.

He was born two months after the 8888 Uprising.

While they were rushing his mother to the hospital just before he was born, his family had to tie a white cloth on the ambulance to show that they were not involved.

## 'ANYTHING BUT POLITICS'

Parents tell their children that they can do anything when they are in Singapore, but they must not engage in politics. On the issue of Burmese

*"Every Burmese person is not happy with the government. But we must be sensitive to our host country."*

**Ms Swe Swe Min**

Life Sciences & Chemical Technology lecturer

dissidents, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Home Affairs Wong Kan Seng said in a written response in Parliament that the government "has rightly decided that such persons are undesirable and that they should leave."

The Burmese students also fear repercussions for speaking out against their own government in Singapore.

"If we do anything political here, we cannot go back to Myanmar and our families will suffer," says Kyaw Waiyan Htet, 19, a Civil & Environmental Engineering student.

According to an online media release by Singapore-based political activist group Overseas Burmese Patriots, a part-time polytechnic student had to leave Singapore in August because his visas were not renewed.

Burmese students in the polytechnic say that they have no intention of joining any political activist group. "Every Burmese person is not

happy with the government. This is something we have in common," says Life Sciences & Chemical Technology lecturer Ms Swe Swe Min, "But we must be sensitive to our host country. We should be mindful when we express our opinion about our government."

Despite current circumstances, many Burmese people have a very strong sense of belonging and community, she says.

They still hope of returning to a peaceful and free Myanmar.

"I keep my hope for that day the military steps down. It will happen in 10, if not 20 years," says Waiyan.

Soe Thet San, 20, an Electronic & Computer Engineering graduate who was top student in her course, plans to either work in the public health or education sector, or set up a non-governmental organisation when she returns to Myanmar.

Until then, the 2008 Golden Graduate award winner says, "I need, I must do well to get out of this darkness."

*"I need, I must do well to get out of this darkness."*

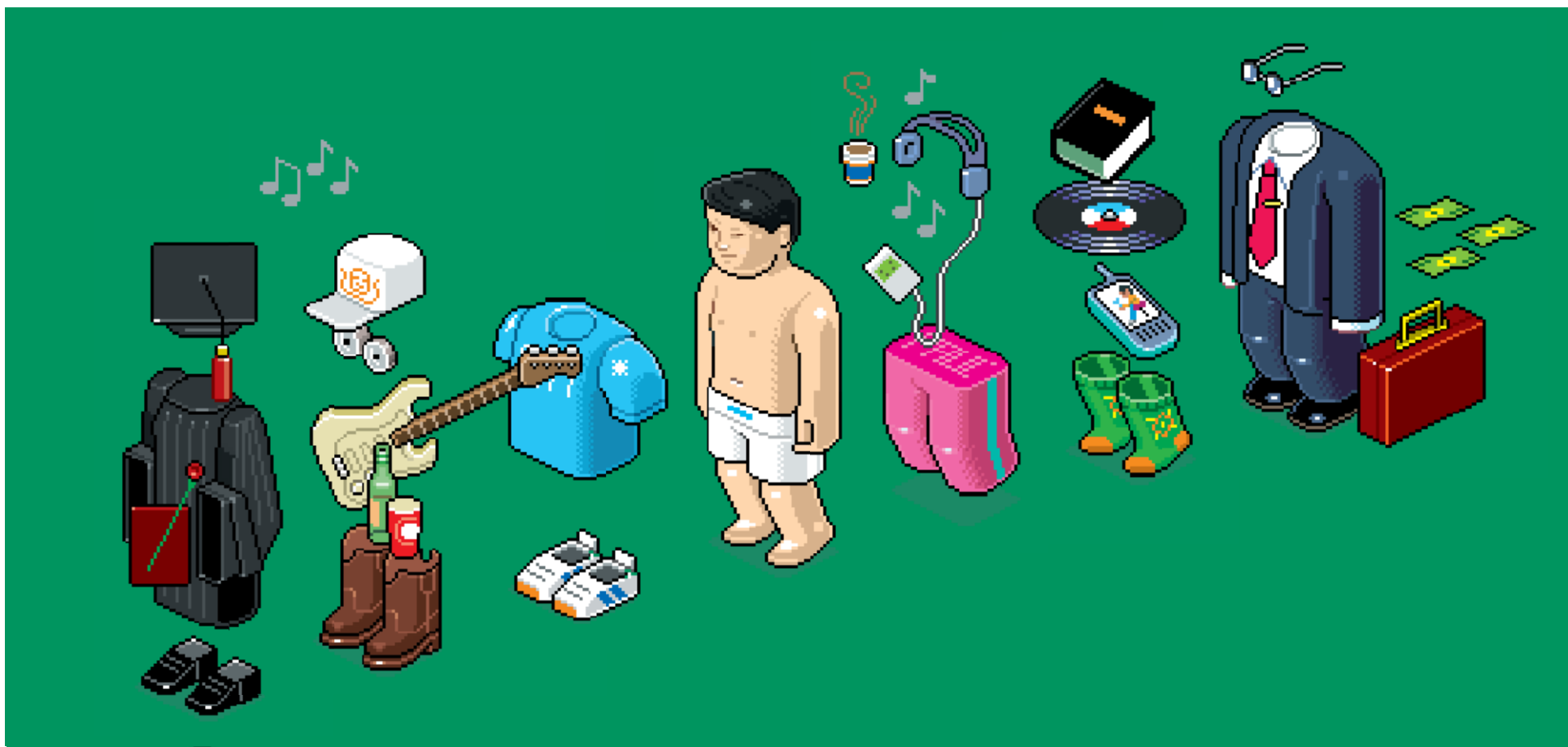
**Soe Thet San, 20**

Electronic & Computer Engineering  
Golden Graduate 2008



When taking a break from hours of study, the six sometimes play World of Warcraft together.





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# NPEOPLE

## GROOMING AMID THE GLOOM

Pampering is a must in times of stress, some students say

**Nadia Shah**

To get anywhere, all Lynn Tham has to do is wave her arm and pop into the next cab that stops for her.

The third-year Business Studies student does not believe in taking the bus or the train, simply because "it's a waste of time".

Lynn spends at least \$30 on cabs every day, and, since the beginning of this year, has been going for regular spa treatments, spending over \$100 each time.

The 19-year-old says nonchalantly, "Going to the spa is a form of de-stressing, so when I feel tense because of school, I just drop by. In fact, even when I'm not stressed, I make it a point to go to the spa at least once a month.

"It's become a way of life for me. I believe life is short and you need to give yourself time to relax."

Lynn also goes for manicure and pedicure treatments "when my friends and I have nothing better to do", which translates to once every one or two months. She spends \$40 per visit.

Her income comes in the form



NPT POSED PHOTO / YEO KAI WEN

*"When I need to shop, I just go to my dad for more money."*

**Lynn Tham**

Third-year Business Studies student

of \$200 weekly allowance from her father, which does not include cab fare and shopping money.

"When I need to shop, I just go to my dad for more money."

Her latest splurge? A \$400 pair of True Religion jeans.

Lynn is not the only student in love with pampering herself. But with dark economic clouds heading our way, one can only wonder if students will

start focusing more on saving rather than splurging to shine.

Claire Chong, 19, a final-year Business Studies student says, "I don't think the economic recession will affect students much, especially since most of us get allowance from our parents."

Claire has no qualms forking out about \$500 a month on online clothes shopping from brands like Forever 21, American

Apparel and Urban Outfitters.

She also goes for manicure and pedicure treatments fortnightly, spending about \$100 on trimming and beautifying her nails each month.

The money comes from her monthly \$700 allowance, while her earnings from her part-time job as a shop assistant go towards saving for further education.

Claire is not the only student with a burning fetish for claws and clothes.

Greta Yap, 19, a third-year Marine & Offshore Technology student, says, "I believe in looking presentable and carrying myself off well. Girls especially like to comment on the way other girls look, so I'd rather not be seen as someone who doesn't take her appearance seriously."

Because of this, she goes for pedicures every three weeks, paying \$15 each time, and shops three to four times a week. Each month, she throws \$400 on fashion labels like Miss Selfridge and Topshop.

"That's not a lot, right?"

To fund her fashionista desires, she works part-time at Build-A-Bear and IndoChine and earns about \$500 monthly. In addition, she gets \$400 a month from her parents.

Greta says with a cheeky grin, "I still can't save even with all that money. I admit I'm a bit of a spendthrift."

While shopping, spa treatments and manicures are relaxing past times, another form of pampering comes in the form of pain and needles—getting inked.

### TATTOOS TOO

Leona Augusty, 20, a third-year Nursing student has already spent \$180 on a tattoo of a cross on her left shoulder, but plans to modify it for another \$200.

She also wants to get another one or two new tattoos sometime within the next year, for up to \$500 each, as well as a belly button piercing for at most \$70.

She says, "They're a form of art and a way for me to express myself."

But Leona admits she will "think twice if they get more expensive", adding, "I won't be so ready to spend so much on something that I know could be a lot cheaper."

Shawn Tan, 19, a final-year Bio-medical Science student agrees thinking twice is the way to go.

He says, "Spending money on pampering yourself may be fine for now, but when the economic recession hits, continuing to do so will just put extra financial burden on our parents."

### BIZ+TECH

## The new face(book) of online businesses

**Kristie Michelle Chiew**

With 944 members in Ngee Ann Polytechnic related groups alone, it is no wonder that an increasing amount of students are starting businesses on Facebook, and hoping for a big break there.

Most start using Facebook to build relationships, keep in touch with clients, and to get feedback from their customers.

Instead of using email lists, student entrepreneurs are choosing to post party invitations and make announcements through their Facebook pages.

Even Stanford University announced in September a new class for business students that will teach them how to develop Facebook applications.

"Facebook offers us a platform to build publicity, and stir awareness within groups," says Paul Chen, 20, a third-year student Business Studies student.

Paul works part-time for Fight Club, Fightsg, a media company that reports on the local Muay Thai scene. He uses Facebook to plan his events.

He says, "I use it to invite people, post discussion threads, and upload videos of recent fights." Paul also says

he uses Facebooks to start competitions, and offer prizes.

Budding entrepreneurs also find the creation of interest groups useful. All Facebook members can create interest groups and fan pages. These pages help strangers with similar interests get together.

Sebastian Teow, 18, a second-year Business Studies student, and one of the owners of Dippit Avenue, a doughnut and tidbit stand, uses interest groups to do market research.

While exploring Facebook pages, he learnt what his student customer base liked and disliked about his food.

Facebook also helped him further understand the doughnut craze that descended on Singapore.

"We started with Friendster, but since Facebook came up, our online marketing is now stronger," Sebastian says. When groups supporting the doughnut craze were set up, Sebastian used them to see if his own 'Dippit' branding was effective. He says, "Now when people see us in school, they go 'Hey! They're the Dippit guys!'"

Sheryl Tan, 19, is a third-year Business Studies student. She owns an online fashion blog shop called VineyardCo, and has hosted it on Livejournal.

She is now looking to expand her reach beyond blogs, and wants to bring her catalogue onto Facebook.



NPT / YEO KAI WEN

**Sheryl Tan, 19, a third-year Business Studies student sells clothes and fashion accessories with help from Facebook.**

Sheryl started with Facebook in August. Now her group boasts 79 members. With the exception of a few Australians, most are local customers. Almost all buy regularly from her.

Sheryl explains, "If I want to get my message out fast, I just send a mass email on Facebook." She adds, "Facebook is free, so I can potentially reach millions. Imagine how many more people can view my catalogues."



# NPEOPLE INSPIRING TEACHERS

## Growing up with CHARLIE BROWN

Meet the lecturer who sees the Peanuts kid as his mascot in life.

By **NG YAN HONG**

The side of his living room is an astonishing sight to behold: a customised wooden bookshelf covers the wall, housing over a hundred plush toys, dolls, and rare figurines.

Mr Chong Ching Liang, a School of Interdisciplinary Studies lecturer, received his first Charlie Brown doll when he was in Primary Five. It was this gift that ignited his fanaticism in collecting toys, especially his stash of the Peanuts gang, which has four levels of the shelf to themselves.

"I was one of the eBay pioneers in the mid-90s," said Mr Chong, "When I first started, it was compulsive buying and I never kept track." True enough, it was easy to spot quite a number of 'stray kids' lying around the house.

His wife, Sharon, also shares his passion for all the little trinkets.

"The Pokémon ones are Sharon's because she loves that little one," Mr Chong chuckled, pointing at the top of the shelf.

Like most people, the couple met at work. In their case, while they were both at the National Archives of Singapore. He was a Research Officer at the Oral History Centre, while she was in the Audio Visual Archives department.

"We started as friends. After four years, we start to see each other as more than friends. We felt that we would be very comfortable growing old together," he says.

Despite the kiddy treasure trove, the 41-year-old lecturer teaches modules related to politics and current affairs, and even keeps up with Thai politics.



**Mr Chong Ching Liang and his wife sit together with a Charlie Brown doll, Mr Chong's first Peanuts character. The Interdisciplinary Studies lecturer has travelled with the doll overseas on many occasions.**

Back in the 80's, Thai construction workers and prostitutes were being treated poorly and unfairly, so Mr Chong felt it crucial that he became a social worker or a researcher to help people understand the situation.

"I want to get everyone to think. Politics and current affairs aren't subjects you can mug," said Mr Chong.

During his school days, Mr

Chong was already linked to the Peanuts character—long before his collecting frenzy even started.

"I had a hairless big round head when I was a kid, so Charlie Brown became my nickname. A lot of people got it wrong: It wasn't Snoopy that started it," he says.

Mr Chong had expanded his collection to all the Peanuts kids because they were rare collectibles.

It was also partly because Snoopy

has always been in the limelight, but the children are often ignored. Soon, the character always seen as "a permanent case of bad luck" became a huge part of his life.

"I see Charlie Brown not as the born loser, but as someone who never gives up despite being given a very raw deal all the time," Mr Chong says.

Having grown up with the Peanuts underdog, he uses

Charlie Brown as a reminder that even though being a teacher might be difficult at times, he will never give up.

Says Mr Chong, "We can breeze through classes and not care, or we can be acutely sensitive to how we can coax students to be better than our generation."

The Peanuts fanatic has dreams. "I want to change the world—one person at a time," he says.

### OUT ON A LIMB

## KEVJN LIM

From rioting to dealing with riots, war zone delegate Kevjn Lim has come a long way from his early years as a delinquent,  
**NADIA SHAH** reports

Rioting, fighting, glue-sniffing and shoplifting.

These are just some of the many messes Kevjn Lim was involved in as a student in the Assumption English School.

For his delinquency, he was placed in the school's boarding home, Boy's Town, which "came complete with a disciplinary regime".

But the now 29-year-old war zone delegate of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), which dedicates itself to helping victims of war and armed violence, has no regrets.

In an email interview with npTribune, he said, "Boy's Town turned my life around. It was there that I decided that my Mandarin was so bad that I wanted to diversify and compensate."

He added jokingly, "I ended up over-diversifying and overcompensating."

While he used to fail Mandarin, Kevjn is now a

proficient speaker of over 10 languages, including Hebrew, Arabic and French—a skill that got him the job with the ICRC in June last year.

He was then sent to the West Bank, where his work consisted of "detention visits to Palestinian prisoners and the protection of the civilian population".

### NOW IN WAR-TORN DARFUR

Kevjn is now based in the Darfur region in western Sudan, where he arrived in September.

On his second day there, an armed car-jack involving a United Nations land-cruiser took place right in front of his group's premises.

Since then, they have been moving around in rented unmarked vehicles to stay under the radar.

Such is the danger that Kevjn faces while performing duties such as tracing missing people to reunite them with





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# NPEOPLE

Don't mess with

# MY LITTLE ARM

Jeremy Boo

It is easy to spot Ms Elise Michelle Novitski from a distance, even in a crowded canteen.

Her empty left sleeve seizes your attention and does not let go, even as you attempt to politely avert your eyes.

"I call it my little arm," she says.

The Mechanical Engineering lecturer, and recent Yale University Physics major, was born with a 16 cm stump for her left arm. Her disability does not seem to have disadvantaged her in any way, even as a child.

"The doctors are not sure what caused it. I'm born with it but it's not genetic. It's just a mystery—one of those things that happen to people," says the International Fellow, who is in her twenties, matter-of-factly.

"Nobody really bothered me. I honestly think I was scary. I was outgoing, aggressive and bossy," she admits. "I used to crush cookies with my prosthetic arm to intimidate other kids."

Her prosthetic arm was a heavy piece of machinery that she hated to wear. "It never felt like an arm to me. It felt more like a thing stuck to my arm," she says. "I would go to school wearing it and come back carrying it."

She stopped wearing it when she turned eight.

Because Ms Novitski never knew how it is like to have two functioning arms, she learnt how to do everyday things with one. While tying a ponytail with her

right hand and left shoulder, she says, "The things I do look awkward to others, but it's normal to me."

Earlier, she used her stump to hold a fork in place while she cut her chicken *murtabak* into small chunks with her other arm.

"The left arm is redundant," Ms Novitski declares.

This confidence is why she does not feel self-conscious when she meets her class of second-year students.

"You can call me Ms N, if you find it hard to pronounce my name," she tells her Applied Mechanics tutorial class on the first week of school.

Sitting in the front row is 19-year-old Ivan Ho. He wonders about what happened but decides not to ask. "It is too personal," he concludes.

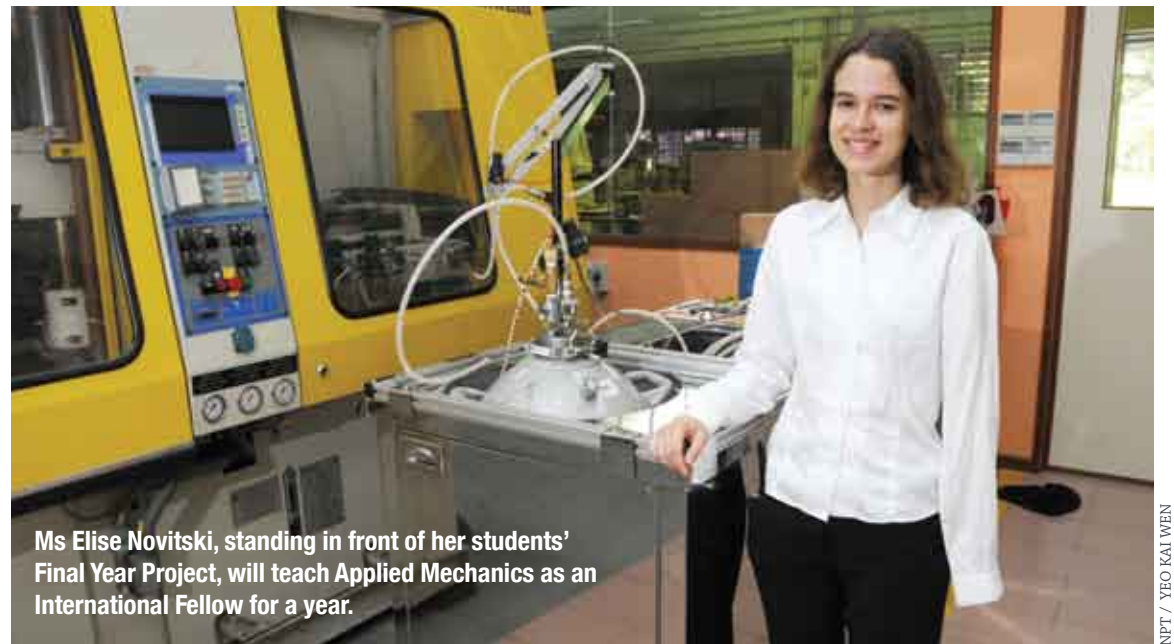
The students seem more interested knowing her as a person. "Yale? Wow," the class gasps in whispered awe when they learn about her alma mater.

"Let's get on to rules," Ms Novitski says. She rapidly types something in her laptop. She can type quickly but excessive use of her right hand has resulted in *ulnar neuritis*, a repetitive stress injury.

Voting determines the rules. Ms Novitski tells the class that their learning is her priority, "I want you to vote against anything that distracts you."

This means students can eat in class if they think that it is not distracting. If they feel that certain foods are distracting, only those are banned.

The students shortlist a



Ms Elise Novitski, standing in front of her students' Final Year Project, will teach Applied Mechanics as an International Fellow for a year.

NPT / YEO KAI WEN

*"I used to crush cookies with my prosthetic arm to intimidate other kids."*

few rules and cast their votes on paper. The rules apply to everybody, including herself.

Ms Novitski can probably empathise with the students' dislike of dogmatic rules. The American took part in an anti-war demonstration in 2003 when the United States invaded with Iraq.

"I just got off class and there were people on the lawn. They were shouting reasons not to invade Iraq. I joined them and chanted anti-war slogans."

"War, no matter how good the intention, causes terrible collateral damage. Buildings are bombed

and civilians, killed," she says.

The war has also negatively impacted one of her biggest passions in life: Physics.

"The government funds physics experiments. When the war started, Congress decided not to increase budget for these experiments despite inflation," she says.

As a result, operations at Fermi National Accelerator Laboratory (Fermilab), a major energy laboratory specialising in particle physics, had to be scaled back drastically. Experiments were suspended. People lost their jobs.

"The war and Fermilab's funding problems are not directly related, but when you spend more on one thing, you have to spend less on another," she reasons.

Like both her parents and two older sisters, Ms Novitski had voted for President-elect Mr Barack Hussein Obama.

Even though she was born with a "little arm", Ms Novitski seems very contented.

She says, "My work is worthwhile and I am getting the chance to explore the world, and I have family and friends who love me."

"What more can I ask for?"



COURTESY OF KEVJN LIM

Kevjn Lim, a Mass Communication graduate, is the only Singaporean war zone delegate at the Geneva-based ICRC.

their families and coordinating water and health projects.

Not a typical career path one would expect a Mass Communication graduate to take.

It was during his years in Ngee Ann—1998 to 2001—that Kevjn met the man he describes to be "by far the best teacher I've ever had who has influenced me profoundly", Mr Desmond Kon.

The adjunct lecturer, 37, who now teaches Book Writing and Publishing via the Internet from the United States, shared his opinion of Kevjn, "I always found Kevjn so refreshing as an individual because he was so open to discovery and change. He has become a fond friend whom I respect immensely."

The polytechnic also inspired Kevjn to find his true calling—dedicating his life to helping others.

In Dec. 2000, he went on a trip with a group of Ngee Ann Polytechnic students to a tiger reserve in northern India and

an adventure camp in the Himalayas. A month later, Gujarat, a state in India, was shaken by an 8.1 magnitude earthquake.

Kevjn said, "A very good friend and I, along with some people from the Indian Cultural Society, decided to pull off an island-wide appeal and collection of supplies."

"This went through and turned out to be one of the best days of my life. I decided I wanted to do this as a career."

Asked what he likes about his job, he rattled on, "The immense sense of fulfilment, getting to travel to places nobody in their right mind would normally visit and to put myself out on the line for a cause. Plus, the fact that it comes with a full salary."

Kevjn has certainly come a long way since his early years as a delinquent.

Mr Kon said: "My hope for Kevjn is the same for any student whom I've taught. I wish he embraces life, and learn to love himself and others."





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# NPEOPLE

## Lunch haunts revealed

After three years, **KYLE LESLIE SIM** says canteen food is starting to taste eerily alike. He checks out the Principal's and two lecturers' favourite lunch spots

### TO THE PRINCIPAL

Dear Mr Chia,

I have revealed your secret lunch spot to everyone, and I must admit that your taste in food is impeccable. It's my duty to share this wonderful find. (Please don't kick me out of school.)

Yours Sincerely,  
Kyle Sim



**10%**  
Off all items on the menu for npTribune readers. DEC '08 only.  
\*Show NP student/staff pass when ordering

NPT / YEO KAI WEN

### **MR CHIA MIA CHIANG EATS AT NEW GARO JAPANESE RESTAURANT CHUN TIN RD (OPP. BEAUTY WORLD)**

If you lunch at Canteen One, then you have already had a taste of New Garo. The Japanese stall there is operated by the same owners! The standard of food though, is vastly different from the actual restaurant.

The first thing to know if you go to New Garo is that the ala-carte menu is on the pricy side. That said, their lunch sets are value for money—and the *bentos* are what Mr Chia goes for. Lunch specials change every month and start from \$13.

For that, you get a choice of two main dishes, a smaller

side dish of the day and the standard miso soup and fruits.

The Oyakodon with tempura (\$16), was decent: Juicy chicken with egg cooked in shoyu and mirin over warm sticky rice. The tempura was nicely done, a mix of light batter and crisp prawns.

But the real winner at New Garo has to be the Shioik maki (\$15). It is almost the perfect sushi roll: Sweet, tender unagi with thick buttery avocado slices wrapped in rice and salmon sashimi all topped off with a very generous dressing of Japanese mayonnaise and tobiko.

Ho Soo Keng, 19, a second-year Biomedical Science student, who is also a frequent patron, says, "It's just so *shiiki*!"

**Open daily 10 am - 2:45 pm and 5 pm - 9:30 pm.**

### **MS MICHELLE KOH EATS AT NEW LUCKY CLAYPOT RICE BLK 328, CLEMENTI AVENUE 2**

There is something about claypot rice that makes me drool. Fluffy white rice, topped with *lap cheong* (chinese sausage), juicy chicken thigh and pickled mustard, the intense mix fused in one claypot, seals in the goodness.

Tucked away in a nondescript *kopitiam*, New Lucky still does a roaring trade even after 32 years. They have a die-hard fan in Health Sciences lecturer Ms Michelle Koh. She says, "My colleagues and I eat here every month. My husband is a foodie and he loves this place".

Having called half-an-hour in advance, a large claypot was brought out to our table the moment we arrived. The chicken claypot for two (\$10) was enough for four. Spoon on dark soy sauce, mix, and dig in.

**Open 1 pm - 1:30 pm, 5 pm - 9 pm.**

**Closed on Wednesdays. Reservations: 6778-7808.**



NPT / JOSHUA TANG

### **MR MIRKO STOLL EATS AT TASTY THAI HUT BUKIT TIMAH FOOD CENTRE, #02-159**

Life Sciences & Chemical Technology lecturer Mr Mirko Stoll says his favourite "has to be the basil chicken".

Everything is priced at \$4, and Mrs Chon-Chom, the owner of Tasty Thai Hut, says keeping her menu to only eight dishes ensures quality.

The green curry here is made fresh every morning. Whole fresh chicken is stewed in coconut milk with herbs and spices for an aromatic blend rich in flavour and texture.

Order rice to go along with it or grab Mrs Chon-Chom's beautifully presented pineapple rice.

She does justice to this dish: fragrant buttery rice is served with large juicy prawns all topped off with pork floss, raisins and cashew nuts.

**Open 10:30 am - 9 pm**

**(while stocks last).**

**Closed on Wednesdays.**



NPT / KYLE SIM

### PLAYS

## 9 short stories and a multitude of emotions

**Muhammad Siraj**

Instead of sticking with the tried-and-tested method of presenting just a play, the Poly Stage F'actor (PSF) has produced a play with not one, but nine original scripts.

"We could always use the foreign plays," says Ms Serena Ho, 29, the artistic director of PSF. "However, writing on paper and acting for stage are two very different things, so through this we are able to find the truth in our writing."

The production was staged at the Lecture Theatre 26 on Nov. 7 and 8.

The production, "*Whatever Lor!*", was an idea that was "never fixed, but had slowly evolved," says Ms Ho.

"Most of the pieces you see are based on students' experience and observations of life. Its about giving them a platform to show how they translate their world on stage," Ms Ho adds.

### SPOOFING GRANDMOTHERS

"The stories in the production are more of us spoofing reality, yet not exaggerating it," says Ng Lye Ee, 18, a scriptwriter in the production. Lye Ee's skit is a caricature of her grandmother in her daily life.

"My grandma is different; she is very dramatic. She's not the kind of caring grandma you see on television, protecting their grandchildren. She is the total opposite of the stereotype," says Lye Ee, a second-year Mass Communication student.

"She can be verbally abusive and self-centred, but she has toned down," explains Lye Ee, "Her character is surprising and is something people will enjoy watching."

The skit, subtitled in English, was performed in Cantonese and Hokkien. Lye Ee says, "Cantonese and Hokkien may not be as graceful as the English language, but they lend a certain culture to the play."

PSF will donate the proceeds from ticket sales to the NP Pocket Money Fund.



NPT / BRIAN CHEONG

## MAGICALLY ERIC KHOO

The visiting Singaporean filmmaker inspires students, reports **TEO HONG JUN**

"Keep making those short films," advises Mr Eric Khoo, Director of locally-produced film, *My Magic*, who talked to students at the Convention Centre on Oct. 20.

His latest film *My Magic* is Singapore's official submission to the Oscars, despite poor reception at local theatres.

Mr Khoo, who started out as a director for television commercials, got into the film

business because of short films.

"I really started with the Singapore International Film Festival (SIFF)," he said.

Mr Khoo added, "If you look at a lot of the filmmakers, like Royston Tan, Kelvin Tong and even Jack Neo, all of them had submitted shorts."

It was in the short film competition held by Mr Philip Cheah, former director of the SIFF, that



COURTESY OF GOLDEN VILLAGE

Mr Khoo's short films first won awards. The awards eventually got him on the festival circuit where he got noticed by the

Venice Film Festival and eventually Cannes Film Festival.

Mr Khoo also said that the "most important thing is not to be jaded by the glamour".

Nur Adilah Bte Sardli, 18, a second-year Film, Sound & Video student, says, "Meeting him and listening to his stories about the filming *My Magic* was inspiring because I want to be in the film industry too."



## SPORTS



Know sportsmen who deserve to be on this page? Email [nptribune@gmail.com](mailto:nptribune@gmail.com)

# THE IRONMAN WHO COULD

## SPORTSPEOPLE

Giving up taekwondo was just the start. **JEREMY BOO** speaks to the second-dan black belt about his first plunge into triathlons

When third-year Mechanical Engineering student Ng Zhaomu wanted to join a sport two-and-a-half years ago, the swim team turned him down. "We are not a swim school," they said.

Wandering around the CCA fair, he spied mounted bicycles at a booth and mistook it for a cycling club. Tri Elite founder-president Keith Hsu had to explain what a triathlon was. "I really can't swim. Is that a problem?" Zhaomu asked.

The club, desperate for members, took him in.

Less than three years later, the nineteen-year-old qualified for the Ironman 70.3 World Championship - one of the world's most demanding triathlons. Held in Florida on Nov. 8, the endurance race comprises a 1.9 km swim, 90 km bike ride, and a 21.1 km run.

Even in his triumph, Zhaomu remembers his first Tri Elite training session.

### FIRST PLUNGE

He had started like a frightened child, gripping the kickboard tightly as he looked into the depths of the swimming pool. He would keep kicking, but barely moved.

He finally swam a lap a few days later. It left him struggling for breath.

At the second session, he was immediately placed on the track

after he dragged himself out of the water.

"Let's go for a short run," the others said. What the others perceived as a 2.4 km jaunt turned out to be something he did only once a month. The week after, they ran to Sentosa and back to campus.

Within a month, he competed in his first biathlon. He never slowed down.

Zhaomu cycles 90 km everyday, and runs or swims in the evening. He sleeps four hours each night. "The tougher the training is, the more 'man' I feel," he says.

He wakes every morning at 4 am, grabs his bike helmet and orange 25-litre backpack that hangs on a wall-mounted bike rack in his room. He is out of the door in 15 minutes.

Zhaomu cycles to Longhouse, an eatery at Upper Thomson Road, where he meets 20 other cycling companions every day at 5 am. They cycle through Mandai, Lim Chu Kang, and Orchard Road.

Then he goes to school, and spends the three hours after class with either the swim or track team. He reaches home at 10 pm.

### WINS AND LOSSES

The doorway of the Bukit Batok flat, which he lives in with his parents, is cluttered with more than 20 pairs of running shoes. Some are for short-distances, others for triathlons.



*"The tougher the training is, the more 'man' I feel," says Zhaomu*

His medals hang on a four-spoke steering wheel across the living room.

"Medals are not interesting. Everybody gets a finisher medal by completing a race," he says. The medals clink against each other with a hollow sound when he touches them.

He prefers his trophies. His favourite is a wooden smiling mask that he earned when he won second place at the Aviva Bintan Triathlon 2007.

Things have not always been this smooth. During a 5 km race on Aug. 3 this year, Zhaomu finished last.

### 18 MINUTES AND 55 SECONDS

He remembers the exact timing because he pasted his runner tag on his faint orange bedroom walls, just beside the bike rack, for motivation. He had written the date, distance and timing on the tag.

The word "last" is underlined twice, in bold black strokes.

That day, Zhaomu was jogging to the nearby food court for lunch when a grain of sand flew into his eye.

He went home and washed his eye, but the pain did not go away. Panicking, he went to the doctor who told him about the angry red slash on his eyeball. "You must not run," the doctor told him.

At 3.30 pm, his coach called him. She told him that she came down specially to watch him run. So he ran.

The salt in his sweat seared his injured eye like an injection. Every blink was excruciating.

"It felt like the longest run ever," Zhaomu says. "I didn't give up because it's only good sportsmanship to complete the race even though I knew I wouldn't win."

But there is a race that Zhaomu will not be



# N'T SWIM



NPT / YEO KAI WEN

The triathlon bicycle Zhaomu uses cost him more than \$8000 because of its customised parts. He works part-time in a bike shop to pay for his gear and competition expenses.

able to complete. Although he qualified for the Ironman 70.3 World Championship in Florida, he will not take part in the race. He cannot afford to.

Qualifiers are required to put down a US\$500 (S\$754) deposit when they accept their position. Transport and lodging expenses take up another US\$4,000 (S\$6,072). He has applied for financial assistance from the school, but it is not enough. Zhaomu will try again next year.

This time, he says he will look for sponsors. He has not yet found any and will soon be enlisting in the army.

With these financial difficulties, it is uncertain whether he is able to compete next year but he does not seem discouraged.

This Ironman 70.3 qualifier is, after all, the same boy who floundered wildly in the water two years ago, desperately flailing for a floor his feet could not reach.

# These girls have balls

**Kenneth Cheong**

For as long as she could remember, Serene Tan, 19, seemed to be losing every football game she was playing.

It came as a shock to the third-year Business Studies student when the Ngee Ann Football Club (NPFC) Women's team, her team, pulled off historic first wins over the Nanyang Technological University and National University of Singapore in their debut at the FAS Young Women's League Games.

"The girls were magical. They put up a good fight in the first game from being 2-0 down in the first half to eventually win 3-2," Serene says.

She believes their sound strategy proved instrumental, in particular "the counter-attacking tactic".

"In women's football, it's tough to pass all the time, so we aggressively seize every high ball and cross opportunities to break through our opponent's defence lines," she explains.

The game plan also worked like a charm in the Oct. 11 to 29 POL-ITE Games where they scored 8-0, 4-0 and 3-0.

Unfortunately, they conceded 1-3 to the defending champions from the Institute of Technical Education (ITE) in the finals, but retained the overall runner-up position in the league.

Defensive errors made for the two goals ITE scored in the first half. But the sea of red shirts remained persistent in their efforts, constantly winning possession and brought the fight to their rival's defence.

In every challenge, the players

bravely intercepted the ball even when they were brought down.

Their tenacity was rewarded with a goal in the second half. But their joy proved to be short-lived, when an ITE forward lobbed the ball past the team's unsuspecting goalkeeper five minutes later to seal the match.

Despite a disappointing loss, players like Ang Xian Qing, 17, a first-year Tourism & Resort Management student, found the net eight times, five of which came in the match-up against Singapore Polytechnic.

The 1.8-metre-tall forward,

who was just a goal short to being the top scorer, was modest about her achievements.

"We trusted each other and didn't give up," Xian Qing says.

She plays the midfield position and serves as the team's playmaker, supplying scoring opportunities for teammates upfront.

Serene says it was no walk in the park when she first joined the team. Much discipline was needed to balance football with schoolwork and her administrative duties later as the team's president.

Xian Qing also met with strong disapproval from her



NPT / YEO KAI WEN



*Xian Qing's parents said football was a "guy sport girls shouldn't play".*

parents who said football was a "guy sport girls shouldn't play".

Mr Edmund Oh, the Manager of the Student Development & Alumni Relations Office in charge of NPFC, says, "Girls are as competitive as guys. They tend to communicate better."

Serene thinks that she still has a long way to go. "I'm trying to better my performance," she says, in anticipation of playing against the defending champions next season.

## SDAR: HIGHER JERSEY SUBSIDIES, FEWER JACKETS

**CONTINUED FROM P24**

three years ago, so the jackets will have to be distributed to more students than before, making the jacket limit necessary.

Mr Edmund Oh, Student Development Manager at SDAR, says the polytechnic "wants to help students by raising the subsidy" while reducing the number of jackets issued per person.

He explains: "The price of everything is going up, so we are raising the subsidy for jerseys to help students with the cost."

With the inclusion of more

representatives, the amount of jackets issued annually is still expected to rise from 1,600 to more than 2,000 despite reducing the number of jackets given per student.

Mr Oh says this is not "cutting costs at all"—pointing out that more jackets will be distributed—and the overall three-year subsidy will be increased by more than \$20 per student.

But for athletes like Shirley, jackets are worth more than receiving subsidies.

"Every year we fight hard to get into the IVP teams to represent

Ngee Ann. The jackets make us feel we are recognised," she reasons.

"It's just unfair for the IVP players who play for the school during their whole time in Ngee Ann to receive just one jacket. And the clubs personalise the jackets with different designs."

Some sportsmen remain nonchalant towards the move.

Jeannette Tan, a second-year Digital Visual Effects student who plays for the school's hockey team supports SDAR's decision says, "Giving it to more students is better than giving someone the same jacket for three years."





# Finding Gymwerkz a hassle, some opt to join private gyms

Lau Liang Tong

Just over a year after being launched, GymWerkz – touted as a state-of-the-art gym– seems to have trouble attracting members although it offers membership for free to students.

Though some first-timers balk at having to attend a compulsory 30-minute orientation, others in the know insist it is important.

Victor Ong, 20, a final year Horticulture and Landscape Management student, and a part-time trainer at Tampines Community Centre’s Boxfit, says the orientation is “a step that all responsible gyms take”.

Alumni and employee at GymWerkz, Muhammed Azmi Bin Muhammed Sahar, 20, says, “The training system here is linked by the Vivo system, different from other gyms. It is only right that users learn about it, because they will benefit from it”.

GymWerkz is the first gym in Asia to use the Vivo system. It lets users choose training programmes, set targets and track progress on every visit.

Students who clear the orientation also get guidance from professional trainers, even without



NPT / POSED PHOTO / YEO KAI WEN

Samantha Than, 18, a second-year Banking & Financial Services student, works out at GymWerkz at least three times a week.

paying for gym membership.

But getting students to see the point of an orientation is tough.

Joycelyn Oh, 19, a third-year Chinese Studies student, says she would rather spend \$280 for three months of membership at Amore Fitness and Boutique Spa.

She hits the gym five times a week, and says GymWerkz should offer more fitness classes, which could be a challenge given that it has only one aerobics studio.

Gymwerkz has potential to soar. Mr Alan Thng, 43, Deputy Director of the Student Development and Alumni Relations Office (SDAR), says plans are in the pipeline. “We are trying to incorporate fitness classes which will be on par with California Fitness’s and Planet Fitness’s programmes”.

The presence of hard-bodied individuals also makes Joycelyn feel intimidated.

“I don’t like seeing muscular men, say dragonboaters, running beside me. It’s intimidating.” Her concern is one that many are too embarrassed to raise.

Male students, on the other hand, want to see more equipment.

Sri Jeeva, 18, a rather muscular second-year Electrical Engineering student, says he would love to see “more free weights”.

The heaviest dumbbell available at GymWerkz is 30 kg, while in gyms like Boxfit, the heaviest goes up to 42.6 kg.

Victor says, “High-tech tracking gadgets are useful for people who are just starting out”. But the lack of heavier free weights bothers him. Aidil Fazli, 20, third-year Chemical and Biomolecular Engineering student, works out at both Gym Werkz and Choa Chu Kang’s ClubFITT gym, but finds GymWerkz stifling.

Aidil says GymWerkz can attract more students by expanding the free weights area, which he says is too small for even six users.

In response, Mr Thng says, “After the Sports Complex is renovated in the Phase 6 Development, we will make more space for free weights.”

“We will also beef up and combine GymWerkz and the gym downstairs.”

Jeeva says the plan “sounds interesting”, and that he “cannot wait to see a greater variety of gym equipment.”

*GymWerkz, located at the Sports Complex (Blk 16, Level 2, near Canteen 2), is open from 8 am to 9 pm on weekdays and 9am – 1pm on Saturdays.*

## SDAR: HIGHER JERSEY SUBSIDIES, FEWER JACKETS

Daryll Nanayakara

Come January next year, Shirley Lim will represent the school in the floorball Institute-Varsity-Polytechnic (IVP) Games.

But she will not be receiving the familiar black-and-blue jackets from the school this time.

The Student Development and Alumni Relations Office (SDAR) says attire subsidies for sportsmen representing the polytechnic have increased, but it has to be more prudent in issuing jackets.

Traditionally, jackets are only given to IVP athletes corresponding to the number of IVP games they play.

But with the control measure, all school representatives will receive just one jacket from SDAR.

SDAR also says they want to recognise more sports representatives who are not IVP athletes.

The Polytechnic-ITE (POL-ITE) Games were introduced

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## TRACK IS IVP 4<sup>TH</sup>

**IVP** - The Track & Field Team has come in overall fourth in the Inter-Varsity Track & Field Championship ahead of all other polytechnics, the Singapore Institute of Management, and the Institute of Technical Education.

**Results:** Men’s - 3<sup>RD</sup> (84 points). Women’s - 5<sup>TH</sup> (47 points). Overall - 4<sup>TH</sup> (131 points).

## KL SPORTS TOUR

**KUALA LUMPUR** - Ngee Ann played against Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM) and Universiti Teknologi Mara Malaysia (UITM) Oct. 8 to 10.

Volleyball beat both universities, Squash lost both matches, and Football (Men’s) beat UKM 4-2, but lost 3-1 to UITM. - LIN ZICHENG

## POL-ITE RESULTS

Results last updated Nov. 10, and are accurate at press time. Source: Student Development & Alumni Relations Office.

HOST	GAME	DATE	MEN	WOMEN	HOST	GAME	DATE	MEN	WOMEN	HOST	GAME	DATE	MEN	WOMEN
TP	DRAGON BOAT	Apr 12	2 <sup>ND</sup>	2 <sup>ND</sup>	NYP	HOCKEY	Jul 21 - Aug 6	3 <sup>RD</sup>	2 <sup>ND</sup>	SP	WATER POLO	Oct 20 - Oct 24	1 <sup>ST</sup>	*
NP	INTERNATIONAL CHESS	Jul 2 - Jul 4		3 <sup>RD</sup>	SP	CHINESE CHESS	Jul 28 - Jul 30		2 <sup>ND</sup>	ITE	BADMINTON	Oct 21 - Nov 4	2 <sup>ND</sup>	1 <sup>ST</sup>
TP	VOLLEYBALL	Jul 9 - Jul 23	3 <sup>RD</sup>	5 <sup>TH</sup>	NP	FLOORBALL	Oct 6 - Oct 24	4 <sup>TH</sup>	5 <sup>TH</sup>	ITE	NETBALL	Oct 22 - Nov 7	*	4 <sup>TH</sup>
TP	TENNIS	Jul 9 - Jul 25	2 <sup>ND</sup>	2 <sup>ND</sup>	RP	TABLE TENNIS	Oct 13 - Oct 17	5 <sup>TH</sup>	4 <sup>TH</sup>	SP	SQUASH	Nov 3 - Nov 7	1 <sup>ST</sup>	1 <sup>ST</sup>
RP	BASKETBALL	Jul 14 - Jul 26	4 <sup>TH</sup>	5 <sup>TH</sup>	NYP	WEIQI	Oct 13 - Oct 17		3 <sup>RD</sup>	ITE	SEPAK TAKRAW	Nov 10 - Nov 21	*	-
NP	RUGBY	Jul 17 - Jul 31	5 <sup>TH</sup>	*	RP	SOCCER (WOMEN’S)	Oct 14 - Oct 19	*	2 <sup>ND</sup>	NYP	ROAD RACE	Nov 19	-	-
NYP	TOUCH RUGBY	Jul 21 - Jul 25	*	5 <sup>TH</sup>	SP	10-PIN BOWLING	Oct 18	3 <sup>RD</sup>	2 <sup>ND</sup>	NP	ARCHERY	Nov 15 - Nov 16	-	-