

# Not ez at all

**When the tertiary ez-link Card replaced the paper-based bus pass in July, many first-year students found themselves without the new Card. Student correspondent DANNY TAN finds out more about the teething problems.**

Some 6,000 Ngee Ann Polytechnic (NP) students were hit hard at the start of the new school year when they paid adult fares for bus travel because they did not have their tertiary ez-link Cards.

More than half the number were freshmen. Affected students were ineligible for student rates on bus and Mass Rapid Transit (MRT) travel because they did not have the new tertiary student ez-link Card that replaced the old paper-based tertiary concessionary bus pass from 1 July.

"I use my own pocket money, so it is tough to save so much for travel as well as for books," said Mohd Harman, 17, a first-year Information Technology student who spends \$2 a day on bus travel.

Adult fares average 50 percent more than student concessionary rates, holding all things constant. A student without an electronic Bus Concessionary Pass (BCP) and averaging \$4 a day on adult bus fares pays an extra \$28 a month.

Harman was one of the luckier ones. Sri Racinawati, 17, a first-year Electrical Engineering student, lives in Marsiling and spends an "expensive" \$8 a day on travel.

The problem with the entire freshmen cohort not having tertiary ez-link Cards before the school term started is attributed to the enrolment period at NP and the processing time for TransitLink Pte Ltd, which makes the cards.

Mr Vickneshwaran Thangavelu, 33, NP Student Services officer, explained, "We could only get their [the first-years'] placements confirmed near the end of May. And before students can apply for their ez-link Cards at any TransitLink ticketing office, their data, which include their pictures and graduation dates amongst others, has to be uploaded into the ez-link network.

"We had to give students time to react and apply for their ez-link Cards, which we [Student Services] set between June 6 to 20.

Subsequently, TransitLink takes a month to manufacture the personalised ez-link Cards, which are then re-routed to the school for distribution."

The freshmen's cards, therefore, could not be ready for collection until the end of July, but the manufacturing timeline was only the tip of the iceberg.

Mr Vickneshwaran added, "After we received the cards from TransitLink, we had to manually sort through the cards alphabetically, often done by three to four people, which may take a week or two to do so."

The first-year students were not the only students affected. Some 2000 second and third-year students also did not have their ez-link Cards ready before the semester started. However, the reasons for the seniors not getting their cards were more within NP's and the students' control.

Some seniors had applied for their cards after the time frame allocated for them, which was from 15 April to 10 May. NP had sent postal reminders to them, but despite these, there were few takers.

Mr Vickneshwaran said, "One reason could be information overload. We put up banners, posters and post it online, but though students see them, the information just doesn't get through to them.

"Another reason could be that they might not have been aware that the ez-link Card was a replacement for the bus pass, and thus never thought they might require the card."

Other seniors had their NP data misinterpreted by the TransitLink system due to

different methods of tracking students' eligibility for the cards, resulting in cards which expired before the semester started on 1 July.

Mr Vickneshwaran explained, "For example, when we track the status of students on attachment to an outside firm, the students count as not going through a course in NP, so the students would have their graduation dates set as 30 June. So how the Admissions Office deals with these students is that when they come back from attachment, the office will check how many more modules they have and subsequently change their graduation dates back accordingly."

Hornan Chandra, 18, a second-year Mechatronic Engineering student, has tried to register three times for his ez-link Card prior to 10 May, the last registration day given. "The ez-link system just gives an error message and the TransitLink office says my registration process is always aborted," he said. While no reason was

given, Hornan said that TransitLink promised to revert to him within two months.

Hornan, who lives in Bukit Merah, spends \$4 a day on bus travel, an unexpectedly high burden on his family this semester. "It's very irritating because I am so used to paying student rates and the cost right now is very hard on the pockets," he said.

Anna Wong, 21, a second-year Electrical Engineering student, had full adult fares deducted from her ez-link Card although she purchased an electronic BCP.

continued on page 3



SEEING RED: Compared to the old paper-based bus pass, distributing the tertiary ez-link Cards needs better streamlining, so that future students can get their cards before school starts. [Picture: Matthew Lee & Hilary Isaac How]



**2** Cats on campus: NP deals with the furry situation



**5** National Day: What does it mean to be Singaporean?



**8** Paddle and score in this uncommon sport



# Deadline: 2003

**An unexpected delay pushes back plans to build and redevelop key buildings in the heart of the campus.**

BY GEETHA VISWAMBARAN  
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**N**gee Ann Polytechnic's (NP) new convention centre will be completed eight months late because the original contractor folded as a result of financial difficulties.

The centre, set to replace the old Lecture Theatres 64 to 66 and the Octagon concourse, will now be ready at the end of November. The Octagon and Block 56 will then be demolished in 2003 to make way for a central teaching hub.

Construction stopped in April, when SAL Construction Pte Ltd was wound up by its creditors. Only 75 percent of the new convention centre's superstructure (the structure that is built above the foundations of a building) had been completed.

Of the estimated \$42 million budget for Phase V development, NP had paid about \$4.3 million to SAL Construction.

"The losses, if any, will be claimed against the contractor and its insurance agent," said Mr Ng Say Kiat, Director of Estates and Development Office (ED).

With market forces in play and the whole construction industry affected, the situation with SAL Construction Pte Ltd was "beyond our control", explained Mr Ng.

NP called for a new tender for the site within two months. Out of 15 contractors applying, ED appointed WY Steel Construction Pte Ltd on 1 July.

Factors such as competitive pricing, sound financial background, and experience and expertise in managing similar projects were taken into account.

Difficulties encountered in getting a new tender for the incomplete project included handling sub-contractors and workers engaged but not paid by SAL, going through legal procedures for terminating the contract and evaluating the remaining construction work, said Mr Ng.

To maintain site safety during the interim period, NP posted security guards put on shifts to man the site on a 24-hour basis.

NP fumigated the site weekly to prevent mosquito breeding and applied for theft, fire

and accident insurance coverage. To protect the campus population, NP also removed the tower crane and flammable chemicals.

All construction work will be confined within the site to minimise disturbances caused by future construction activity, with heavy work to be done at night and over the weekends, said Mr Ng.

Meanwhile, NP staff and students are looking forward to the new convention centre.

Mr George Yuen Chee Seng, Senior Lecturer at the School of Engineering's Building & Environment Division, said, "The convention centre would be a focal point for NP [comparable] to the NUS Cultural Theatre. It is going to be an interactive place where students can participate in activities and learn beyond the curriculum."

Iris Lim Sing Pei, 19, third-year Biomedical Science student, said that the new convention centre would serve as a "convenient location for holding graduation ceremonies and more cultural performances within campus".

"I can't wait for the convention centre to be opened," said Anithasri d/o Manokaran, 18, second-year Business Studies student.

"It is good that NP is upgrading. I'm looking forward to better facilities." She felt that NP is comparable to other polytechnics as it keeps up with the changing trends of the education system.

The new centre will have two halls that can be combined to have 1,800 seats. Once the seats are retracted, the space can be used to conduct exhibitions, exams and functions. A new student study area will be built behind the centre.



**BACK TO WORK:** Work on the convention centre resumed in July following the halt in construction in April. The original company, SAL Construction Pte Ltd, ran into financial trouble and was dismissed by NP. (Picture: Priscilla Tang)

# Who let the cats out?

BY JESSICA ANN THOMAS  
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**I**n response to the stray cat problem in Ngee Ann Polytechnic (NP), NP employs pest controllers, ISS Servisystems Pte Ltd, to capture and remove cats found on campus.

The Estates and Development Office (ED) received complaints from NP staff about cats in the canteens, the Atrium and other public areas.

Before calling in the controllers, ED tried measures such as denying the cats food at the bin centres and canteens. Circulars were sent out to advise the campus population not to feed the cats.

"Stray cats can be a public health nuisance. The law allows us to trap and dispose of them," said Mr Ng Say Kiat, Director of ED.

ED had consulted the Agri-food and Veterinary Authority of Singapore and was advised to catch the cats for removal.

According to ED, the pest controller ISS Servisystems was chosen for its competitive pricing and professionalism.

Once the cats have been caught, ED said that it is ISS' responsibility to deliver the stray cats to the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA).

SPCA said only 25 in 100 stray cats will get adopted. SPCA also has a high put-down rate for cats that are unable to find homes.



**HERE, KITTY, KITTY:** Pest controllers are hired to remove stray cats from the school compound. However, groups such as the Cat Welfare Society say sterilisation is a better option. (Picture: Priscilla Tang)

Dr Daphne Ang, a consulting veterinarian for the SPCA, said that cats are associated with diseases such as ringworm, but they do not usually pose a great health threat to humans.

"Unless food gets contaminated by cat faeces, cats are not a health risk," said Dr Ang,

adding that students must practise good hygiene and wash their hands after they stroke a cat.

Both Ms Deirdre Moss, SPCA's Executive Officer, and Ms Dawn Kua, Cat Welfare Society's Director of Operations, said that removing the cats from campus will only create

a vacuum which other stray cats will then fill.

Ms Moss said sterilising the cats is a more humane option because it allows them to live out their natural lives.

She added that SPCA offers sterilisation programmes and did not think sterilisation is a costly alternative for NP.

If asked, SPCA can sterilise the cats in NP although the process will take more than one day. The sterilised cats can be identified through tattoos and tags.

The Cat Welfare Society, a non-profit organisation that aims to improve the welfare of stray cats in Singapore, uses the Trap, Sterilise, Return and Manage programme, said Ms Kua.

However, Mr Ng said, "We will be glad if there are campus population [who] want to adopt them. We cannot spend money to sterilise them and release them back to campus."

He said that sterilisation would only be an option if NP intended to keep the cats without having them reproduce.

"We have no intention to keep stray cats on campus because of public health reasons," said Mr Ng.

*Do you think there is a better way to deal with the cat situation? E-mail your comments to jessica\_thomas@journalist.com*



# Students get international recognition

BY CHIA SIHAN  
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**T**wo Ngee Ann Polytechnic (NP) graduates presented a well-received research paper on local media bias at an Asian media conference on 28 June in Australia.

Elissa Chia and Gracia Yap, both 20, presented their academic paper "A Study on Bias in The Straits Times' Reporting of the September 11 Attacks" at the three-day 11th Asian Media Information & Communication Centre (AMIC) Annual Conference. Their project supervisor Ms Susanne Chan, who accompanied them, said that the students had received positive comments from fellow students, academics and media practitioners.

"People were coming up to congratulate me after the presentation. I'm very pleased with their performance," she said.

The paper was co-authored by Mass Communication (MCM) graduates Gracia, Elissa, Kelvin Soh, 20, and Deborah Krishnamoorthy, 20. However, Kelvin and Deborah could not attend the conference because of National Service commitments and further studies.

The conference aimed "to address issues related to media's power and influence over the phenomenon of terrorism and conflicts, and their role in conflict resolution and peace initiatives in Asia".

Reflecting on their experience in presenting to an audience of media professionals and policy makers, the students were impressed by the depth of discussion that followed their presentation.

"There was considerable depth during the Q&A session... their knowledge seemed to buzz in the atmosphere," said Gracia. "After a speaker has finished, an audience member would ask, 'But why can't it be this way?' and the discussion would continue. The openness that dominated

the conference was amazing."

As the September 11 catastrophe was one of the top news stories for 2001, its timeliness and newsworthiness made it a worthy topic, said Elissa.

"We felt strongly about it. It became even more challenging when we realised no one had done a research paper as a specialist project in years." A specialist project is offered to the top 50 percent of second-year MCM students as a third-year elective.

After weeks of researching at libraries island-wide, the group concluded that there was a "slight pro-American sentiment in the Straits Times reporting" of the attacks on the United States (US).

Considering the Straits Times' social responsibility stance and Singapore's close ties with the US, Gracia felt that the mild pro-American position was "understandable". She maintained, however, that Singaporean journalists should strive to present a balanced perspective when reporting.

"Our research shows that balanced reporting shouldn't contain loaded language, sensationalism, glorification of any group and presence of the reporter's views or opinions," said Elissa, quoting their study.

The paper also questioned the credibility of "parachute" journalists who are flown to countries such as Afghanistan only at times of crisis, and often have little or vague understanding of the places they are reporting.

"Context setting is important. By not knowing enough of the context and situation, the story might just skim the surface and not capture the essence of what's happening," Gracia said.

"We realised that it's more enriching to get information from various sources. As most of our research is based on others' research findings, we hope that some day, our research will be useful to others too."

BY DEEPA THANASEELAN  
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**W**ith practical innovations, Ngee Ann Polytechnic (NP) students won first and third prizes in an international students' quality circles conference in America.

Held from 11 to 13 June in Kentucky, the fifth Annual International Convention of Students' Quality Control Circles (ICSQCC) saw more than 100 student participants from 16 countries including

Germany, Switzerland and Japan. NP teams "Infinity" and "Sens" were the only tertiary student participants from Singapore.

Team "Infinity", made up of third-year Electrical Engineering (EE) students Edwin Leong, Neo Chien Jun and Adam Tan Hock Liang, emerged champions in the new, above-18 problem-solving category. Their "soundless" communication system enabled lecturers to effectively locate and communicate with technical officers, and resolve computer problems during on-line quizzes, without disturbing other students.

The communication system had been fully implemented in the EE Division.

Team "Sens", made up of three School of Business & Accountancy (BA) students Shirley Ho, Alvin Loke Leong Siew and Christie Yong Mee Ling, came in third in the same category as team "Infinity".

Team "Sens" presented ways of improving

the organisation of notice boards in the NP campus. "After conducting a survey of 40 students and ten lecturers, we realised the key factor to why students did not bother looking at the notice boards was because these notice boards were very disorganised, everything being jumbled up," explained Shirley, 22.

The team decided to revamp the stuffy image of notice boards by introducing categories such as "Little facts of life", academic information and life improvement ideas. The

aim was to give a balance that would appeal to students, making them read the different notices more.

The important aspect of participating in ICSQCC was gaining quality circles analysis skills and tools that would make them more productive in the working industry, said Edwin, 26.

He added that winning was made more fruitful because it would further break

misconceptions some people had when it came to polytechnic students' capabilities.

"In the recent years, polytechnic students have been excelling overseas in terms of business, creativity and studies. If we were to compare ourselves to junior college students, there is no great contrast. Polytechnics just adopt a more practical, hands-on approach," he said.

NP student Quality Circles have been well known internationally in previous years because of their participation in India, Mauritius and the US, said Mr Lim Siew Choon, BA lecturer-in-charge and leader of the NP teams.

*In the recent years, polytechnic students have been excelling overseas in terms of business, creativity and studies. If we were to compare ourselves to junior college students, there is no great contrast. Polytechnics just adopt a more practical, hands-on approach.*

- Edwin Leong, 26,  
Team "Infinity"

## ...Not ez at all

continued from page 1

She reported the matter to TransitLink's Toa Payoh office which advised her to board buses, show her receipt of the BCP purchase and travel without using the ez-link system.

However, Anna received different advice when she reported the matter to the TransitLink customer service centre in Buona Vista. The centre instructed her to pay for her travel by using the adult ez-link Card and file for a refund. Despite the conflicting instructions, the matter was water under the bridge for Anna. "My BCP is working properly now, and I am just waiting for my refund for the amount I used on my adult ez-link Card," she said.

Currently, anyone who has fares incorrectly deducted can file for a refund at any TransitLink office.

When Tribune contacted Transit Link Pte Ltd, the company confirmed that the most common complaint was from students who bought the electronic BCP but were unable to use it.

Ms Yvonne Low, Assistant Public Affairs Manager for Transit Link Pte Ltd, explained how students with BCP problems could be compensated. "We have been advising students to file a claim for every single trip they make that they pay by cash or farecard. They can keep

their receipts and then call the hotline to leave details about the trips they make and file a claim from there.

"When they first file a claim, they will be given a refund number. Before they make their way down to the ticket office to collect their money, usually after seven to ten days, they should give the hotline a call to check if their refund is ready for collection, so they don't make a futile trip to the ticketing office."

Ms Low also added that TransitLink took measures to simplify matters for students with BCP problems. "We have been in discussion with the Land Transport Authority (LTA), and LTA has gotten confirmation from the bus operators that students who encounter problems boarding the bus because their BCPs are not working are allowed to board the bus without having to pay," she said.

But feedback from students indicated that some bus drivers barred them from boarding without paying.

In response to this, Ms Low advised those affected to "jot down the date and time of



Matthew Lee

occurrence and service number so that we [TransitLink] can take the necessary action to bring it up to LTA to let them know it is happening."

This short-term fix has its loophole though. Ms Low explained, "This system is based on an honour and goodwill system. We know that because of this [BCP] error, inconveniences have

been caused to students, which is why we implemented this temporary solution. So we appeal to students not to abuse this honour system."

By August, almost all the students would have received their tertiary ez-link Cards. However, the problem is likely to recur next year for the new freshmen unless something can be done.

Mr Vickneshwaran said, "The only foreseeable solution would be to bring forward the enrolment date or if TransitLink is able to produce the cards faster."

Ms Low said that TransitLink is looking into better handling the ez-link problems. "I can safely say that there will definitely be improvements [next year] and we will learn from this first experience that we have had. We will try to ensure a better situation for next year than what we have this year," she said.

Mr Vickneshwaran added that Student Services was aware of the financial strain adult fares could have on students, and is working to minimise the inconvenience to students in any way.

The Academic Affairs Office, the Computer Centre and Student Services plan to re-group and streamline their processes to better serve the next batch of students after the current ez-link Card distribution exercise is over.



For most of us on campus, the word 'Singaporean' means pride and peace. From canteen operator to NP's top management, individuals, who make up Ngee Ann Polytechnic, shared their answers to the question:

# What does it mean to Singaporean

DEEPA THANASEELAN and JOEY TAN looked hard for traces of the Singapore spirit on campus, and were heartened with what they found.



"Singapore, as compared to other countries, has a very stable economy. The government helps to look into the welfare of the society."

- Mrs Tan Shuet Fung, 50+,  
Supervisor,  
Student Service and  
Information Centre



"You are a Singaporean every day. You don't have to wait till National Day to feel like a Singaporean. I'm definitely proud to be a Singaporean."

- Ms June Wee, 31,  
Senior Sales Assistant, Splash

"I feel I belong. Being in Singapore, a multi-racial country, everyone treats each other well. World Peace!"

- Nirhana bte Japar, 19,  
Students' Union member



"We just want Singapore to be peaceful. Everything we want is all here... who does not want a peaceful life?"

- Mdm Vijaya, 50,  
Campus Supervisor



"We've got a successful country. Everything has gone very well. However, I hope that young students can be more well-behaved in public as it reflects on Singapore."

- Ms Kang Seam Tiang, 51,  
Library Security Officer



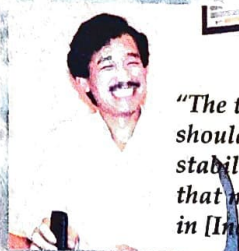
"I'm happy that after 37 years, Singapore is still a very peaceful country."

- Ms Roos Mastura, 40,  
Muslim Food canteen operator



"The things that Singaporeans should be lucky for are peace, stability and the luxury life that many don't get back home in [Indonesia]."

- Mr Jonas Lee, 30+,  
Lecturer, School of Business &  
Accountancy



"I'm proud to be a Singaporean."

- Tan Wei Li, 18,  
Mr Ngee Ann 2002



"It means having the privilege to have the freedom of choice and learning the art of racial tolerance which many in this world are forgetting."

- Sumitra Devi, 18,  
Miss Ngee Ann 2002



"I feel lucky, okay and about at nation, from until now, a develop"





# be orean?

*"Although being small makes it easy to manage, you can't take away the credit from the people, because they are our resources. And these people make our lives meaningful. But we've got to remain focused on what's important, especially the youngsters because they are easily distracted."*

- Mr Gopinathan Retnam, 33,  
Student Development Officer



*"I feel really good. I have a peaceful, happy and challenging life. And most importantly, I feel safe."*

- Mr John Ferdinand, 38,  
Security Guard



*"Being Singaporean is unique in a sense that we have a melting pot of cultures and different nationalities. We can have rich experiences interacting with the different races... in many places in the world, people of different races and cultures cannot live together but here, we are capable of doing so."*

- Mr Lee Tuck Seng, 51,  
Deputy Principal (Academic)



*"Our security is feel safe to walk. Ours is a new initial stage have emerged as country fast."*

- Mr Koh Han Hin, 59,  
Campus Supervisor

Pictures: Joey Tan, Matthew Lee, Priscilla Tang and Suharti Samsudin

## Powering the way for Singapore

BY SUHARTI SAMSUDIN  
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**N**gee Ann Polytechnic (NP) contributed for the first time eight specially designed Human Powered Vehicles (HPVs) as floats for this year's National Day Parade (NDP).

The vehicles, built as part of Mechanical Engineering (ME) students' final year project, were selected to represent NP for the Parade.

The students decorated and modified the HPVs to fit themes based on the Singapore 21 Vision (see below). Each vehicle was made of everyday materials, including generators, bicycle wheels and lights. They were designed to move forward and backwards, and to negotiate turns freely.

Students operating their seniors' HPVs for the NDP found no trouble handling them. Said Fazlina Farouk, 18, second-year Mass Communication student, "It's easy because the girls just sit on the vehicles and wave and the guys operate the vehicles." Operating the vehicles means either cycling or pushing them forward.

Initially targeted for the Chingay Parade,

the lecturers and students were surprised when told that NDP 2002 would feature the HPVs instead.

"It's better. It's a bigger audience, and it's also a live audience," said Mr Soh Hong Joon, the lecturer in charge of the HPV project.

ME graduate Hafiza bte Buang, 21, the mastermind behind the "Education and Excellent Healthcare" HPV, saw nine months of hard work pay off as she and her three other team-mates had crossed many barriers to make a successful HPV.

"We had to think of what materials to use, the sketches we had to produce. And that's only the theory part, whether we can apply it in practical is a different thing. But we seek help from Mr Soh," she said.

The selection of her vehicle for NDP came as no surprise, as her HPV was selected as the "Most Popular" during the HPV race held in NP earlier this year, she said.

When asked if she looked forward to seeing her vehicle in NDP, she said, "Of course! I mentioned to them [my family] about the HPV and even went down to the NDP rehearsals." ☐

## Human-powered what?!?

Each of the eight HPVs had themes based on the Singapore 21 Vision:

### Global Connectivity

Comprising a globe on top of the HPV and four rotating icons, the HPV symbolises Singapore's global connectivity within the maritime, telecommunications and financial industry.

### Flourishing Arts Scene (right)

This float is encapsulated in a thorny shell to represent the Esplanade. On top of the HPV is a revolving figurine of a ballerina to represent Singapore's vibrant arts scene.



### Caring Nation

The vehicle incorporates a collapsible ramp for the disabled and a detachable carriage that carries a physically disabled passenger.



### Together, a New Singapore (above)

Designed with a heart-shaped structure that makes up this year's National Day logo "A Caring Heart", this HPV seats one rider and two passengers.

### First-class Homes and Strong Families as Bedrock of Society

The cone-shaped float that accommodates up to five passengers depicts the nation's future housing estates and family units.



### Team Singapore (right)

Sporting the "Team Singapore" logo, the float represents our nation's ambition to become one of the ten best Asian sporting nations.

### Life Sciences and Biomedical Engineering

With structures that depict revolving DNA and molecules, this float corresponds to Singapore's aspirations to be at the forefront of the field of life sciences.



### Education and Excellent Healthcare (above)

This HPV is designed with a raised platform surrounded by ringed structures fitted with icons. Each icon signifies Singapore's excellent learning and healthcare services. ☐



# Knowing people



BY KELVIN BIK  
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I don't know people. I trek in and out of school each day, and I see faces whom I have come to "know" after two years here as a student. We stop, but only if and when we are not rushing off to another class or project meeting. We talk. We part. We do our "hi"s and "bye"s. Somewhere in my head rings a bewildering "Excuse me, do I know you?" I have many acquaintances, people who wave at me and smile knowingly at whatever fresh inanity they heard I was doing. I would wave back, grinning cheekily at whatever antic I heard they were doing.

I trawl through and pick up little fragments of information floating like jetsam down our cheery NP drain.

I piece together the reality of those people around me, through all my little contacts that form my much-denounced but oft-used grapevine.

I avoid the people whom I have heard so many negative things about: how X always turns up late and how Y never hands in the work.

I make those judgments every day. Somewhere along the line, I threw aside my belief in seeing the potential good in people and convinced myself that I was being Professional.

I do still believe that work ought to be done.

I still believe that people should be held responsible for what they do.

But when I choose to see my schoolmates only as working partners, it is no wonder that I can sit in a lecture theatre or a tutorial class full of people — people whom I should have known for two years — and still feel utterly alone.

I don't know people.

I didn't know that a friend I made in first

year slipped into suicidal depression and could have died without anyone caring.

I didn't know that another friend broke off an intense relationship, and with that insane pain and rage, began fumbling in studies.

I didn't know when a close friend began smoking like a chimney just to "de-stress".

I didn't know.

If you asked me what my dad did yesterday, I couldn't tell you.


If you asked me what my mom cooked for dinner, I couldn't tell you.

If you asked me when my sister got attached, I couldn't tell you.

I don't think you are as bad as I am.

I hope not.

I hope you have always known that people, even those who drive you mad with stupid jokes, matter.

I'm learning to make time for the people who matter: to ask "How are you?" and press for an answer; to sit next to a friend in his freezing room and hear his grouses; and to look into someone's face and sometimes, just sometimes, smile for the joy of knowing a friend. 

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# A packet of blood saves three

BY DANNY TAN  
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Ngee Ann Polytechnic (NP) maintains its high volume of blood donation by organising drives every semester, the most recent held from 10 to 12 July.

Despite local blood donation dwindling, NP had been awarded the Champion Organisers' award in 2001 for topping the category for polytechnics and universities with 1,221 units donated. A unit equates to one packet of blood donated by one person, which is about 430 ml.

The NP Students' Union liaises with the Singapore Red Cross Society (SRCS) at least once a semester to initiate blood drives in NP, averaging three drives per year. Banners and posters about the blood drive are put up around the designated banner and poster areas opposite Canteen Two and on most notice boards.

Ms Carol Teo, Communications Manager of the Blood Donor Recruitment Programme at SRCS, said, "It helps a lot that the school population is pretty huge. And NP also has a very good, supportive committee of people who did very good recruitment effort in bringing the donors in, so credit should go to them."

The blood donation drive for the 2002 academic year was held at the examination hall on Level 2 at Block 72.

Tan Yan He, 19, third-year Mechanical Engineering student and organiser for the blood donation drive, said, "It is less noticeable because we changed the venue from the Octagon to the current one because the Octagon is due to be demolished. Some students don't even know where it is, because some of them don't even use the exam hall. Because of the location, we probably lost some potential donors."

Yan He added, "The purpose of this drive is not about the number of participants, but about doing it to help people who need the blood, as well as to spread the awareness to the students. Awareness will encourage students to donate blood. Students should know that their donation

will benefit somebody in society. If students want to help others, they should come forward to donate."

However, potential donors shy away for various reasons.

Sandy Leong, 18, a third-year student from the School of Business & Accountancy has never donated blood before. "It's not that I don't want to. It's just that I'm afraid of the pain," she said.

Bobby Ashan Thapa, 17, a second-year Film, Sound and Video student who has donated blood before but not in school, said, "I guess it's because it's not that close or personal enough, since you don't know who gets the blood... I guess we're just too busy doing our own things or just lazy."

At present, the Centre for Transfusion Medicine (CTM) of the Health Sciences Authority (HSA) is not meeting its daily quota of fresh blood.

Ms Teo explained, "On a daily basis at the blood bank, we need a hundred units each of blood type 'A' and 'B'. Because blood type 'O' is a universal giver, we need 200 units, whereas we only need 50 units for blood type 'AB' because it is rarer. Currently we are about 10 percent short in each category."

CTM is in charge of the physical collection, testing and distribution of blood to both private and public hospitals.

Fresh blood platelets can be kept for only five days, while red blood cells can be kept up to



**GOOD, BUT NOT ENOUGH:** Last year, NP was awarded the Champion Organisers' award, with 1,221 units of blood donated. The Centre for Transfusion Medicine, which collects and distributes blood to hospitals here, requires some 450 units of blood daily, but is currently not meeting its daily quota. (Picture: Matthew Lee)

42 days, after which they must be frozen to extend their life span to ten years.

However, the blood bank does not have the luxury of freezing fresh blood because the daily quota is not being met.

Instead, it has to thaw its frozen reserves and when needed for distribution to the hospitals. While the situation is not yet critical, a prolonged deficit in blood donation will only deplete the reserves.

Regular donors in Singapore and in NP do keep the blood pumping into the blood bank. Hari Krishnan, 19, a third-year Electronic & Computer Engineering student, is a regular blood donor who has donated more than four times in NP.

Ms Teo said, "The root of blood donation is that you want to help someone. We can't hold


## Little-known facts:

- The average weight for females in tertiary education is dropping. Women weighing between 45 to 50 kg donate only 300 ml of blood, which is a smaller packet than the normal 430 ml packet.
- Blood cannot be artificially manufactured.
- A single packet of donated blood can save three lives. Donated blood can be separated into three components — red cells, plasma and platelets. Red cells are needed to replenish blood loss after severe bleeding; plasma is the medium for a number of functions, such as maintaining blood pressure; and platelets are the cellular fragments that help blood clot. The components are given to patients with different needs.

your hand and ask you to donate."

She reminds those with a low threshold of pain that there is a way around it.

"We are very fortunate in Singapore because we provide local anaesthesia... local anaesthesia actually numbs a small area, so when the needle for withdrawing blood is injected, you don't feel the pain."

If you wish to donate blood, you can visit the Bloodbank of Singapore at the HSA building located opposite Outram Park MRT station. Healthy donors between 18 and 60 years may donate while those aged 16 to 17 must seek parental consent. 

For more information, visit [www.redcross.org.sg](http://www.redcross.org.sg) or call 6220 0183 for more information.



# It's party time, NP!

12 July saw students turning up the heat at two parties: the Freshman Orientation Hopnite and the ICT Party

BY SUHARTI SAMSUDIN  
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**T**he annual Freshmen Orientation Hopnite held on 12 July at the Octagon saw a promising turnout with an initial crowd of about 450, with more streaming in as the night wore on.

Organised by Ngee Ann Polytechnic Students' Union (SU), all 800 tickets to La Evolucion sold out one month before the event. Although targeted mainly at freshmen, the event also saw a handful of seniors attending.

Nur Fadzilah Jumat, 21, a third-year Electronic & Computer Engineering (ECE) student, said, "The previous years' [hopnites] were good, so I had to go again. I always look forward to the good music to dance to, the crowd, and the beautiful people."

For Doris Chin Shet Ley, 20, third-year ECE student, this year marks her first attendance to the event.

"I missed out on the first two [hopnites], and I heard from my friends that it's quite good," she said. "So, since this is my last chance, I decided to go."

The attendance by seniors, who made up about a fifth of the crowd, came as no surprise to SU.

SU had planned all along to include the seniors by allowing them to take part in the beauty pageant as well.

Ben Lee, SU's project chairman for La Evolucion, said, "For example, [pageant contestants] M4 and F4 are year twos. It is therefore an open invitation for the seniors to come support their friends."

The involvement of seniors did not stop at supporting and participating in the beauty pageant. As Hopnite proper started, throngs of people started dancing with anyone around them, regardless of age, race or course. This gave everyone a good opportunity to mingle.



**NOT JUST ABOUT "WORLD PEACE":** Amidst the confusion when the winners were announced, Sumitra Devi received her Miss Ngee Ann title in utter shock. But she told Tribune later that winning boosted her confidence. "I won the pageant out of my own efforts, and I feel good about myself."

La Evolucion was sealed with the crowning of beauty pageant winners Mr and Miss Ngee Ann, won by Tan Wei Li, 18, first-year Mass Communication student, and Sumitra Devi, 18, first-year Early Childhood Education student.

Their prizes included \$50 cash, tickets to Men in Black II and \$90 worth of makeover vouchers at De Character Models, said Wei Li.

The crowning was followed by two hours of dancing that ended at about 11.30pm.



Matthew Lee

BY CATHERINE TAN  
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**D**espite a clash in timing with Freshmen Orientation Hopnite, about 200 Ngee Ann students attended Party 2002 on 12 July to dance the night away.

Having Hopnite on the same night did not adversely affect Party 2002, said Cheryl Chen, 19, third-year Information Technology (IT) student and one of the organisers.

Planned by the Information & Communications Technology Society (ICTS), Party 2002 aimed mainly to welcome ICT freshmen as a follow-up to the ICT orientation in June.

Although the organisers had not foreseen the clash, they sold more than 200 tickets, hitting their sales target of 200 to 300 tickets, said Cheryl.

The figure was almost equivalent to last year's, she said, but she could not confirm the actual number of first-year ICT students who attended the party at the Level 2 open space adjoining Blocks 27 and 31.

In comparison, the annual Hopnite held at the Octagon sold 800 tickets.

Shaun Lee, 18, a first-year IT student, had bought a Hopnite ticket but came to Party 2002 to support his School. However, he felt that the crowd was not big enough. "There seems to be very [few] first-year students around," he said.

Accompanied by friends, most of the freshmen appeared undeterred by the smaller turnout. Lee Liling, 17, a first-year IT student and Shaun's classmate, said, "It's quite fun. I've got friends who are with me, so it's not so bad after all. [However], it's a bit warm."

Dillian Neo, 19, agreed. "I think it should be at the Octagon... got seats... got air-con," said the third-year School of Business & Accountancy student who came to support her friends in ICTS.

## Enjoy film classics free

BY BELINDA CHNG  
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**S**tudents and staff are being treated to free weekly screenings of classic films, with the chance to learn about appreciating films this semester.

The School of Film & Media Studies (FMS) has organised Tuesday at the Movies, showing acclaimed films such as Citizen Kane directed by Orson Welles, Rear Window by Alfred Hitchcock, and Sunset Boulevard by Billy Wilder at Lecture Theatres 22 or 26 and the FMS Preview Theatre at Block 52, #09-05.

Initiated by Dr Victor Valbuena, Director of FMS, the programme complements the new film appreciation module offered by FMS, through the School of Interdisciplinary Studies, to non-FMS second-year students.

As some students were unable to take the module due to timetable clashes, Tuesday at the Movies "provides them with a semblance of the module and allows them to watch classic films", said Dr Valbuena.

Instead of watching for just entertainment, the screenings could "let more people know what makes a good film and enrich their intellectual and emotional experience for a more total cinema-going experience", he said.

By picking up some film production values, the audience would enhance their movie watching experience, said Ms Sandra Salas, FMS visiting lecturer and American filmmaker.

She introduces the films at each screening and highlights their artistic features to give the audience a means of appreciating them better.

"Tuesday at the Movies is an excellent opportunity to get your feet wet without taking a course, so there is no intimidation," she said.

Mr Adam Ho, 44, a Mechanical Engineering technical support officer, said, "It is good to be exposed to different films other than what is shown in the commercial industry."

Ng Wan Sin, 22, an Electronic & Computer Engineering student, said after the screening of Citizen Kane, "The style and the way it was shot is good and I understood the lecturer's explanation."

Although Tuesday at the Movies is planned for the long-term, Dr Valbuena said its continuation depended on staff and student response to the screenings. Attendance has ranged from 10 to 20 people at the movies.

To promote the programme, a banner was put up outside the Octagon and posters that listed the movies were pinned on notice boards after the first screening.

As a basic film appreciation programme, Tuesday at the Movies would not screen Restricted (Artistic) films, as the expected audience of 16 to 60-year-olds would pose a crowd management problem, said Dr Valbuena.

Though he did not discount the likelihood of screening R(A) films in the future, the main objective of the programme, he said, was to reach a diverse audience and provide them with good classic films.

Dr Kannappa Iynkaran, 56, a Mechanical Engineering senior lecturer who attended the first screening with his wife, said, "This is a very good idea for staff and students to enjoy some time together."

### Coming soon ...

20 August. All About Eve, directed by Joseph Mankiewicz

27 August. His Girl Friday, directed by Howard Hawks

3 September. Les Enfants Du Paradis, directed by Marcel Carné

10 September. Los Olvidados, directed by Luis Buñuel

17 September. Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid, directed by George Roy Hill

24 September. The Good, The Bad and The Ugly, directed by Sergio Leone

1 October. The Graduate, directed by Mike Nichols

8 October. Casablanca, directed by Michael Curtiz

15 October. 2001: A Space Odyssey, directed by Stanley Kubrick



# NP honours student excellence

BY NOEL HIDALGO TAN  
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**N**gee Ann Polytechnic's (NP) inaugural Student Excellence Day recognised the achievements of 35 individuals and eight teams in sports and Co-Curricular Activities (CCAs).

Besides sports and CCAs, NP also recognised students for their achievements in the technology, community service and international fields in the ceremony held on 13 July in Lecture Theatre 26.

The Student Development and Alumni Relations Office initiated the event. "We felt that we had the Outstanding Academic Awards for students who excel in their studies, but we don't have anything to encourage students in non-academic areas," said Student Development Officer, Mr Gopinathan Retnam, 32.

In his opening address, the Principal, Mr Chia Mia Chiang said, "In giving out these awards to these talented and deserving students, we are hoping that you will inspire your fellow students to also strive and excel in areas outside of the classroom."

He said, "Life, as we all know, is not about one single correct answer in any situation; it is also not answering a series of multiple choice questions." Noting that academic results do not guarantee success in life, Mr Chia said that sports and CCAs help teach useful life skills.

Women were among the more notable achievers. NP's Sportswoman of the Year, wushu exponent Jennee Sae-Tang, 19, was surprised at



**OUTSTANDING STUDENTS:** Jennee Sae-Tang, 19, (above) and Doranna Wong, 25, are among the students recognised for excellence in non-academic areas. (Pictures: Noel Hidalgo Tan and Pricilla Tang)

receiving her award because she did not know that the School of Life Sciences & Chemical Technology had nominated her.

Jennee trains six days a week, over eight sessions. On juggling work and studies, she said, "You have to hunt for time to study. We can't stop our training for any excuse, because when we go overseas for competitions, it's based on attendance at training sessions."

"Winning a medal is only a result after a competition," she said. "To win a medal, it's very easy but it's hard to maintain and improve," said the second-year Horticulture & Landscape Management student. Jennee has

represented Singapore at international competitions, including the South East Asian Championships, a wushu competition in Myanmar; and the World Grand Wushu Festival in Shanghai where she came in third.

Jo-Ann Bok Jia Yun, 19, member of the women's bowling team and second-year Business Studies student, said, "We put in our best effort to bring our bowling team to achieve the best we could."

"It was very encouraging to see that our team had a lot of spirit although we don't train together frequently due to different school hours," she said. The NP women's bowling team

overcame the strong Temasek Polytechnic team, winning first place at the most recent Institute-Varsity-Polytechnic (IVP) games.

The women's bowling team was the only team to receive the full colours award, which recognises teams and individuals who have won IVP gold medals.

Recent Early Childhood Education (ECH) graduate Doranna Wong, 25, clinched not one, but three awards: Outstanding Performance in CCAs, the Community Service Award, and the Chairman's Award for Student Excellence. Guest-of-honour Mr Choo Chiau Beng, Chairman of the Ngee Ann Polytechnic Council, presented the last award.

Doranna started the ECH society, and played an active part in Students' Union projects and in HI (Hearing-Impaired) Club activities.

CCA participation in NP has increased over the last few years and could be attributed to a few factors, said Mr Gopinathan.

The range of sports and CCAs available to students has increased. NP's Sports and Wellness programme has also helped introduce students to sports such as tennis and basketball.

The most recent and compelling factor, said Mr Gopinathan, was that CCA participation now counts for polytechnic graduates to gain admission to local universities.

In his address, Mr Chia revealed that some 85 percent of NP graduates last month received a CCA certificate, indicating they had secured at least a bronze award. "This is more than double the active CCA participation six years ago, and we're all very excited about this remarkable achievement," he said.

## It's "paddles up!" for our canoe polo teams

BY DANNY TAN  
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**N**gee Ann Polytechnic's (NP) men's and women's canoe polo teams came in second and third place respectively in last year's National Canoe Polo Championships. Yet canoe polo is one of the less well-known sports in NP.

Succeeding at the national level was a combination of hard work as well as carrying the tag of the underdog.

Both the men's and women's canoe polo teams trained throughout the year for the annual championships. The men's team beat traditional powerhouse Singapore Polytechnic (SP) in the semi-final before losing to the National University of Singapore (NUS) in the final.

Mr Peter Lo, 35, Student Development Officer in charge of the canoe polo team, said, "NP was up against strong teams, but I told them not to worry about winning or losing but to just try their best."

A team sport, canoe polo teaches lessons difficult to impart in classrooms. Vice-captain of the men's canoe polo team and third-year Electrical Engineering student, Lai Chin Loon, 21, said, "Communication is vital [in the game]... canoe polo taught me how to be aggressive, how to work as part of a team and how to play as a team."

Florie Oh, 19, third-year Multimedia Computing student and captain of the women's team, said, "Canoe polo taught me to overcome mental challenges; as a player, you have to keep yourself going no matter how tired you are."

For earlier rounds of the National Canoe Polo



**TEAM SPORT:** Canoe polo players do not have fixed positions like "attackers" and "defenders". Every member works together to out-score the opponent.

Championships, the game is played in seven-minute halves with a one-minute break. It then increases to the international standard of ten-minute halves with three-minute breaks from the semi-finals onwards.

Seven minutes might seem short for onlookers, but the intensity of the game during this period is very high.

Chin Loon said, "The time is not really that short, because you expend a lot of energy in those seven minutes and it's tough to maintain your energy levels because you need to sprint up and down the pool to attack and defend."

Added Gracie Chua, 18, a second-year Business Studies student and the women's canoe polo team's vice-captain, "Sometimes during a game, you put your paddle down and you tell

yourself, 'I'm really tired and I want to give up.' It is the easiest thing to do, but yet the hardest thing to push yourself. But if your team mates are there, you can overcome it."

Florie describes her sport as more "exciting and challenging" than mainstream sports such as basketball and netball, which she played when she was in secondary school.

The Singapore Canoe Federation is trying to increase the number of institutes taking part in the game. Only four tertiary institutes take part in the championships - Temasek Polytechnic (TP), NUS, SP and NP, along with teams from the People's Association and a team of NUS graduates.

Mr Cheng Lin Chuan, 25, Singapore Canoe Federation's (SCF) Canoe Polo sub-committee deputy chairman, said, "They [secondary

schools and junior colleges] aren't very receptive about having a new sport. Especially because the cost of playing is actually quite high if you need to book a pool."

Mr Cheng added that even low-end sets of equipment would cost an average of \$1,500.

Florie advised those who are tentative about joining canoe polo to come forward and try it out. She said, "Even if you can't swim, it's all right. Life-vests are compulsory and you can tread water on those if you capsize. Some of the players didn't know how to swim at first, but picked it up as they went along."

"There's no harm coming down to just try out. It's okay even if you don't like the game. At least you would have tried something different in your life." ■