

TRIBUNE

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Dealing with SARS

With the SARS outbreak on everyone's mind, and NP's three-day closure, AARON WONG and MARK NG investigate the measures NP is taking to deal with the situation.

A third-year Business Studies (BS) student was diagnosed with Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) on 30 March, prompting a temporary closure of Ngee Ann Polytechnic (NP) from 2 to 4 April and a series of follow-up measures by the polytechnic.

According to Ms Janice Quah, Director of NP's Corporate Communications Office, NP had received information about 20-year-old Mohamad Fairuz Abu's infection on 1 April. Together with NP, the Ministry of Health (MOH) and the National Environmental Agency traced the people who might have come in contact with Fairuz. In all, 25 people were traced and home quarantined, including his 17 classmates and two lecturers.

Fairuz's infection came as a shock to most of his friends. Neo Chee Seong, 21, a first-year BS student who was under Fairuz's supervision during last year's orientation, said, "He organised a lot of activities for us and took care of all the first-year students under him. I feel really sad because he lost his mom as well, and I think it is really unfair that such a nice person had to come down with this sickness."

The cleaning of the campus, especially common areas like the Atrium, canteens and the School of Business & Accountancy (BA), was carried out during the three-day closure.

Ma Yong Li, 19, a second-year Accountancy (ACC) student said of the three-day closure, "I felt relieved because SARS seems to spread easily and closure of school is better for all of us. But I think three days is not enough time."

Unlike the closure of primary schools, secondary schools and junior colleges to calm parental fears, the Ministry of Education (MOE) directed NP's closure because Fairuz was then suspected of having SARS. An MOE statement said, "The polytechnic was closed... to facilitate contact tracing by the Ministry of Health and the necessary disinfection work."

Mrs Geraldine Christee, 44, a parent of a second-year NP student and a retail assistant, shared similar views. "The students are also

human beings and you can't tell who has SARS, or come into contact with someone with SARS in the polytechnics. I think the polytechnics should be closed as a precaution," she said before the closure.

New measures were implemented when the campus reopened on 5 April. These included about 25 posters placed around campus to educate students on SARS. NP's Student Services (SS) Office created an online SARS advisory on the NP website. Pocket-sized cards were given to students advising them on SARS symptoms, preventive measures and responsible social behaviour. Lecturers also gave briefing sessions before classes.

Goh Swee Ling, 19, a final-year ACC student said, "I think the presentation is good because it highlighted important points like information about SARS, its symptoms and how it is spread and the necessary precautions."

Estate Management Office is also carrying out regular disinfection of the campus as part of the ongoing measures. A disinfectant with active microbicide was also introduced into air-conditioning systems on campus.

Lecturers were given masks and gloves, as well as thermometers to facilitate early detection of suspected SARS cases. "Our lecturer took our temperatures before we headed to the lab for our lesson," said Nur Azmy bin Muhammad, 20, a final-year Civil & Environmental Engineering (CEE) student. Students who had travelled to SARS-affected countries would be home quarantined.

SS Officer Mr Vickneshwaran Thangavelu, 33, said that although there is no doctor on campus, SS has provided the addresses of two nearby clinics on the NP website, so that students who are unwell can visit a doctor as quickly as possible. Apart from disseminating information, NP has also curtailed co-curricular activities, cancelled or postponed mass student activities, and suspended the Overseas Industrial Training Programme.

Ms Noelene Liew, an Industrial Training Officer with the Student Development and Alumni Relations (SDAR) Office, said, "For the moment, all overseas trips and overseas attachments will be cancelled until further notice." At press time, SDAR was evaluating travel restrictions to various countries.

The school has contacted students overseas, including those on attachment or exchange

programmes. Six students who were on attachment at Beijing University have been recalled, while students in affected countries can return to Singapore if they wish to do so.

Two final-year Horticulture & Landscape Management students on their Industrial Training Programme (ITP) at Changi Airport also had their six-month attachment shortened by a month because of the risk of infection from the high traffic of foreign travellers. Ms Sim Ee Min, ITP lecturer-in-charge at the School of Life Sciences & Chemical Technology, said, "Recalling them was to be on the safe side. If there's an option to take them out of a potentially risky place, we will," she said.

On the measures taken by NP, Mr Vickneshwaran said, "We don't want to make students and parents more anxious than they already are. NP should not over-react or under-react as we are handling a very new incident."

Most students Tribune spoke to felt that NP was doing enough, but at the same time, felt that students had just as much responsibility as the polytechnic to cope with SARS.

CEE student Azmy said, "I think the students also need to find out about SARS on

their own instead of people spoon-feeding them. To be on the safer side, it is better to find out for yourself."

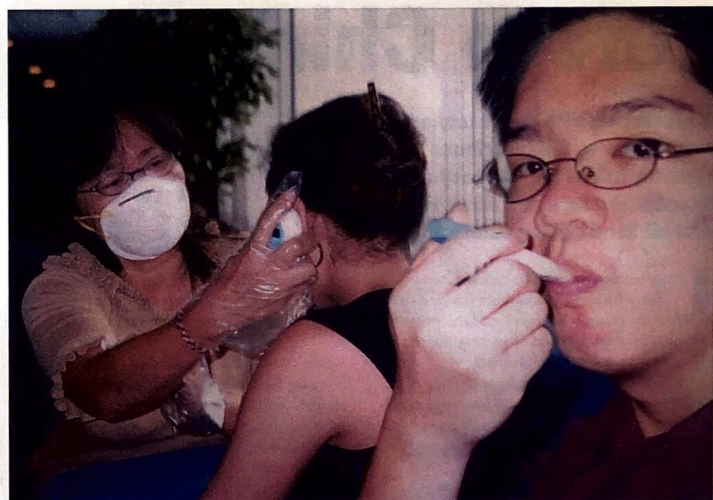
ACC student Swee Ling agreed, "I think whatever is being done is enough because we are young adults and should be sensible enough."

Jachin Tan, 19, a final-year ACC student, also felt better about the school's efforts. "Initially, I felt that not enough was being done as there were only posters and not everyone will read them. But after the lecturers briefed us about SARS, I am proud that the lecturers are concerned about the students' well-being."

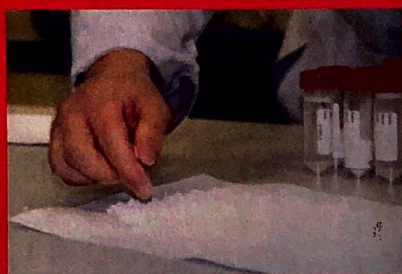
Visiting NP on 8 April, Minister of State for Education and Manpower, Dr Ng Eng Hen was encouraged at how campus life had returned to normal. He praised NP's measures and said Singaporeans can learn from NP.

"Just like this polytechnic, you have to get back to your routine activities and if you put in measures, certain lines of defence, certain precautionary measures, life can go on and indeed as the students have demonstrated, does go on," he said.

Information was correct at press time.



PREVENTIVE MEASURES: Aside from disinfecting the entire campus, NP staff were issued thermometers, gloves and masks to help with the early detection of SARS among the student population. (Posed picture: Noel Hidalgo Tan)



Small particles: LSCT's latest big discovery



Birthday bash: NP celebrates its 40th year



Touch rugby: Women's team faces string of poor results

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Temporary car park raised

BY LIN LIZI
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The second-storey open area outside Canteen Three has been converted into a temporary car park to replace the parking lots next to the Octagon.

The lots have been boarded up for the construction of a new six-storey teaching block under Phase V for the development of Ngee Ann Polytechnic (NP).

The block will be built on the land where the Octagon and Carpark 27 now stand, said Mr Teo Hin Chuan, Manager of Development in NP's Estate Management (EM) office.

According to EM, the new teaching block will have 54 classrooms, replacing Block 56 as the teaching centre. Block 56 will be demolished, making space for the Ngee Ann Convention Centre's (NACC) car park.

The centre's car park, with a capacity of 112 parking lots, will be completed tentatively at the end of October 2004, said Mr Teo. The temporary parking lots outside Canteen Three will then be closed.

Currently, NP staff hold about 860 season car park labels. EM said there are ample parking spaces available for all the season parking vehicles in NP. However, when Tribune visited the temporary car park, cars were seen parking illegally on double yellow lines.

Mr Hassan Bin Mohammad Noor, 47, Project Officer of NP's appointed security agent, Concorde Security Services, said, "We would do our daily rounds and if we spot any vehicles



CARS ONLY: Up to 24 cars can now park at the elevated open area near Canteen Three, but motorcycles are prohibited to ensure pedestrian safety. (Picture: Lin Lizi)

parking illegally in the campus boundary, we would issue the car owners a warning letter. But after a maximum of three warnings, we would seek approval from the management (EM) to wheel-clamp the vehicle."

Wheel-clamped vehicles mostly belonged to visitors and students who parked their vehicles at the staff car park, and they are usually repeat offenders, he said.

The car park outside Canteen Three can hold 24 vehicles. Motorcycles are forbidden, to ensure safety for the pedestrians. New parking lots are also available at Blocks 4, 6, 7, 8, 25 and 27 as well as the convention centre's main entrance to cater for the vehicles that used to

park at the removed car parks, said EM.

EM had put up a "dead-slow" sign at the temporary car park to remind car owners to drive cautiously. It also set up signs at the exits of Canteen Three to warn pedestrians of the moving vehicles.

Mr Teo said that the yellow-and-black concrete kerbs surrounding the parking area and the parapet wall below the red hand railings are strong enough to

withstand the impact of moving vehicles in case of an accident. Plants are also placed at the areas without the kerbs to keep students away. However, the red railings are not designed to resist vehicle impact, he said.

Students Tribune interviewed said that the temporary car park did not pose any inconvenience to them.

He Rui Qiang, 17, first-year Chemical Engineering (CE) student, said, "I believe the vehicles won't be going fast. Drivers will be aware that there are students walking around the area. They will be extra careful when they drive. We will also look out for oncoming vehicles."

However, he felt that more prominent signs should be displayed to highlight possible

dangers to drivers as well as pedestrians. He also suggested having a separate pathway for students to ensure safety.

Joey Tse, 21, final-year Information Technology (IT) student, who eats almost every day at Canteen Three, shared the same sentiment. She said, "The car park did not cause much inconvenience to us. In fact, when we reached school, the cars were already parked there. I don't see much moving vehicles when I walked past."

Both Joey and her coursemate, Tan Yoke Ling, 20, did not know that the car park was a temporary measure of the Phase V Development.

"I thought the school wanted to make use of this empty space. I didn't know that it's only a temporary car park," said Yoke Ling, a final-year IT student. According to them, students from the School of Information & Communications Technology usually have their classes at the nearby Blocks 27 or 31.

Mr Johnson Yeo, 55, chief cook of Canteen Three's Chinese Gourmet stall, said in Mandarin, "The temporary car park did not affect us. None of us in the canteen drives. Hence, we are not affected by it at all. So far, we have not seen or heard of any accidents and complaints."

Mr K. S. Periasami, a lecturer at the Building & Environment Division, said, "To me it doesn't cause any inconvenience. The parking lots are defined and there is adequate space for pedestrians to pass through."

EM said that no complaint has been received and no accident has been reported. ■

Left in China

A pioneer on NP's first exchange programme to China, Tribune reporter DIANA SIM shares her experience and a new lifestyle on and off her Zhejiang campus.

Left-handers seem to be rare in China. Many Chinese nationals are amazed that I write with my left hand. In fact, when I demonstrated my method of writing, some Chinese friends almost applauded.

Orthodox strokes in Chinese characters are written from left to right. For a left-hander, my strokes go from right to left. Hence, I was told that Chinese children are usually "corrected" if they use their left hands to write.

Coincidentally, Teo Ying, my fellow exchange student from the School of Film & Media Studies (FMS), is also a left-hander, leading a friend to wonder if all Singaporeans are left-handers.

My left hand has served me well as lecturers here do not distribute lecture notes. Unlike FMS lecturers who prepare PowerPoint slides or transparencies, my journalism lecturers (the Journalism Department is equivalent to FMS) expect students to jot notes while they rattle on.

Before coming to Zhejiang University City College (ZUCC), I feared not understanding the accent of the Chinese lecturers. However, all my lecturers speak standard Mandarin. For example, Professor Wang, who teaches Interviewing & Newswriting Skills, is trained at the renowned Beijing Broadcasting Institute and

speaks Beijing *putonghua*. He was one of two lecturers who visited Ngee Ann Polytechnic (NP) on the exchange programme last semester.

The subjects here are more theory-based than in NP. Lecturers teach from the textbooks and explain real-life case studies, asking only occasional questions. Students tend to have fewer class discussions.

Although there are few assignments per module, ZUCC students take more than ten subjects each semester, with lessons from morning to night. ZUCC students also tend to be punctual unlike the familiar NP scenario of late-comers strolling into class after lessons have started. Students I spoke to said they reach the lecture hall early to grab the front seats so they can concentrate better.

The eight ZUCC exchange students who had been to NP were the first to bring us around. My classmates are also friendly, even volunteering to be our guides. So far, we have visited the famous West Lake and admired plum blossoms in the Botanical Garden.

Since this is the first exchange programme between NP and ZUCC, many Chinese students are eager to learn more about Singapore. Ying and I have been interviewed by the campus radio station, the Journalism Department's newspaper and the campus newspaper. As our Chinese counterparts usually think that Singaporeans are English-speaking, I have had to explain that most Singaporean Chinese do speak Mandarin.

During our interviews, we like to point out the oiliness and saltiness of local dishes. The seven NP students survived on instant noodles

and biscuits for the first two weeks. But our tongues have become numb and we have found a cafeteria which provides more healthful dishes. We also have home-made soup every week to "cleanse" our stomach, prepared by Mrs Yeo, the wife of our NP lecturer-in-charge, Mr Peter Yeo.

Complaints aside, we are grateful that the college has done its best to make our hostel stay comfortable. We have electricity throughout the night, whereas local students have their electricity cut off at 11pm every night except on Fridays and Saturdays. Also, we have an air-conditioner cum heater, a luxury not enjoyed by other students. Our hostel room has thus become a cosy haunt for our local friends seeking warmth and a friendly chat.

However, campus life contrasts greatly with the world outside.

Besides learning to bargain with vendors who ask for ridiculous prices, the most hazardous issue I face is the crossing of roads. Besides speeding drivers, I must dodge numerous bicycles seemingly engaged in an Olympic competition. There are no traffic lights to stop vehicles at short-distance pedestrian crossings, but even with traffic lights, reckless drivers may still dash across. And let's not forget, it is left-hand driving in China.

So while my left hand remains free to scribble, I have to be corrected still – to look to the left instead. ■

At press time, Diana reported that with mounting figures of SARS cases, many people in China appear concerned. The NP students are avoiding crowded places as a safety precaution.

Convention Centre Spoiler

JUST BEFORE its anticipated opening, Ngee Ann Polytechnic (NP)'s Convention Centre was beset by problems that delayed its opening.

The centre was initially aimed to open during Open House 2003.

However, on 17 February, three days before Open House, a lorry crane crashed onto the side of the building, denting the steel cladding.

According to Estate Management Office (EM) Manager Mr Richard Loo, the lorry crane was parked on the slope outside Block 53 when the accident happened. No one was hurt.

After Tribune contacted both EM and NP's Corporate Communications office, a statement from the latter said, "The contractors... confirmed that the weight of the soil hoisted was well within the capacity of the crane and that all statutory requirements under the Factories (Building Operations & Works of Engineering Construction) Regulation 1999 were observed at the time of the incident."

But an additional issue has surfaced. While NP had made preparations for the Open House to be held in the Convention Centre, the venue had not been certified safe for occupation by the Building and Construction Authority (BCA).

NP did not have a Temporary Occupation Permit (TOP) to hold the Open House at the centre. The BCA website showed that a TOP was only issued for the Convention Centre on 27 March 2003. NP's 40th anniversary dinner at the centre was held on 28 March.

At press time, after repeated queries, Tribune was unable to get a reply from Corporate Communications on why the centre had no TOP for the Open House period. ■

— HILARY ISAAC HOE &
NOEL HIDALGO TAN

War: Students and staff speak up

As far as the war in Iraq goes, Singaporeans appear to prefer silence or apathy. But what do people really think about the war? AARON WONG and NOEL HIDALGO TAN pick the minds of some on campus.

While Singaporeans have generally remained silent on the issue of the war on Iraq, several small-scale anti-war movements have garnered notice from the national press. For example, political activist group Think Centre organised an online petition against the war which was sent to the Prime Minister's Office and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. At the Substation, a candlelight concert was held on 31 March for peace, in response to the US-led war.

Ngee Ann Polytechnic (NP) also had its share of anti-war actions. On 17 March, anti-war posters were put up on campus. The A4-sized, black-and-white posters carried images of war – including the famous Vietnam War photo of Phan Thi Kim Phuc – and a short message about how war destroys innocent lives.

There was no indication on the posters of the identity of the person or organisation that made them.

According to Mr Vickneshwaran Thangavelu of the Student Services Office, some 15 to 20 posters were placed in various locations in school such as the walls outside the School of Film & Media Studies and on the covered walkways between Blocks 56 and 23.

The posters were taken down the same day by the school authorities, and Mr Vickneshwaran said that such actions "were not particularly condoned" in school and amounted to "vandalism".

By far, the most visible anti-war movement in NP has to be the White Ribbon campaign started by final-year Mass Communication student Daniel Yap.

"I'm a peace advocate just trying to give peace a voice collectively," said the 24-year-old. Daniel has been giving out white ribbons and safety pins to friends and their friends – so far, he has given out some 400 ribbons.

Daniel added, "I agree that Saddam should be punished for his wrongs, but not at the cost that George Bush is willing to pay. If there's a murderer in Ang Mo Kio, you don't wipe out the entire town just to get the murderer and say, 'We got him!'"

Fellow Singaporean and President of the Muslim Students' Society Khairu Redjan echoed Daniel's sentiment. "It's a sad issue, because humanitarian-wise, you see people dying," said the 22-year-old first-year Electrical Engineering student. "We must have compassion for this kind of thing. I would like to quote from the Pope. He said it's a sad thing that people are killing themselves."

Ann Koay, 19, a second-year Biotechnology student, was more hesitant about the war. She said, "[I have] kinda mixed feelings. Firstly, you feel that America is going to clean up Iraq, yet people around you say that 'war is not good'. I think it's a necessary evil."

Second-year Building & Real Estate Management student, Ben Pok, 18, said, "I think I'm neutral. Because each of them have their reasons for doing what they want."

"For Saddam, maybe he has his reason for shooting his people like that. And for Bush,

maybe he has his own personal reason that we don't know, but he's making use of his various resources to conquer the place. That's why me as an outsider, I can't quite understand what they are thinking."

Among NP staff, there are mixed reactions.

Mr Jean François Noël Ghesquière, a French lecturer from the School of Interdisciplinary Studies (IS), said that the current war is a "job that should have been done 12 years ago", referring to the Gulf War in 1991. He said, "We can only hope the war will be fast, and there will be as little deaths as possible."

Mr Ernest Abbot, 56, a lecturer at the Mathematics, Science & Computing Division, believes that neither the pro nor anti-war brigade has made a compelling argument.

"The French believe that disarmament can be done peacefully, but they don't say 'how'. Their arguments are all so poor," added the British national and

Singapore permanent resident.

Mr Shandon Quinn, 22, a lecturer at the School of Life Sciences & Chemical Technology, said, "As an American citizen, I put a certain

amount of trust in my government and I'm sure that their actions and motivations are to be trusted, so I don't second-guess too many of the decisions my government makes."

"In this case, when it is such a very controversial issue and talked-about issue, I imagine that there are a lot of people in the US government who believe that there are good reasons for the actions that have been taken."

Ms Zaibun Siraj, Director of the International Students Centre, disagreed.

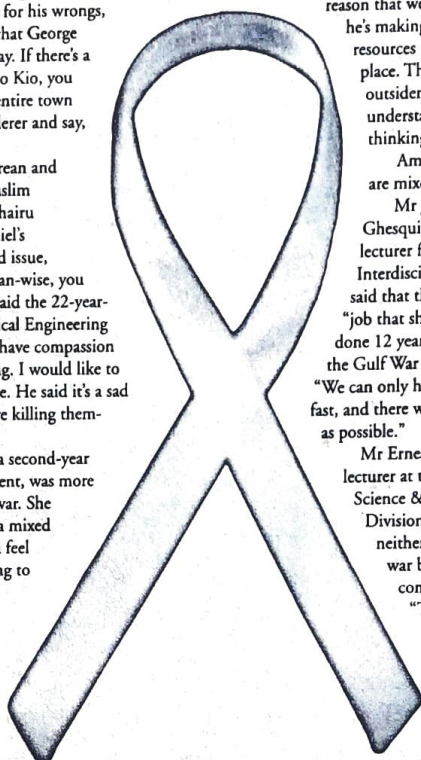
She said, "I think [the war is] wrong. The US went against the UN and the whole process of democracy."

For Japanese IS lecturer Ms Kumiko Azuma, 25, the legitimacy of the war on Iraq was not her only concern.

"My thinking is changing now because America is becoming a big power in the world. Because America didn't tell UN that they began war by themselves. In the future, maybe America will do the same to other countries. If America attacks North Korea, maybe Japan is involved in the war," she said. Last October, North Korea revealed that it contravened a 1994 agreement with the US by pursuing a nuclear weapons programme.

Senior lecturer from the School of Business & Accountancy, Ms Katherine Ng said, "At the end of the day, although you may have a victor, but there's a big price to pay in terms of human lives... For most Singaporeans, SARS was more important. It had a deeper impact."

Daniel believes that whatever the results of the war, the ends don't justify the means. "Sometimes war accomplishes certain things, but just because something good came out of something bad, doesn't mean that the bad thing is a good thing," said Daniel. "Should I kill a man to learn that I should not kill? The act itself is inexcusable." ■



Bigger effects now possible with smaller drug particles

BY KEH CHIEN YUNG
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Ngee Ann Polytechnic (NP) Chemical Engineering (CE) lecturer has successfully developed a method of mass producing particles 1/80,000 of the diameter of a human hair. This paves the way for savings in the medical industry.

Ibuprofen, the salt being studied, is a common painkiller for swelling caused by diseases, including arthritis, said Dr Wang Danmei, who pioneered this project in 2000.

Once the exact size of the nano-particle can be determined, the dosage of Ibuprofen used can be reduced. "By reducing the dosage, you can reduce the side effects and by reducing the dosage, you can reduce the cost," she added.

Dr Wang also said that this is the first time that a method is found to mass produce nano-particles in Singapore. Scientists in United States, Australia, Russia and Japan also work to produce very minute particles, but so far in

general, have usually succeeded on a small scale, measured in grammes.

"From the studies they are doing, they got a long way to go before commercialising. For us, it's much shorter," she said. Currently, as Dr Wang revealed, in CE's case, the scale is measured in kilogrammes so that 140g of nano-particles are produced per minute at the nanoscience lab in Block 40.

This project has so far only expended half of its \$1 million grant from the Agency for Science, Technology and Research (A*STAR).

"We are trying to develop this process, we aren't trying to change the way to develop Ibuprofen," Dr Wang said, adding that this knowledge of mass production is basically to add value to the industry.

She chose to study Ibuprofen because of its unique qualities. "For us, technology has been successful in applying to inorganic salt, and our target is to try to develop a technology which we can apply to organic crystallised salt," she said. "Ibuprofen is basically an organic crystal. And

most importantly, it's insoluble in water."

As a result of its insolubility, Ibuprofen tablets come with a higher dosage than what the human body can take.

"Take 200 milligrammes of Ibuprofen for example. When that's taken into your body, the drug that's effective in your blood may be only 20 percent," she explained. "We are trying to push this level up to 40 to 50 percent."

The other 80 percent goes unabsorbed and may be harmful to the body, she added. In some cases, the unabsorbed Ibuprofen may worsen bleeding conditions.

To solve the problem of Ibuprofen's insolubility, its size should be broken down into the nano range.

"We are trying to break down the particle size, thus the surface area will increase and because the surface area increases, this will increase the solubility although the physical properties still remain the same," she said.

Dr Wang Yuhong, a Research Engineer from Beijing also working on this project, said

that the increase in surface area comes from the formation of new surface areas when an object is cut.

Even a dent or a jagged edge on an object can cause the surface area to increase, he added, meaning the drug has more contact with the bodily fluids and increased chances of being dissolved.

The two lecturers are now conducting tests to produce better quality particles of Ibuprofen. "Our target is to produce the particles as small as we can and also as uniform as we can," said Dr Wang Danmei.

However, she added that she is unable to say how much can be saved from manufacturing the Ibuprofen tablet using the newly developed knowledge as "we are not in that stage yet".

Dr Wang hopes that her technique of mass producing nano-sized Ibuprofen will be ready for commercialisation by June. She said that NP's industrial partner, NanoMaterials Technology, is working on the method to achieve that goal. ■

40 years in th

FROM ITS HUMBLE BEGINNING AS A SMALL ESTABLISHMENT, NP MARKS ITS 40th BIRTHDAY. FROM A BOOK CHRONICLING ITS ACHIEVEMENTS, TRIBUNE BRINGS YOU THE BIRTHDAY BASH.

Alumni and staff celebrate with dinner at Convention Centre

BY MARK NG
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Ngee Ann Polytechnic (NP) kick started celebrations for its 40th anniversary on 28 March with a dinner at the new Ngee Ann Convention Centre.

The dinner, which saw some 400 staff and prominent NP graduates in attendance, was the first major event held in the convention centre. Education Minister, Rear-Admiral (RADM) Teo Chee Hean was the Guest of Honour.

The highlight of the dinner was the cutting of the birthday cake, celebrating NP's 40 years. As the candles were blown out and RADM Teo cut the cake, the guests toasted NP's future.

RADM Teo, who sat on the NP Advisory Board in the 1980s, said, "I'm happy to see where Ngee Ann has grown to be today. One of the things that it has always placed great emphasis on was the quality as well as the relevance of the education that it provides for its students."

Said Eugene Chong, 24, a second-year Electronic & Computer Engineering (ECE) student and a member of NP's Hip Hop Club, "Actually I didn't know it was such a grand event until I saw the 40th anniversary banner and was quite shocked to perform in front of such an event."

"But I think it is a privilege to perform in front of all the guests. It's not every day that you get to perform in front of such an important crowd," Eugene added.

"It was a very good event, considered

that it is mostly run by students. I think the last performance by Magnum Force was great and very exciting, and seeing these young people made me feel young again!" said Mr Sim Wong Hoo, Chief Executive Officer of Creative Technology and NP ECE graduate from the class of 1975.

During the dinner, a video presentation, which chronicled NP's most memorable moments and the changes it underwent also, invoked feelings of nostalgia.

"Having been in NP for 3 years, I have learnt a lot and grown up a lot. I feel that NP is my second home as there is a stronger bond with my friends and the lecturers here are much closer to us," said Denise Sum, 21, a final-year Accountancy student and member of Magnum Force, on her feelings about the video.

"It really brought me back to the good old days of how NP started, and reminded me of what it has achieved, what it is today with its students. It has definitely set a benchmark for the rest of the polytechnics," said Edwin Siew, a member of the Singaporean team that scaled Mount Everest in 2000 and a graduate from the class of 1992 in Building Services Engineering.

The video also gave the audience the opportunity to know more about the polytechnic's history. "I wasn't exactly brought through the whole Ngee Ann system so I didn't know much about the school's history. This was the first time I actually got to see how we got to where we are and allowed me to know more of the background of the polytechnic which I graduated from," said Elaine Chua, the first Asian woman to attempt to sail around the world. She graduated from NP in 1997.

Awards were given out to the chairmen of the various school advisory councils and to the entire NP advisory council for their services to the polytechnic.

Special thanks was also given to a group of students from the School of Film & Media Studies and their lecturer-in-charge, Mr Desmond Kon, who produced a commemora-

tive publication about NP as part of the celebrations.

A mini-pyrotechnic display brought the dinner performance to a close, with streamers and confetti. Student performers also came out with party poppers to celebrate. As they left, guests received a complimentary copy of the 40th anniversary commemorative publication.

Cultural performances and vibrant displays by various NP clubs, like the Harmonica Troupe, NP Strings, and Magnum Force, had entertained the audience and helped build the atmosphere for a truly enjoyable evening.

The Principal, Mr Chia Mia Chiang, praised everyone involved in the event.

"I think it exceeded our expectations in every way, because it is such a big event involving hundreds of students, so we were expecting some hitches here and there, but as it turned out, everything was to clockwork precision and the students did marvellously well," he said.

NP's seventh principal stressed that while it was a tremendous achievement to be around for 40 years, the polytechnic has a long way ahead. "I think we have a track record that anyone can be proud of. But the point is not to rest on our laurels and there are many more years ahead. It is up to us to try ever harder," he said.

Mr Wee Tew Lim, the Chief Executive Officer of Network of Electronic Transfer Singapore (NETS), Vice-chairman of the NP advisory council and Chairman of the advisory council in the School of Information & Communications Technology, agreed. "While we celebrate our 40th Anniversary, and look back with pride, we also have to think of what needs to be done in the coming years. We want the people who gather to celebrate the 80th Anniversary to say that the last 40 years have been fantastic and NP is even better than it was in 2003. That would be a real achievement."



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MENT TO EVOLVING INTO A
40TH ANNIVERSARY THIS
TO A DINNER CELEBRA-



Memories in a flash

BY WOO SUE-ANN
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To celebrate Ngee Ann Polytechnic's (NP) 40th anniversary, a team of students, lecturers, directors and non-teaching staff have collaborated to produce a publication that pays tribute to the people who have moulded NP and envisions the school's future.

Instead of a bound book, the publication is a series of 40 mostly A4-sized flash cards, representing 40 years of NP history.

Each card tells a story. On one side lies a photograph or a graphic representation, and on the other, anecdotal write-ups of NP's monumental achievements or moments.

For instance, Flash Card 18 with a cheerful photograph of a child on a slide represents Block 18 on campus, which houses the faculty and students of the Early Childhood Education programme, a unique offering in a Singaporean polytechnic.

Other cards range from profiles of NP graduates to questionnaires that reveal interesting trivia about NP.

Produced mainly by a group of Mass Communication (MCM) students taking the Book Writing & Publishing elective, work on the publication, which began in August last year, saw the team of students work on it for days on end, often with little sleep.

The publication was launched at NP's 40th anniversary dinner on 28 March at the Ngee Ann Convention Centre.

Student editor of the publication, Catherine Tan, 21, third-year MCM student recounts the six-month experience. "All the information... having to understand and organise and go through," she said, "it was tiring."

Besides the scheduling of many photographs and tight deadlines, Catherine had to

constantly evaluate the direction the book was taking. "Sometimes, the numerical linkages seemed to work really well. Then sometimes, they just didn't seem to make sense. So it was a lot of re-arranging and constantly adapting. Even when you went back home, you could still see the numbers floating in your head."

The effort, however, has paid off. Ms Tan Seow Wei, 24, Research Officer with the NP Library, is one of the many library staff credited for their help in research. She was pleasantly surprised when she first saw the publication. "It's much better than I thought," she said, with reference to the link between the 40 numbers and each corresponding story.

"It's not your typical anniversary book," she added. "It's different because unlike NP's 25th anniversary book that was in chronological order, [this was] interesting and unconventional."

When Tribune showed the publication to Mr William Timmins, 49, a lecturer in the Electronic & Computer Engineering Division, his first impression was, "Why can't they just make it in a book?"

However, as he flipped through the flash cards, he said, "It looks like they had a lot of fun with the visuals." He added, "It's an interesting result and I like the strong photographs."

Breaking away from the traditional book format, the publication has sought to be new and creative. Said Editor-in-Chief, Mr Desmond Kon, 31, a lecturer from the School of Film & Media Studies, "It helps show, really, that we can re-invent new ways of telling our story."

Sue-Ann is the editor of 'hype' magazine, Ngee Ann Polytechnic's campus magazine.



Pictures: Jack Sim

Ngee Ann Polytechnic (NP) celebrates its 40th anniversary as an educational institution this year. Here's a look at the significant events and milestones in the school's history.

NP HAS had three name changes in its 40-year history. It started in 1963 as Ngee Ann College, a private institution financed by the Ngee Ann Kongsi, an organisation started by Chinese Teochew immigrants. The college was located at the Teochew Building in Tank Road, and in 1967, it became a legal and independent institution offering engineering and commerce courses. The name was changed to Ngee Ann Technical College (NATC) in 1968 after the shift to the current Clementi campus. The college was renamed NP on 23 June 1981.

OUR FIRST principal, who is also our only female principal, was Professor Liu Yin Soon. Upon her death, the Prof Liu Yin Soon Scholarship Fund was set up with income from the sale of three properties she had willed to NP. To date, NP has had seven principals.

TODAY, NP has six schools specialising in more than 26 fields and a student population of more than 14,000.

IN 1983, NP hosted the weightlifting and boxing events during the 12th Southeast Asian (SEA) Games in our multi-purpose hall.

TWO OF NP's mass media vehicles, Radio Hearwave and campus newspaper Tribune, were started in 1993. They are managed by Mass Communication students taking Advanced Radio Production and Print Journalism respectively.

NPNET, A \$9 million campus computer network, was launched on 15 October 1993. NP became the first local polytechnic to boost such a network. NPNet also marked the campus' upgrading to the use of PCs equipped with Microsoft Windows, graphics and colour monitors.

NP BECAME the first tertiary institution to join the Singapore Kindness Movement in April 1999. NP was also recognised for its community efforts and as the number one corporate donor.

THE DIPLOMA in Early Childhood Education which began in 1999 was the first local course of its kind. Its first student intake graduated in 2002.

NP'S ALPHA Centre was awarded the Excellence for Singapore Award in year 2000 for its long-standing achievement in robotics, the first time a polytechnic has received such an award.

IN NOVEMBER 2000, the NP Access for All (NPal) system was unveiled to streamline administrative applications in NP. Subsequently, from this semester, students can obtain personal data from school such as exam results, attendance records, Co-Curricular Activity (CCA) points and timetables, and update their personal records via the internet.

THE NGEEN Learning Model (NLM) was introduced in July 2001. With the School of Interdisciplinary Studies (IS), students are provided with a more broad-based education as they are able to opt for subjects not directly related to their course modules.

THE INNOHUB was unveiled in January 2002 to showcase technological expertise, provide consultancy services, and offer research and development (R&D) experience.

THROUGH THE years, NP graduates have made a mark with their entrepreneurship. For example, Mr Sim Wong Hoo, an NATC graduate and founder of Creative Technology Ltd, pioneered the uniquely successful Sound Blaster sound card used in personal computers worldwide. His multi-billion dollar company has been listed on the US NASDAQ alongside information technology giants such as Microsoft.

NP STUDENTS and graduates have also attained external adventuring achievements. For instance, in October 1983, six representatives planted the NP flag on Tent Peak in Nepal's Annapurna Range. The 22-day expedition was a first for a local institution. Ms Elaine Chua San-San (Business Studies, Class of 1997) became the first Singaporean to complete the BT Global Challenge, a 10-month race regarded as "The World's Toughest Yacht Race". Mr Edwin Siew Cheok Wai (Building Services Engineering, Class of 1992) became the first Singaporean to reach the summit of Mount Everest on 25 May 1998. He later planted the NP flag on the highest peak in Antarctica, Mount Vinson Massif.

- Compiled by Neo Chai Ying and Amanda Koh

Source: NP's 40th Anniversary Commemorative Publication

Finding hope



BY KELVIN BIK
kelvin_bik@journalist.com

She haunts me – Anne Frank. I don't recall in detail what she wrote in her diary when she went into hiding as a result of Nazi persecution.

For two years, the 13-year-old Jewish girl, her family and some friends cut themselves off from human contact while World War II raged on. In their self-quarantine, they sought to preserve themselves, to live.

But I recall clearly Anne's face staring at me from a book cover, a young girl smiling and thankful for being able to write, for her life, even in such severe conditions.

I'm haunted though by facts recorded by her biographers.

After two years of hiding, she and her family were betrayed and everyone except Anne's father died. But Anne had fallen because her hope broke. Imprisoned in a

concentration camp, Anne who had been ill had realised that her dearest sister had died.

Death, despair, hope.

This editorial is the third I've written in a fortnight. My previous one written during NP's closure due to SARS had been too full of despair, said my advisor.

That editorial had been clouded by an intense reaction to the hopelessness soaking through our world – the SARS outbreak and the rising number of deaths, the war in Iraq, even the despair I saw in messages from severely depressed friends.

I had written about how I became sub-human in this time of uncertainty.

I tried to quarantine myself from the world, to block out the news that came flooding in like a quagmire that ensnared.

How strange it is for me, a newspaper editor, to forcibly clamp my hands over my ears like a child refusing to face the world.

Unlike Anne who wrote honestly in her intimate diary, I hide in cryptic poetry and essays embedded with ambiguous words.

Unlike Anne, unlike my grandparents, I've not lived through a war. Any war. The only deaths I know personally are those of accidents

and of violence. I don't recall crying for anyone's death, except that of a dear friend a long time ago.

Some sixty years of history divide Anne and I, but a greater gulf divides us.

Anne had a spirit, a desire to live, to love; she had blossomed in the shadows. She died, yes, in much suffering, but she had lived. She had embraced her life with a passion that haunts me.

I remember another Anne, a fictional Anne. Anne Shirley, under the pen of L. M. Montgomery, was a feisty red-haired girl whose passion to write was equalled only by her desire to live fully.

That Anne too had her hope broken when her child died, but the pain became then a heightened compassion for her friends, her family.

I know yet another Anne, a friend and a single mother with a lovely child. She's not a writer; she's simple in her words and faith, but rising from her trials, she extends her warmth, her listening ear to her friends.

What hope then in this world, but one that haunts me, arising phoenix-like from a passion to live and the compassion to share.

The Ngee Ann Tribune
is a publication by third-year print
journalism students of the Diploma in
Mass Communication course.

TRIBUNE
Ngee Ann Polytechnic's campus newspaper

Advisors: Veronica Leng
Choy Kok Kee

Editors: Amanda Koh
Kelvin Bik
Noel Hidalgo Tan

Designer: Hilary Isaac Hoe

If you have anything to say, contact us and be published here. Let your story be known. We also welcome our readers' feedback and suggestions on each issue. Please write to:

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Website: www.nptribune.com
Letters should include your full name, contact number and school. The editorial team reserves the right to edit all letters where necessary.

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Anthology launched

BY KELVIN BIK
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Ngee Ann Polytechnic launched its first creative anthology featuring some 40 published and student writers at library@Orchard on 28 March.

"We have our campus newspaper, magazine, TV, radio and even e-zine," said Mr Desmond Kon, the book's editor-in-chief and a lecturer at the School of Film & Media Studies (FMS). "It was about time we put out a book, and it's arguably the oldest medium."

The anthology, titled "Don't Judge A Book By Its Cover" AKA "Dead People, Flying Fishes And The Ones Who Missed The Boat", was co-published by Beaumont Publishing. It was produced by FMS' Book Writing & Publishing elective students, taught by Mr Kon.

About 150 people attended the launch, which saw contributors such as well-known writers Robert Yeo and Kirpal Singh reading their works.

Mr Kirpal Singh, 54, Associate Professor of Literature at the Singapore Management University, said via email, "For a book which set out to highlight, showcase and bring together some truly wonderful writers and writings, the quality is unmistakable." He added, however, that like most other anthologies, the book had an uneven quality in terms of its contents.

Rachel Fang, 20, a final-year Mass Communication student taking the FMS elective, had submitted about 10 poems, three of which were published. "I write because we have to expose ourselves to be judged, so that there may be a chance of being worth something to somebody other than yourself," she said.

The free book, with its sole print run of 1,000 copies, focused on the theme of one's writing condition.

Kelvin Bik was managing editor, writer and layout designer for the anthology.

Volunteers needed

There are many places near Ngee Ann Polytechnic (NP) where you can volunteer your time for the community. From gardening, to interacting with residents or working as a museum guide, **BRANDON TAY** and **NOEL HIDALGO TAN** find some places where you can take a short bus ride to offer help.

BUKIT TIMAH NATURE RESERVE

Bukit Timah Nature Reserve, 177 Hindhead Drive, Singapore 589333

Located a few stops away from NP at Upper Bukit Timah Road, the Bukit Timah Nature Reserve has one of the largest primary rainforests in Singapore. Visitors come to the reserve to bird-watch, cycle and trek. The reserve has opportunities for volunteers to help promote nature awareness through the Nature Reserve Volunteers Programme.

Volunteer Opportunities: Guiding walks, reforestation, educational activities, research, plant propagation, visitor services, publication, design and artwork, photography, IT skills.

Commitment: Once a month, but a minimum of four times a year

Getting there from NP: Take bus service 75 outside NP, and alight at the bus stop after Courts and cross the pedestrian overhead bridge.

Contact: Ms Genevieve Chua at 6462 9203

THE NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF SINGAPORE MUSEUMS

50 Kent Ridge Crescent, Singapore 119279

The National University of Singapore Museums, which started in July 1997, consist of three collections: the Lee Kong Chian Art Museum, the Ng Eng Teng Gallery, and the South and Southeast Asian Gallery. Under the volunteer guides programme, the guides attend intensive training by the museum. Volunteers are currently aged between 16 to 75.

Volunteer Opportunities: Join the volunteer guides programme at the NUS Museums, research, help out at events and activities. Visit

http://www.nus.edu.sg/museums/outreach_volunteer.htm to find out more.

Commitment: Volunteers are placed on a roster to lead a guided tour at least twice a month for an entire year.

Getting there from NP: Bus service 151 towards Clementi

Contact: Ms Ng Leh See at 6874 6496

NATIONAL COUNCIL OF SOCIAL SERVICES (NCSS)

NCSS Centre, 170 Ghim Moh Road #01-02, Singapore 279621

The NCSS is the umbrella body for over 200 welfare organisations in Singapore. Their aim is to enhance the quality of social services by working with voluntary welfare organisations.

Volunteer Opportunities: The NCSS conducts a monthly talk on the last Monday of every month from 7 to 8.30 pm. During these talks, different volunteer welfare organisations conduct presentations on their needs for volunteers.

Commitment: Varied and dependent on the voluntary welfare organisations.

Getting there from NP: Take bus service 74 to Buona Vista MRT and change to bus service 92. Other bus services that go there are 111 and 100.

Contact: Ms Suraiza at 6210 2500

FOOD FROM THE HEART

www.foodfromtheheart.org

After The Straits Times ran a story on bread wastage, Food From The Heart was formed to help distribute unsold bread from participating bakeries to welfare homes and institutions. Needy Singaporeans are also included. Every

day, volunteers collect unsold bread and deliver it to their assigned homes in the morning and evening.

Volunteer Opportunities: Deliver unsold bread from bakeries to designated homes.

Commitment: Volunteers decide on how many collections and deliveries per week they want to give for at least three months. Deliveries can be carried out in the mornings and evenings.

Contact: Download the application form from www.foodfromtheheart.org and send it to Angie at angie@foodfromtheheart.org

SINGAPORE BOTANIC GARDENS

Cluny Road, Singapore 259569

Spanning 52 hectares, this 144-year-old garden is under the care of the National Parks Board. It houses some 600,000 plant specimens and 3,400 plant species, and is a regional resource in the fields of horticulture and botany.

Volunteer opportunities: Guides for rainforest and National Orchid Garden tours, volunteer patrol for the gardens, herbarium volunteers to mount herbarium specimens, database entry of plant records, manning the visitor services booth during concerts.

Commitment: Ability to commit time to the Gardens on a regular basis. A total of at least 10 hours is required per year.

Getting there from NP: Cross the overhead bridge and take bus service 75 to the Singapore Botanic Gardens.

Contact: Email Abdul Hamid Hassan at Abdul_Hamid_HASSAN@NPARKS.GOV.SG

Note: Due to the outbreak of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) in Singapore, a number of welfare homes have stopped accepting volunteers.

Showcasing international cultures

BY AARON WONG
aaronwong@journalist.com

Ngee Ann Polytechnic (NP) students visiting the International Festival were treated to a cultural feast of mini-United Nations' proportions.

Organised by the International Students Centre (ISC) and held at the Atrium on 20 and 21 March, the festival featured 21 countries, mostly from Europe and Asia, including France, the United Kingdom, Malaysia and Japan.

The inaugural festival, divided into four sections, was aimed at exposing NP students to different world cultures, said ISC Director, Ms Zaibun Siraj. "We held this event to provide students with information of the economic and cultural background of various countries, and to give a more international experience."

Although the festival started the day the United States declared war on Iraq, the mood was far from sombre, with one of the biggest crowds at the Atrium this year.

Most participants and visitors interviewed by Tribune gave the festival their thumbs up.

"It's educational. I liked the Turkey booth, mainly because of the ice-cream man," said Mohd Azahari bin Abdul Aziz, 24, a third-year Mechanical Engineering (ME) student, referring to the tricks performed by the ice-cream server dressed in traditional Turkish garb.

The man bewildered his customers by making it almost impossible for them to grab the ice-cream cone properly, by either missing the cone completely, or getting the cone without the ice cream.

Mr Ugur Bayhan, 26, Manager of the Anatolia restaurant which ran the Turkey booth, said, "I've been to about a hundred schools. This is by far the most organised event. We came and everything was done for us already," referring to the colourful décor throughout the Atrium. "Besides, we've done quite well," he added, gesturing to his cash register.

"We try to introduce them to the native products, what they're famous for," said Ms Elizabeth Chia, General Manager of Golden Horn Pte Ltd, who was running the South Africa booth, selling traditional South African and Turkish snacks.

However, the food did not appeal to Bernard Daniel Nicholas, 21, a third-year ME student. "It's redundant. It has made no impact with me. It's mainly food! What culture are they talking about? If I want food, I can find most of it outside anyway," he said.

The Sweden booth, run by the Swedish Women's Education Association (SWEA), was one of the more popular booths. It featured facets of Sweden, such as interior design, festivals and educational opportunities.

"A lot of the people are curious, but some of them don't even know where Sweden is. We give out brochures and talk to them, and it's good for them to know the different countries and cultures. Even I have been walking around getting information (about the other countries)," said Ms Emelie Wicklund, 28, a SWEA member.

At the three-in-one booth of Germany, Switzerland and Austria, visitors were asked to try a quiz about Germany, and were given

traditional German snacks for participating.

Ms Vivian Tsang, who manned the booth and teaches German at the School of Interdisciplinary Studies (IS), said, "It's very successful, the turnout is so good. It's very positive. Everyone is so enthusiastic. I'm very satisfied with the overall décor and atmosphere."

The décor concept came from Mr Tan Soon Liang, 45, graphic designer at NP's Teaching and Learning Centre, who used red and blue balloons festooned on all the pillars, and the flags of each country emblazoned on the canvas behind each booth. An external contractor did all this for a "very cheap" \$15,000, he said, as he was initially quoted double the amount.

ISC volunteers ran some of the booths even though most of them were not citizens of their booth's country.

Lee Chinsze, 18, a Malaysian first-year Accountancy student, manned the U.K. booth, with a range of brochures, as well as traditional British sweets and toffees for tasting.

"We're here to promote Britain and tell the students about some of the places, and distributing flyers. It's useful for those who want to know more about further studies in Britain," said Chinsze, who added he had a fairly good knowledge of Britain.

Anil Kumar, 20, stationed at the France booth, was equally confident. "I took French for my IS class. I think I know enough about France. Some of them ask about the restaurants, some of them want to go backpacking."

Anil, a second-year Electronic & Computer Engineering student and ISC member, believed his France booth was the most popular. "We tell

them about things to do in France as a student. Other booths have limited information in this respect. We'll tell you vis-à-vis about the country. Ask anything about France!"

Some booth operators thought it was difficult to communicate the country's culture, one of the festival's aims.

"I'm not really telling them about the culture, just raising the awareness of my shop," said Ms Aileen Kwok, an ornamental shop owner. "Anyway, students have not been asking about culture. They're more interested in my products," she said.

Kalle Koskela, 23, and Aki Levanen, 24, sitting at the Finland booth, spoke to about five students in the two hours that they were there.

"It's difficult. Everybody comes, takes one paper and leaves. It's not much. If someone hangs around, we give them a brochure. 'Here you are,' that's all," said Kalle in halting English, as Aki nodded in agreement.

Kalle and Aki are in NP as part of an exchange programme with Mechanical Engineering Division, doing the Logistics Engineering & Management diploma.

Both were part of a Finnish dance performance, one of many items that were featured over the two days.

Another performer was Daniel Yap, 24, a third-year Mass Communication student, who sang a French song from the popular movie *Moulin Rouge*.

"The festival was very amicable," he said. "People were out to get to know other cultures better, not bomb them into the Stone Age," he said, referring to the US-Iraq conflict. ■

Rui-En

UNPLUGGED

BY NEO CHAI YING
chaiying@journalist.com

Home-grown newcomer Lu Rui-En performed in Ngee Ann Polytechnic (NP) to a full house on 20 March at Lecture Theatre (LT) 26 to promote her debut Mandarin album 'Rui-En Vol. 1'.

The 500 free tickets distributed at the Atrium were snapped up in less than half an hour. NP's Poly Stage Production (PSP), organiser of the concert, said this was one of the fastest ticket distribution for any concert they have held.

Fang Poh Lian, 19, a second-year Biomedical Science student who queued for an hour before the concert, said, "We thought that she was worth seeing. And we also thought it's worth the wait outside."

The highlight of her concert was her unplugged session, which also marked her first time singing in English during a performance. Rui-En was accompanied on the guitar by Jim Lim of local group Dreamz FM. She sang two popular English songs, 'Kiss Me' and 'Angel'.

Many of the 400 students in the audience were on their feet, dancing with Rui-En as she sang and ended with a simple unplugged thank-you encore.

Rui-En is best remembered for her appearance in a SingTel hi Card television commercial a few years ago. She has since signed a 10-year contract with local record company Hype Records. "Ten years doesn't really scare me because I know I am serious about being a



Michelle Goh

singer and this is something that I really really like to do," said Rui-En.

Aside from the lack of freedom that comes with popularity, there is an added pressure of school weighing the 22-year-old down. "It's awful... I try my best but it takes a lot of discipline and will-power," said the final-year business student in Nanyang Technological University. "Initially, I found it really hard to adjust." Rui-En said she avoids missing classes and her record company tries to accommodate her schedule.

Rui-En has thought of quitting school to concentrate on her career, but later decided that she will finish her degree, feeling it would be too "idealistic and romantic" to quit school and decided "to just get it over and done with".

"If you are always going to ask 'what if', you are never going to know. At least go for it and you know because you have tried it," she said. ■

NP welcomes Mei Ling

BY MICHELLE GOH
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Ngee Ann Polytechnic's (NP) students were treated to new Taiwanese singer Luo Mei Ling's first campus concert in Singapore on 19 March at Lecture Theatre 26.

Jointly organised by Poly Stage Production (PSP), MediaCorp Radio Y.E.S. 93.3 FM and Mei Ling's record company BMG, this was her first campus concert in Singapore to promote her debut album, 'Hong Se Xiang Ri Kui' or 'My Red Helianthus' in English. Helianthus is more commonly known as the sunflower.

Though a newcomer in the Chinese pop scene, 600 tickets to her concert were distributed in half an hour although only 250 to 280 students turned up at the event. The response is considered "good" for a new singer, said PSP's President, Adrian Kong, 20, a third-year Information Technology student. He said, "Although this is her first time in Singapore and not much promotion were done to promote the album, people still take her tickets."

He added, "We cannot keep bringing in popular singers. We must also help to promote new artistes."

PSP tried to generate more publicity by playing her songs at the Atrium when distributing the tickets and putting up posters with

concert details on the notice boards.

However, there were still some students like Hwee Chiu Sang, 22, a first-year Electronic & Computer Engineering student, who were familiar with Mei Ling and queued up an hour before the 5 pm concert.

Chui Sang was first in line with her two friends. She said, "I quite like her songs and I think she can sing quite well." They also hoped they could take some photos with her.

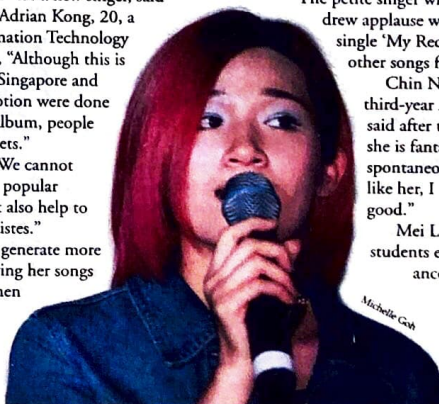
Hosted by Y.E.S. 93.3 FM deejay, Zhou Chong Qing, the one-hour concert got off to a rousing start when the students cheered and clapped for Mei Ling.

"I think performing here gives me a very posh feeling unlike outdoor performances when it can get chaotic and noisy. I feel like it's my own concert," said Mei Ling in Mandarin.

The petite singer with flaming red hair drew applause when she sang her hit single 'My Red Helianthus' and four other songs from her album.

Chin Nguen Shiong, 20, a third-year Accountancy student said after the concert, "I think she is fantastic and very spontaneous. For a new singer like her, I think she is quite good."

Mei Ling was glad that students enjoyed the performance. She said, "I just want to perform to the best of my abilities and hope that everyone will enjoy the concert." ■



Michelle Goh

Looking back at Touch Rugby's poor finish

BY MICHELLE GOH
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Ngee Ann Polytechnic's (NP) touch rugby team finished a miserable second last in the annual Institute-Varsity-Polytechnic (IVP) competition. To rub salt into the wound, newcomer Singapore Management University (SMU) finished ahead of NP.

Held from 13 February to 3 March at Nanyang Polytechnic (NYP), this year's tournament saw the introduction of two new teams - SMU and combined Institute of Technical Education (ITE) East.

Team captain Suhailin Abas, 22, a third-year student from Early Childhood Education, was initially optimistic about NP's chances, "aiming for fourth or fifth" out of eight teams despite facing stiff competition from Temasek Polytechnic (TP) and Singapore Polytechnic (SP).

NP started off their IVP campaign against the highly fancied TP. But lack of fitness and teamwork saw the team tiring and losing 0-10.

Coach Albert Tan, 22, pointed out many factors for the defeat. He said, "The team has no proper pattern of play and we lack basic ball skills and fitness. We don't have their explosive pace to create openings. A lot of work needs to be done."

Shell-shocked and visibly disappointed by this defeat, Suhailin said, "I expected the team to perform better, in terms of ball-handling and basic skills."

"The team spirit wasn't there, we didn't gel together at all," she added.

NP put up a stronger fight against host NYP in the next match. But the lack of ideas in attack led to their downfall as NP lost the match 0-3 after defensive lapses gave NYP the tries.

A dubious refereeing decision was the turning point in the match against SP. Trailing SP by a try, the referee disallowed an NP try claiming that the ball was dropped. The referee then called for a change over and ball possession was given back to SP. NP went on to concede four more tries to lose 0-5.

Kym Chua, 20, a third-year student from Business Studies (BS), felt that the lack of teamwork contributed to the defeats. She said, "Touch rugby is a team sport, team spirit is important. Individualism will not get the team anywhere."

However, NP raised their game against defending champions, National University of Singapore (NUS). Though the NUS players were faster, fitter and more experienced, NP maintained their discipline and played to their own pace. With a defensive strategy, the NP team worked hard covering for each other unlike the first few matches where teamwork was missing. Despite losing 0-14, team morale was high and better things were expected in the next match against last year's runner-up Nanyang Technological University (NTU).

According to Coach Tan, the NUS match was the best match NP played in the IVP.

He said, "We played a very well controlled game, everybody played to their role and to the game plan."

He stressed, "I don't emphasise on winning but the process of how the game is played. I don't mind losing to better teams if the team played to their fullest abilities."

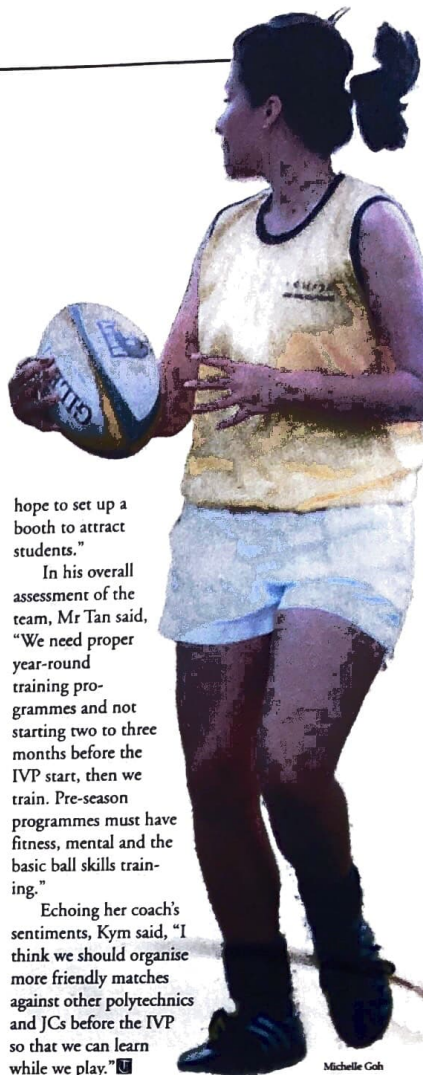
NP was hoping to do well against NTU, but the gruelling match against NUS left the players strained. NP lost the match 0-17.

Needing a win against SMU to finish fifth or better, NP could only force a 3-3 stalemate despite taking the lead three times. Hopes of finishing higher were dashed.

In the final match against ITE, NP needed to score at least 12 tries to finish sixth, above SMU. NP went on the attack as soon as the referee's whistle blew. But NP struggled against the newcomers before quick tries from Grace Choo, 21, a third-year student from BS, managed to blow away ITE's challenge. However, the team fell short of the target 12 tries with an 11-1 win.

It was a hard pill for the team to swallow, ending up second last out of eight teams and losing to newcomers SMU. The team now has to learn from this setback and rebuild itself for the next round of competition as most of the team are playing in their last IVP.

Kym, also a Public Relations officer of the Rugby Club, said, "The team is planning to organise a mixed team touch rugby tournament to create awareness about rugby and we also



Michelle Goh

hope to set up a booth to attract students."

In his overall assessment of the team, Mr Tan said, "We need proper year-round training programmes and not starting two to three months before the IVP start, then we train. Pre-season programmes must have fitness, mental and the basic ball skills training."

Echoing her coach's sentiments, Kym said, "I think we should organise more friendly matches against other polytechnics and JCs before the IVP so that we can learn while we play."

Individual medals at canoeing meet

BY UMA CHANDRAN
uma_chandran@journalist.com

Ngee Ann Polytechnic's (NP) canoeing team won three individual medals in the 8th Singapore Dragon Boat Association (SDBA) Invitational Canoeing Championships 2003.

Organised by SDBA and NP, the championships were held at Kallang Basin from 9am to 3pm on March 22 and 23. The loading area in Kallang was packed with activity as canoeists got ready for the competition with friends and spectators cheering them on despite the high noon sun.

The Institute-Varsity-Polytechnic (IVP) Canoeing Meet was held as part of the Canoeing Championships.

The championships was open to secondary schools and junior colleges as well as varsities and polytechnics.

NP's Principal Mr Chia Mia Chiang, who was present, was proud of the canoeists and the canoe polo group that helped to run the championships as they had "won lavish praise from SDBA officials".

An avid canoeist in his pre-university days, Mr Chia felt the Canoeing Club had a good outing. "Thriving CCA (Co-Curricular Activity) groups such as the Canoeing Club add colour and vibrancy to student life," he said.

Though the NP team did not win top honours, the three medals were an improvement from last year's two. NP made it to 10 finals and

won in the IVP women's singles 500-metre and IVP men's singles 500-metre events.

Xu Xinyu, 19, Canoeing Club president and second-year Business Studies student, won the bronze medal. She was the only woman to have won a singles medal for NP in two years. Taking up the sport more than four years ago in her secondary school, Xinyu said, "It's really a sport that requires much mental strength."

Jack Ang Yeng Joo, 22, third-year Electrical Engineering student, won a silver medal in the men's event while Jonathan Ho Kai Hong, 22, won the bronze.

Jonathan, a third-year Electronic & Telecommunication Engineering student, said, "The competitors' [standard] has increased. Much better than before." NP, however, maintained last year's form. The heats last year saw NP leading by more than a kayak's length in distance from the competition, but this year, the heats were more competitive, said Jonathan.

The finals saw many neck-to-neck finishes. Though the Canoeing Club had trained all year, they started training with an external coach three months before the

competition, compared to teams like NTU and NUS which train throughout the year. The NP Canoeing Club trains with a coach only during competition seasons.

The club's main concern is the lack of good quality equipment to train with and a long-term training programme.

Jonathan said, "NP got a lot of good canoeists but not enough good equipment." Xinyu added that better equipment and training would help NP do better in the competition.

NP has canoes and paddles, but only some are of competition standard and need to be shared among the club's 40-odd members. Thus, NP canoeists had to tackle problems such as using different paddles for training and for competition.

For example, the club has 11 Powermasters, which are paddles for beginners, and four Brascas, paddles that are used for competition.

As there are not enough Brascas, the canoeists at times train with the beginner paddles, but they must then readapt to using the Brascas before the competition.

A good paddle will cost more than \$450, and the kayaks up to \$1,800. Since the club had just bought a new rack to hold the existing kayaks, it had no funds for new kayaks.

Furthermore, funds for the club must be shared by three canoeing groups - sprinting, adventure and canoe-polo - under the Canoeing Club, Xinyu said. The different groups also need different sorts of kayaks and paddles to train and compete, she added.



PADDLING FAST: Striving for a good finish during the Singapore Dragon Boat Association Invitational Canoeing Championships 2003, NP's canoeing team brought back three medals in the singles competitions. (Picture: Uma Chandran)