

TRIBUNE

Ngee Ann Polytechnic's campus newspaper

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Zoning in or Zoning out?



IN LIMBO: Hang on to your lanyards, NP may re-introduce zoning in October. [Picture: Mugilan.R]

The controversial zoning exercise implemented at the start of the semester was suspended after barely two weeks. CHERYL CHIA reports.

Just 10 days after it was enforced, zoning as a Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) precautionary measure in Ngee Ann Polytechnic (NP) was suspended.

After a similar interval, the twice-daily temperature-taking was also no longer compulsory, in line with the Ministry of Education's guidelines.

The school has spent about \$300,000 on equipment alone, according to Mr David Lui, to contain the spread of the virus, if it ever returned.

The money comes from NP's normal operating budget, however, and is "less than 1 percent of the budget", assures Mr Lui, Director of the Student Services Office and Chairman of NP's SARS Action Group.

Mr Lui explained that this money went into demarcating NP into three zones, education and temperature control measures. The most expensive of the last is the library's \$90,000 thermal scanner. Each student and staff member has also been issued with one of 17,000 sets of "SARS Kool Kit", comprising a digital thermometer, a coloured lanyard and a card to note down temperatures.

Offices and classrooms also had to physically move so that there would be no crossing of zones. Besides students who now go for classes in industrial-sized containers instead of classrooms, one of the more visible changes was the dismantling and temporary relocation of the soundproofed Radio Heatwave studio to Canteen 1.

Theurbanwire.com, the campus e-zine, quoted Mr Tan Hang Cheong, Deputy Principal of Academic Planning and Chief of Operations for the SARS Action Group, saying that the school has spent half a million dollars, when you include the physical rearrangement of schools and classes.

Mr Lui said that the amount of money and time spent on protecting the campus are things the school "cannot afford not to spend on" if it takes the safety of its staff and students seriously.

NP was the only institution of higher learning in Singapore to know first-hand what it was like to send more than 15,000 people home after a student's mother died of SARS and the student himself exhibited signs of having the illness. This disrupted the academic schedule and wasted precious time – something the school does not wish to see a repeat of.

Confirmed Mr Lui, "The decision for zoning was made soon after the polytechnic had to close for three days." By limiting human movement to one of three zones, only the staff and students

in that zone will have to be quarantined if a fresh case breaks out. Everyone, except visitors, was required to wear coloured lanyards that identified the zones (red, yellow or blue) they belonged to. Even to enter common access areas such as the library, the Atrium and swimming pool, you had to have your temperature taken and your details captured from either your staff or student card.

More than 10 NP students Tribune interviewed agreed that they were surprised by the sudden decision, but were nevertheless happy that the division of the school into three exclusive areas has been lifted, at least for now.

"It's a good thing that zoning is suspended, but it came too abruptly; I thought they will have it going on for a month or so. But it's good because now we can get back our freedom," said Florence Ong, 19, a third-year Information Technology (IT) student.

The school's good intentions, notwithstanding, the zoning exercise turned out to be an unpopular one for many students according to the small sample spoken to.

"The zoning [exercise] is a waste of money because they spent so much money on lanyards and the [barricades] at the atrium and suspended it just 10 days later," said Ngu Howe Yung, 21, a final-year Business Information Technology (BIT) student.

Douglas Mok, 18, a second-year Mass Communication student said, "I find that zoning doesn't work. It is hard to restrict a huge population of students. Besides not many people bother; they end up zone hopping and some don't even wear their lanyards."

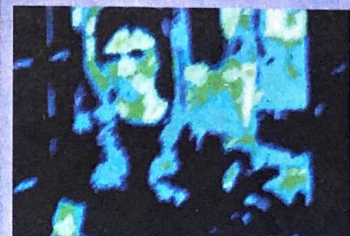
Agreeing, James Pang, 19, a third-year BIT student, added that students cross zones without hesitation because "no one bothers". There were no clearly articulated penalties for doing so, according to the same July report in theurbanwire.com.

Other complaints from the students usually centred around the inconvenience faced in wearing lanyards, taking their temperatures and, something closer to their hearts, the inability to visit the various canteens on campus.

Mr Lui attributes the initial indifference to zoning to a lack of understanding among students, despite educational materials distributed to them and constant reminders by the lecturers. This resulted in them being far more negative in their feedback than staff. And since the end of May when Singapore was declared a SARS-free country, students have possibly also become more

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With temperature-taking likely to return to campus soon, TIMOTHY FERNANDEZ gives you the highs and lows of thermometer technology.



[Photos: Timothy Fernandez]

Thermal Imager

Where: Entrance to the library.

How: Translates the different wavelengths of thermal energy into visible light.

Accuracy: $\pm 3^\circ\text{C}$

Cost: \$200 to \$3,000 each

Digital Oral Thermometer

Where: Part of every student's Kool Kit

How: Uses a simple electronic resistance circuit to determine temperature.

Accuracy: $\pm 0.1^\circ\text{C}$

Cost: From \$6 each

In-Ear Thermometer

Where: Previously at checkpoints around campus during exams.

How: Detects the thermal radiation emitted by your eardrum.

Accuracy: $\pm 0.2^\circ\text{C}$

Cost: \$50 - \$120 each

Disposable Thermometer

Where: Carried as spares by lecturers.

How: Uses temperature-sensitive ink.

Accuracy: $\pm 0.2^\circ\text{C}$ (Improper placement in mouth will result in lowered accuracy)

Cost: \$15 for a box of 100

Infrared Thermometer

Where: In the Atrium.

How: Detects thermal radiation off a surface using infrared beams.

Accuracy: $\pm 0.3^\circ\text{C}$

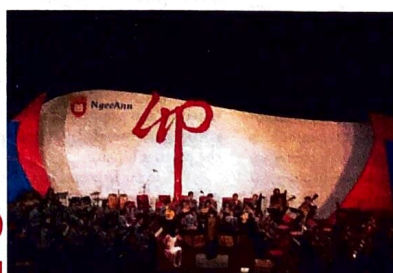
Cost: \$180 each

The least intrusive thermal imagers allow many people to be scanned quickly, but are less accurate. The cheapest oral thermometers are most reliable, which shows that checking your own temperature is the best way to ensure that you really do not have a fever.



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Van concert in NP in Tribune's first Chinese page

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Talking About My Generation



BY MELODY TAN
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It was the most uncomfortable lunch I had ever had.

We were a group of NP students, all from the same course, sitting at the same table as four Singapore Management University (SMU) students during the farewell lunch at the Singapore International Foundation's International Student Symposium [see story below].

One of the SMU students asked: "So, what's your course in polytechnic about?"

His polite inquiry unleashed a torrent of answers and chattering from several of my schoolmates, who were more than happy to explain to him what Mass Communication was all about.

After about 20 minutes, I realised that while we had been talking about ourselves all this while, none of us had asked a single question

of the SMU students, who had been patiently listening throughout.

The revelation that we had been so self-absorbed and thoughtless was deeply embarrassing. I cringed to think of the stereotypes that we were reinforcing with them.

That incident, coupled with local students' mocking of a Myanmar student's accent made me wonder if our young, cosmopolitan generation considers the saying "put yourself into someone else's shoes" no longer useful.

The American ambassador, His Excellency Frank Lavin, said in his speech that one of the challenges Asia faced was the social transformation involved in the rise of the "first affluent Asian generation" - basically, us.

As our parents so often remind us, our generation has had luxuries that were never to be found in the past. We get cable TV, high-speed broadband Internet connections, sleek mobile phones, palm-sized PCs and an innumerable number of digital gadgets and gizmos.

Oh, we also have shelters over our heads and good food on our tables.

While we may be rich in material goods, we are severely lacking in real human warmth and understanding.

Sure, we can smile at people and speak articulately. But we're so busy flashing our most flattering smiles and talking about ourselves that we don't notice if people aren't listening any more, or have stopped smiling back.

How many times have we jeered at others or ostracised them because they didn't fit our mental images of what they should be like?

Or worse still, how many times have we completely ignored people and not made an effort to reach out simply because they looked like they weren't worth all that trouble?

When it comes to love for one's fellow humans, I think we still have a tremendously long way to go, no matter how tech-savvy or well-connected we are. Warmth and friendliness have become exercises in public relations - useful, necessary and pleasant, in an artificial way. One sees too much of that in career-minded Singapore.

Still, we're not all doomed to false smiles.

Taking another note from the symposium, as RAdm Teo Chee Hean was optimistic about the developing world, I am also optimistic that our generation will conquer this selfishness sooner or later.

In the meantime, I think I'll arrange another lunch meeting, and we could try again... ☐

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Tribune, 2003

New World, Same Old Mindset?

BY MELODY TAN
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Despite minor flaws, this year's Singapore International Foundation (SIF) International Student Symposium drew a record high of 600 participants, comprising international students and Singaporeans studying locally and overseas.

Held on 24 and 25 July at Raffles City Convention Centre, the symposium was organised by the Overseas Singaporeans (OS) Programme and the International Student Community Programme (isc@SIF).

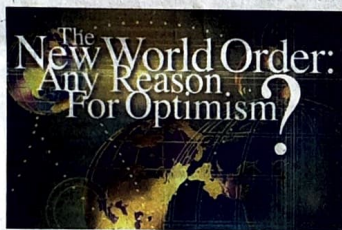
Ngee Ann Polytechnic (NP) was a Bronze sponsor of the symposium - the only polytechnic among the educational institutions, which included White Gold sponsors National University of Singapore (NUS) and the Singapore Management University (SMU).

Guest-of-Honour Rear-Admiral (RAdm) Teo Chee Hean, the then Minister for Education and Second Minister for Defence, introduced the symposium's theme of "The New World Order: Any Reason for Optimism?" and spoke of the new world's influences and implications on Singapore.

He said, "The New World is a more integrated one, brought closer together by globalisation and advances in technology... A more globalised world presents greater opportunities for everyone, rich and poor, to make the most of their potential."

With these words, the symposium's main discussion themes of regional and global economic, social and cultural issues were set.

Speakers from different fields such as academia, business, politics and the media were invited to participate in plenary discussions both on-stage and in smaller discussion groups after lunch on the first day. They included luminaries such as Mr Steve Chia, the Non-Constituency Member of Parliament and Mr David P. Conner, chief executive officer of the Overseas-Chinese Banking Corporation.



Local and international students pondered The New World Order at the symposium. [Picture: SIF brochure]

Participants were invited to ask questions of the speakers. Among those who posed questions was an NP student who asked how the government was responding to local students' concerns about competition from foreigners in Singapore's job market.

Li Nan, a 22-year-old third-year Electrical Engineering student and a Chinese national said: "I was here in 2002. It was very interesting and I was very impressed with the symposium, so I came here again this year."

He was among dozens of other NP student leaders at the symposium. Although the total number of NP students who attended is unclear, the School of Film & Media Studies (FMS) sent 12 representatives. NP paid the \$50 entry fees of all its student representatives.

Said Li Nan, "This year's topics are more diverse and there are more discussions. It's better compared to last year's - every year it's improving."

While other participants agreed that there was a strong show of diversity, they had mixed views about the standards of discussion.

One such opinion came from Azahar bin Muhammad, 17, a second-year Serangoon Junior College student: "I felt that most of the questions asked are from foreigners. [But] there's a diversity of viewpoints, and through them we can see our [Singapore's] weaknesses. It's quite enriching and enlightening."

His schoolmate, Justin Chan, an 18-year-old

second-year, commented: "I think people should have come up with ideas for things to be solved, like the water issues, so that the minister [RAdm Teo] could have commented on them."

Two of NP's representatives felt that the standards of critical thinking in the discussions could have been higher.

Said Cheong Wei Lun, 19, a third-year Multimedia & Computing student, "They [the students who asked questions] tended to keep to the surface, and didn't really go deeper. There was very little interaction."

Several incidents also marred the otherwise-cooperative atmosphere of the symposium.

A Myanmar student who went up to ask a question on the first day was laughed at because of his strong accent, which was ironic considering that one of the symposium's aims was to promote cross-cultural tolerance and harmony.

One of the student's acquaintances and countrymen, Tharaphe Khine Zar, a 21-year-old third-year Biomedical Engineering student from Singapore Polytechnic (SP) said: "He told me he was very embarrassed."

Chimed Sowmiya d/o Palaniyappan, a 19-year-old third-year Biotechnology student from SP: "It's like they were turning him away."

Still, Tharaphe said she was "happy that my country's issues were addressed" during the discussion session.

Further undermining the symposium's aims was the anti-American sentiments and hostility apparent in several of the questions asked and comments given during the last speech of the symposium by the American ambassador Frank Lavin.

At the end of the symposium's two days, however, there appeared to be no hard feelings as participants mingled and exchanged views during the parting lunch.

While far from perfect, the symposium still managed to engage students from all over the world in a common dialogue on social, economic and cultural issues. ☐

Upcoming Events:

BY MUGILAN R.
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UFM Campus Concert

22 August
MediaWorks UFM 100.3 will be holding a concert featuring Taiwanese stars like Anson Hu Yan Bin and Fan Wei Qi at LT 22. The concert will be supported by Radio Heatwave. Please contact Zheng Xiu Hui at xiuhui@radioheatwave.com.

Muzik Concert

27 August
The ongoing band auditions organised by Poly Stage F'Actor will culminate in a NP band showcase at the Atrium featuring alternative punk rock acts. Please contact Fadhil Muhammad at dael01@hotmail.com.

Heritage Walk

13 September
Participants will trace NP's contribution to education from the Teochew Building at Tank Road to its current premises at Clementi Road to mark the 40th anniversary of the polytechnic.

NP 40 Celebrations and Concert

13 September
This hip-hop themed concert hosted by Radio Heatwave at the Convention Centre will feature performances by local acts such as Urban X-change and Trevalation as well as break-dancers and rappers.

Aaraathanaa 2003

20 September
The popular annual Indian all-arts competition, organised and hosted by NP's Indian Cultural Society, features participants from secondary and tertiary levels. Please contact Junaidah Binte Abdul Sayed at 9271-2195 for tickets.

Aerospace Technology: The Sky's the Limit

BY MELISSA NG
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Ngee Ann Polytechnic (NP) received 600 applications for its new Aerospace Technology (AT) course, but could only accept 70 students in accordance with Economic Development Board (EDB) guidelines.

The course, which comes under the umbrella of the School of Engineering, was developed by Mechanical Engineering lecturers and directors who had begun researching the viability of the course as early as 2001.

Industry sentiment afterwards supported this move, including rosy projections by the EDB for the developing aerospace industry in Singapore. Mr Goh Eng Ghee, the Logistics and Transport Director of EDB had said: "We welcome the move by Ngee Ann Polytechnic to introduce this course in tune with industry developments."

"We are glad the new diploma is designed to strengthen the industry's existing capabilities in aerospace manufacturing, design and MRO (Maintenance, Repair and Overhaul) activities," he was quoted in a press release in February.

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Defense Dr Tony Tan, made similar comments last year on Singapore's "strong technology base, and... critical mass of aerospace activities".

In a move to help stabilise and advance the new diploma, NP is now part of an Industry Working Group (IWG) formed by EDB, consisting of several aviation companies such as G.E and Honeywell to improve the standard of Singapore's aerospace sector.

While some may question the timing of this new option in the face of a downturn in the airline industry resulting from the impact of SARS and

Many students applied saying they wanted to be pilots...[actually] we teach them to design and not to fly a plane.

*- Mr. James Leung,
Course Co-ordinator,
Aerospace Technology*

the war on terrorism, lecturer Mr James Leung, 53, remains optimistic.

The AT course coordinator is confident that given time, the Asian economy will pick up and things in the industry will return to normal. He said: "It's a good renewal process, to consolidate operations. This will give our graduates opportunities. By the time the industry recovers from the

recent economic situation, then our first batch of graduates will be ready to meet the demand of aerospace design professionals.

"We are merely feeling the immediate effects. The response for the last ASEAN Aerospace show was good. We are looking forward to next year's air show," he added.

Some US\$3.2 billion (S\$5.9 billion) worth of deals were signed during last year's Asian Aerospace Airshow, according to an EDB press release.

The first year of the AT course builds a strong foundation in basic mechanical engineering, while second-year students explore design tools and learn about software technology. In their final year, students try out the designing process of aero-components and study the airworthiness regulations.

Bryan Quek, 17, pioneer Aerospace Technology student, gave his take on the course work. "Sometimes it gets a little too much for me to handle because some of the lecturers are quite fast, but I'm also quite interested in aeroplanes."

Addressing a common misconception among many applicants, Mr Leung said: "Many students applied saying they wanted to be pilots! During our open house, we stressed repeatedly to all the students that we teach them to design and not to fly a plane. To excel, students must love the technology and have the desire to learn how the whole frame works." ■

EXTEND-ing a Helping Hand



BA students collaborate with SSS students to do good. [Picture: Cheryl Chia]

BY CHERYL CHIA
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Last year it was to bring a secondary school's hydroponics project to the market, this time, Business Studies (BS) students are busy EXTEND-ing a helping hand to Sembawang Secondary School (SSS) so they can sell their art club's handmade works.

EXTEND (experiential training for entrepreneurship development) is a final-year entrepreneurship specialist programme that BS students can opt for in place of a core module - Enterprise Creation and Development (ECD).

For this project, the BS students will be setting up a booth at the open space outside Takashimaya Shopping Centre's food court at Basement 2 on 7 September.

The booth, open from 11 am to 5 pm, will allow members of the public to view and place orders for the SSS's works of art.

Another booth will be set up at Ngee Ann Polytechnic's (NP) Convention Centre on 27 September.

This collaboration, a first with SSS, sees BS students pitching in to put together a business proposal for the sale of SSS's artwork.

The 15 students have been spending two hours every Wednesday afternoon since the last week of June, to discuss and develop the business proposal.

Mr Joseph Seer, lecturer-in-charge of this project said that the main aim of EXTEND is to allow students to "better appreciate the challenges of creating, developing and managing new business ventures. In addition, students can [also] hone and develop their leadership, communication and interpersonal skills."

The students involved in the EXTEND programme said they take pride in applying their knowledge to help external institutions with their proposed business ventures.

Zhong Jinhao, 19, who is in his final year said, "I feel good seeing people succeeding with my help." He added that "EXTEND is a hands-on and practical programme that interests [him] more than just theoretical lessons."

The difference between ECD and EXTEND is that ECD places more emphasis on the theoretical part of business planning, while the latter gives students a chance to execute their business proposal in reality.

Just like a real business venture, "the group structure of the programme is fairly similar to a full-fledged company with a Chief Executive Officer (CEO), two vice-CEOs and the respective department heads," Jinhao observed.

Started only a semester ago, this specialist programme may become a permanent fixture in the curriculum of BS students.

Mr Seer said that EXTEND may be implemented "as a major module where students will be able to apply their business skills and also [serve] as an assessment... for their diploma course".

The previous EXTEND programme saw BS students collaborating with Peiyi Secondary School in coming up with a business venture involving hydroponics. ■

Let NP Fund Your Way to Success

BY JUANITA DINO
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Ngee Ann Polytechnic (NP) students looking to make their dreams of starting a business a reality do not have to wait for graduation or a bank loan. The EnterpriZe programme launched by NP's Innohub creates an opportunity for students to give their business plans a jump start financially.

Now in its second year, EnterpriZe! has helped several students bring their ideas to life. A good example is Jason Kok, who has set up a company called J.K. Net Productions, which produces multi-legged robots.

The 21-year-old from the Mechatronics course heard about this programme from a lecturer, who encouraged him to sign up for it.

He had his proposal approved in April, and has since been working on developing his company by meeting up with more clients and negotiating prices for his domestic robots. His ambition and drive have even led him to negotiations with a company in Japan.

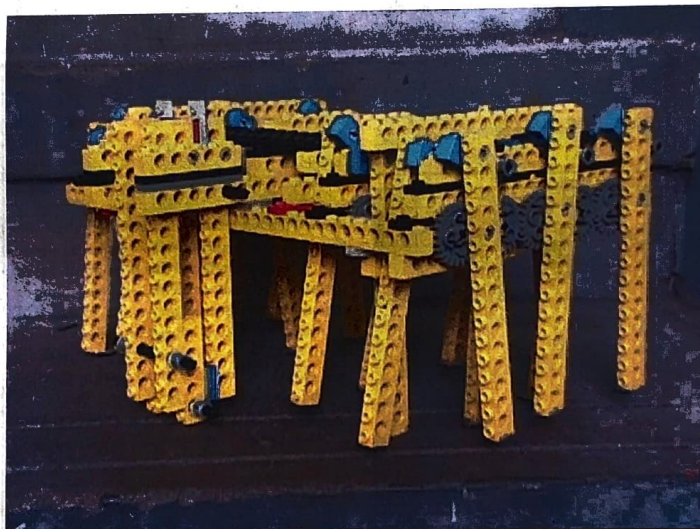
"I have been interested in robots since secondary school, and I was very happy that the school was impressed with my project idea," he said.

The school will be giving him grants of \$1,500 every six months if his company continues to progress.

His advice for fellow students who might be hesitant to realise their dreams. "There's no right or wrong. If you feel for it, go for it."

Another student who has received over \$1,000 in funding from the EnterpriZe! programme is Li Nan, 22, from the Electrical Engineering course. Li Nan, who hails from China, plans for his IT consultancy company to eventually branch out to his home country.

Along with two of his classmate friends, who are also from China, Li Nan is working on attracting more clients for his business, which is up and running. "Competition is intensive, so we have to try and survive," the determined



Students' business ideas get a leg up, thanks to EnterpriZe funding. [Picture: courtesy of Jason Kok]

student said.

Li Nan and his team, composed of fellow compatriots, Bai Qing and Li Weishi, established a networking company that deals with clients from across the board: homes, offices and small-to-medium-sized companies. They pride themselves on offering personalised services at competitive rates to customers.

They describe themselves as "a computer and network company with a difference" and urged fellow students on the NP website with ideas to "just do it".

Like Jason, Li Nan was also recommended to the EnterpriZe! programme by his lecturer because of his active interest in the course.

Jason and Li Nan's success stories are examples of how personal motivation and ambition are needed besides funding. ■

How to be EnterpriZing!

EnterpriZe! is a co-funding initiative by Ngee Ann Polytechnic to stimulate students to innovate and begin their own businesses.

Successful applicants receive 70 percent co-funding for their projects, up to a maximum of \$3,000. Funding is dependent on the progress of the students' efforts.

A mentor from NP or the industry will be assigned to them. Applicants must be Ngee Ann students who have not received corporate assistance for the same project.

Interested students can either sign up through the Innohub or the offices of their respective Schools/Divisions.

Please see Innohub's website, <http://www.np.edu.sg/innohub/enterprize1.htm> for further details.

ACCA: No Threat to NP Accountancy

BY MATTHEW AU
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More people are taking on Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA) certification to qualify for accounting jobs in the bleak job market.

According to a Straits Times article dated 8 July, graduate applicants for the United Kingdom-based ACCA course increased from five percent in 2000 to 20 percent in 2002. This credential, recognised as the equivalent of a degree, allows its holder to apply for the job of an accounts manager.

Ms Alicia Wong, a 25-year-old retail executive, plans to study for the ACCA certification after her contract with her company ends in October.

"I want to give myself more job options, and I'm getting a little old to go back to school full-time," quipped the National University of Singapore (NUS) alumna.

When even graduates rely on ACCA credentials to beef up their resumes in the tight job market, does it mean bad days are ahead for the polytechnic accountancy student?

Ms Jeannie Liu, a lecturer from the School of Business & Accountancy in Ngee Ann Polytechnic (NP) assures students that ACCA poses no great threat.

"The ACCA [examinations] have always

been around, and that has not affected us much. ACCA certification and diplomas are different qualifications... the positions are also different."

Ms Liu adds that the majority of NP students quickly move on to either take the ACCA programme part-time while working, or they go overseas for their degree courses. Therefore, within a few short years post-graduation, the playing field is more or less level for everyone.

Also, given the strength of the NP programme, its accountancy diploma holders are also usually granted exemptions from certain ACCA foundation papers. "I chose NP's Accountancy [course] because I think it's the best... I believe it will give me more [of an] advantage when I go for my degree," said Yeo Weizhong, a third-year Accountancy (ACC) student, vouching for the popularity of the NP course as a higher qualification option.

Candidates for the ACCA examinations can opt for self-study for the 14 examinations or enrol in a private school. Completion of the course usually takes between three and five years. But this is a price more graduates are willing to pay, said financial analyst Mr Louis Foo, 31, because of the weak economy and a reduced job market. "The economy is reviving, but [the] poor economy is still going to be around for a while, which means [fewer] jobs for another say two to three years," he said.

Mr Foo attributed the trend of more people taking the ACCA examinations to the Singaporean mindset of being *kiasu* (afraid to lose out). "To them [Singaporeans], the more qualifications the better. They think that if an additional qualification can do

them good, why not?"

However, this trend does not seem to disturb most NP Accountancy students who are optimistic about their prospects, as evident in an unofficial survey of about 30 of them conducted by Tribune.

"I believe that the job market will get better when I graduate. [Besides], there are lots of accounting jobs around," said Sheryl Sim, a second-year ACC student, who voiced the dominant opinion of students interviewed.

On the other hand, a few sceptics feel that degree holders having additional ACCA qualifications will adversely affect those who possess just a diploma.

But their fears may be unfounded.

"Polytechnic graduates have their strengths. They are generally more willing to learn and quicker in their thinking," said Mrs Janice Liew, a senior accounting manager in Aberdeen Consulting, one of the larger accounting firms in Singapore.

She urges polytechnic students not to be daunted by people with higher qualifications, but to work harder and strive for their best performance. An NP Accountancy graduate herself, she sums up her secret to success — "In life, if you give 100 percent, you won't be disappointed at what you get back."

For more information on ACCA programmes, log on to <http://www.acca.co.uk>, or call ACCA hotline at 6734-8110.



THE MUSIC OF POETRY: Ann Shen sways to the rhythm of MCM student Zayed Talib's poem and Turkish drum beats. (Picture: Ng Liang Zhi)

Slam!

BY HANIS HALIM
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Students and alumni of the Book Writing and Publishing (Book Pub) elective in the Mass Communication (MCM) course were asked to contribute two performances at the monthly Poetry Slam at Velvet Underground on 29 July.

Poetry Slam, which debuted in May, calls for participants to read their poetry in front of an audience and to be judged on their speech skills, their actions and how well they wrote the poem.

On the success of the debut, Book Pub's lecturer-in-charge Mr Desmond Kon, 32, commented, "It was a wild night, with the audience hooting and screaming at the participants who bravely read their work to a discerning literati public. I was quite amazed at how receptive the audience was to such a performance of poetry."

For July's Poetry Slam, the Book Pub team was invited to contribute prizes, sell their other books and launch their creative anthology CD entitled "How to Read a Poem" and perform, all of which they acceded to.

One highlight was the recitation of final-year MCM student Zayed Talib's poem "When Fingers Don't", by three final-year MCM students. The *darbuka*, a Turkish percussion instrument, accompanied this poetry recital. A dancer, Ann Shen, a 20-year-old student from Temasek Polytechnic (TP) interpreted the poem with her dance moves.

The Poetry Slam opened at 7.30 pm with the "open mike" section where anyone from the audience was welcome to read poems by renowned poets.

The five who went up to read received warm applause from the supportive audience, in particular, other supporting MCM students, who made up about one-third of the 60 to 70-strong audience.

Among the audience, Dean Tan, a 20-year-old student from Singapore Polytechnic commented, "I really admire those participants going up there and reading their work, it takes guts. It helps that the audience is really showing support for each participant."

A friend of his, Shahrin Johry, 21, added, "I think some of the judges are a bit stingy with rewarding [people with] points though, because some of the poems are really good and even though the audience cheer[ed] for them, one of the judges is bound to give a bad score."

Poetry Slam is held at Velvet Underground every last Tuesday of the month.

In conjunction with the slam is an open-mike stand for poets at The Book Cafe situated at Seng Kee Building (near the end of Mohamed Sultan Road) every first Thursday of the month.

Has Web Enrolment Served You Well?

Panic ensued among some NP students when the NPAl system went down during the web enrolment exercise in June. JUANITA DINO reports.

About 60 percent of the 150 students from various courses in Ngee Ann Polytechnic (NP) surveyed by Tribune experienced problems with web-enrolment before the semester began, raising questions on whether signing up for modules the high-tech way is really the best way.

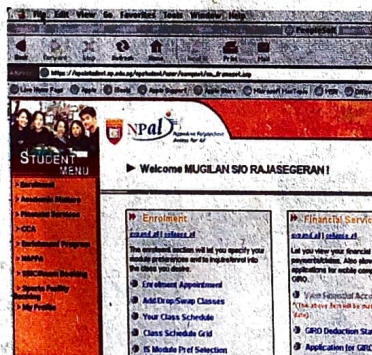
Many of these students had difficulties accessing their student accounts on the NPAl system, with some having to wait up to 20 minutes before they could enrol.

Ms Angela Wong, Manager for Support Services at the Computer Centre, explained that the problems encountered were due to a server hardware failure on the morning of 16 June, the first day of the enrolment exercise. She added that the problem was rectified around 10 am that same day.

Even so, the server lag is critical because the NPAl system is programmed to let students have their desired modules on a first-come, first-served basis. Those who did not manage to access their accounts quickly enough may have lost a chance to enrol for their preferred module, especially if it was a popular choice.

Modules that have to be chosen in the online exercise include those offered under the School of Interdisciplinary Studies (IS), Third-year students also use the NPAl system to select their electives.

Introduced in phases prior to the 2001 January semester, the NPAl online system



A BOON OR A BANE: Students disagree on the value of web enrolment. (Screenshot of <http://npalstudent.np.edu.sg>)

was meant to streamline administrative and academic record-keeping procedures as well as provide students with better access to information related to financial services, co-curricular activities and enrichment programmes.

According to a survey done last semester, many students had already made unofficial complaints to the persons-in-charge in their respective schools. Lim Li Ting, a 19-year-old Business Studies student said that after she had informed her school of the problems she had encountered, all she received was an acknowledgement of her feedback. Several third-year students indicated during the survey that they preferred choosing their electives the old-fashioned way by filling in a form.

On the contrary, Ramanathan d/o M.K. Thuraijoo, 20, from the Marine & Offshore Technology course feels that the system makes enrolling for modules "a breeze", and described the pen and paper procedure as too troublesome.

Students from Mass Communication (MCM)

may actually be able to do this next semester.

Ms Gurcharn Kaur, Deputy Director of the School of Film & Media Studies (FMS), said that some students were upset by the last round of web enrolment exercise when problems beyond their control meant they did not get the electives of their choices.

"In order to address this concern and give everyone, especially students, a bit more time to get used to web enrolment, the school will probably conduct a hybrid procedure for the January 2004 electives-choosing - i.e. students will manually rank their choices and be enrolled by the school into their first choice. Details will be announced during the elective briefings later in the semester," explained Ms Kaur.

However, they will still have to go through the NPAl system for their other two electives.

According to the NPAl administrative office, the two courses most affected by the server problem were FMS and the School of Information & Communications Technology.

Ms Wong attributed the slowdown in the server to the complexity in registering the interlinked lectures, workshops and practical sessions the preferred module entailed.

She added that various schools, major stakeholders and the senior management have met to review the issues encountered in the June 2003 web enrolment exercise. It is not yet known if other schools in NP will feel a need to adopt a similar system for the upcoming semester. The Biotechnology and the Quality Management and Engineering (QME) courses did not receive complaints from their students.

Areas slated for further improvement include: scheduling of the enrolment appointments, coordination between schools, strategies for handling electives, enhancing system messages and increasing server capacity, Ms Wong added.

Zoning in or Zoning out?

continued from page 1

complacent, hence their refusal to comply with the new rules.

Now that the restrictions have been lifted, the collective fate boils down to each individual's consideration for others, said Ms Evelyn Ng, a lecturer from the School of Interdisciplinary Studies (IS). "I think that students should exercise personal responsibility. They should make an effort not to come to campus if they're sick."

Students were not the only ones affected by the zoning measures.

Food vendors have generally observed a decrease in business since the implementation of zoning and are glad that it has been suspended.

Jennifer Lim, sales supervisor of the polytechnic's Campus Deli at the Atrium says that after the implementation of zoning and the barricades at the Atrium, sales did drop a little.

She believes students were "finding it troublesome" to go through the hassle of scanning their student cards and having their temperatures taken at the entrance of the barricade before they can enter the store.

Hilari Rozario, 52, owner of the Cavana Chicken Rice stall at Canteen 1 noted that since the implementation of zoning, his stall has faced "a decrease of 20 percent in business".

Mr Lui agreed that because it is hard for many people to understand how long these protective changes take to effect, there is a "feeling of disap-

pointment that we couldn't introduce these measures at the height of the SARS outbreak".

He explained that they decided to suspend zoning soon after it was introduced because the message of social responsibility appears to have got across, going by the significant number of people putting on lanyards. More importantly, he was keen to "bring back that buzz to campus life" by allowing student activities to carry on.

"Why inconvenience our students and community further [unless we have to, especially when] it has an impact on the way we actually interact on campus?" Mr Lui said.

Most noticeably, the barricades that had been erected at the Atrium, prompting nicknames like the zoo for the popular hangout, were removed.

Campus Deli's Lim is relieved, "[Business] after the suspension of zoning is better than before; our sales are now very good and students are happy too".

But Mr Lui is quick to qualify that "should the situation [with SARS] change at any time ... [or when] an infection comes to Singapore, then we can re-activate this within a day or two".

In fact, he is planning to re-introduce zoning, "probably in October and get everybody to put on their lanyards again". He expressed his concern over the possible return of the SARS virus during the colder seasons in December.

"Will SARS return? The World Health Organisation says yes, very likely. I've got no reason to doubt them so measures must be in place." ■

MeL Service Centre Charges

BY MUGILAN R.
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Since 1 June, students who asked to have their notebooks serviced on campus in ways outside of the standard warranty were charged at least \$20.

The typical three-year warranty covers the repair of hardware-related faults, such as the failure of liquid crystal display (LCD) screens, but does not include secondary services. These are software-related ones such as image re-cloning and reinstallation of individual applications licensed by Ngee Ann, such as Microsoft Office and Macromedia Suite. Image re-cloning involves restoring the original Operating System (OS) with course-specific applications.

The Mobile e-Learning (MeL) service centre has introduced \$20 charges for both of these secondary services. Mr Lim Peng Heng, 42, manager of MeL systems support, explained that they are charging students to ensure that the primary aim of providing warranty-related services is not compromised.

"In the first week of the last academic year, we actually had 300 requests for re-cloning alone. And 60 to 70 percent of the requests were from new notebooks," added Mr. Lim, who is based the Teaching and Learning Centre (TLC), one of whose roles is to address student computing needs through the MeL service centre.

This alternate demand meant that response to genuine warranty-related cases were affected.

As a result, instead of the usual maximum turnaround time of a week, students had to wait up to a month for their notebooks to be serviced.

This inevitably led to negative feedback from students.

To moderate the problem of overwhelming demand for secondary services, the charge was introduced to discourage students from approaching the centre for secondary problems.

However, several of the students affected by the new service charges feel that they are too expensive and unreasonable.

Said Hasir Arafath, 18, a first-year Electrical Engineering student: "Some students [have] financial difficulties, so we rent notebooks. If we were to pay for services as well, it [would be] too taxing on us."

12 out of the 15 students from various courses whom Tribune spoke to felt that the default three-year warranty provided should cover the secondary services.

Echoing the thoughts of others, Yee Weng Gie, a 16-year-old first-year Electrical & Computer Engineering student said: "I feel that they should



NO MORE FREE SERVICE: Students now must pay for technical software support. (Picture: Melissa Ng)

provide free technical support for these services and they (MeL) should include this in the warranty."

Disagreeing, Mr Lim said: "\$20 is not an exorbitant amount if you want to re-clone your machines. It is not cheap but it is reasonable."

Agrees Ms Diane Ong, 36, Senior Executive at the MeL service centre, "Consider IBM, which charges \$100 per software and other vendors who charge \$50. \$20 is an affordable price."

According to Mr Lim, the nominal charges also "allow the operators to recover the extra resources they need to mobilise for students who need secondary services".

Ms Ong confirmed that overtime was incurred as the centre could not finish services during operating hours due to the flood of requests, adding to operating costs.

When asked if the pricing has lessened the workload on the MeL centre, Ms Ong said that though the traffic at this point is significantly lesser than last year's, it is still too early to say with certainty if MeL's strategy is a success.

But TLC is not relying solely on administrative charges to service students more efficiently.

Said Mr Ng Kay Peng, 36, TLC's project manager: "Technically, we are trying to beef up the system, make it faster, more efficient. [We are] procuring more devices and faster cloning services." TLC is also monitoring traffic flow closely and ensuring that there are enough resources and staff to cope with it. ■

Evacuation Exercise in NP



FIRE DRILL: Firefighters from SCDF simulating a rescue for NP's safety drill. (Picture: Tan Yuyun)

BY TAN YUYUN
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The fire engine you saw on campus on 22 July was not responding to some lab or arsonist's prank. It was the sign of the once-in-five-years participation of the Singapore Civil Defence Force (SCDF) in fire safety cum evacuation exercise at Ngee Ann Polytechnic.

"The main objective of the drill was to create awareness among Ngee Ann students, so they will know how to react should there be a sudden fire outbreak," said Marine & Offshore

Technology (MOT) lecturer Mr Hor Siew Weng, 50, adding that the drill is usually held on the third week of a new semester. The division is the main coordinator of this event.

Students watched in interest as SCDF firefighters demonstrated a high-rise building rescue procedure.

The "evacuated" crowd from Block 52 and 53, which houses MOT, Engineering and Film & Media Studies staff and students, was later treated to a fire extinguishing demonstration at the car park at Block 52. The whole evacuation exercise ended within 15 minutes. ■

ECH'S Golden Dad

BY HANIS HALIM
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Muhammad Shameer Bismillah is used to being in the minority. After all, he was only one of six male students in Ngee Ann Polytechnic's (NP) Early Childhood Education course in 1999. Even so, being the first male graduate to win its gold medal has taken the 31-year-old by surprise.

Bismillah wants to make a difference in children's lives by giving them the proper foundation in the early stages of their lives. He has always been interested in young children's education but it was only after he had his second daughter that he was spurred to take up teaching as a full-time profession. Wanting to give both his daughters, aged five and three-and-a-half, more attention as father and teacher, also helped him decide that teaching was his calling.

Bismillah also hopes to change the perception of male childcare teachers as being less suited to the industry than females because he thinks that it is essential for children to have a male role model, in particular, adopted children or children who come from single-parent families. However, he admits that many are sceptical of his ability in this female-dominated profession.

Bismillah credits his achievement to his wife, Chin Mei Ling, who motivated and assisted him greatly in his assignments like cutting and pasting children's book illustrations till past midnight. Ms Chin, a part-time tutor, spends most of her time teaching her children at home. For the past three years, Bismillah's daily schedule saw him trying to balance school, work commitments and family life. In that time, his daily routine looked something like this: School in the day, giving tuition to his students from 6 pm to 10 pm, five days a week. He then spends time reading to his



HIGH ACHIEVER: Bismillah succeeds both in school and at home. (Picture: Courtesy of Bismillah)

children before working on his homework around midnight. Even on Saturdays, he leads reading programmes at home until 2 pm. Sundays are spent with his family.

Before joining NP, Bismillah was relief teaching at Eastview and Westview Primary Schools. But because he believes a child can learn more before entering primary school, his mission is to teach them before they turn six.

Bismillah chose to further his studies in NP "because the education in Ngee Ann is so complete that it trains you in every aspect to become a supervisor." His syllabus also covered other fields like financial management and honing speech skills in class.

It helped that Ms Chua Huay Ling, principal of The Children's Place, a childcare centre Bismillah is teaching at, supported his decision to further his studies.

His advice to those who aspire to teach? "Always believe in yourself and never be intimidated by society."

Bismillah left for the University of South Australia to pursue a two-year degree in Early Childhood Education subsidised by the Association for Early Childhood Education Singapore (ACES) last month. ■

Safety on NP Roads: Mission Possible?

Road safety is back in the spotlight with an increase in this year's road safety talks' attendance. **MARYAM ABDULLAH** investigates.

Going by the attendance at this year's road safety talks, Ngee Ann Polytechnic (NP) students are either taking the subject more seriously, or possibly responding well to changes in the annual exercise's execution.

Some 51, mostly first-year motorists signed up for the 29 July talk jointly organised by NP's Student Services Office, Traffic Police and Singapore Safety Driving Centre.



DANGER ZONE: Students and motorists in NP point fingers at each other for road safety accountability on campus. (Picture: Tan Yuyun)

student added, "Maybe they should let people know if there had been any accidents in NP before. Now, people think that roads in NP are safe, because there are very [few] cars, and they drive very slowly."

Estates Manager, Mr Richard Loo, 42, from the Estates Management (EM) office, which ensures NP's infrastructure is safe, believes that roads, and traffic systems and facilities in NP are working well, and do not need to be improved.

Aside from maintaining the facilities, EM also deploys traffic supervisors every day to monitor and contain vehicle and pedestrian movement during morning peak hours. According to Mr Loo, a motorist is speeding if he or she travels beyond 15 kilometres per hour on campus.

Some students are sceptical about how strictly the rule is enforced. A complaint posted on NP's Student Suggestion System, IDEAS, on 6 June by a School of Life Sciences & Chemical Technology (LSCT) student claimed that motorists "seem to have transformed the campus into a racing circuit", citing an example of a near-accident at the Blk 79 exit to SIM.

Kelvin Ng Zhi Wei, 18, who is driven to school daily, expressed an opposing sentiment that roads in NP are "safe for the pedestrian, [but] not safe for the motorist", explaining that his parents often almost get into accidents due to irresponsible pedestrians.

Said Mr Vicknesh, "The driver will complain about the pedestrians, and when you talk to the pedestrians they will complain about the driver. We cannot be pointing fingers at each other. Pedestrians do not have to pass a test to be a pedestrian. Riders have to." ■

The number increased slightly over last year's 50, reversing a four-year progressive decline that saw 300 students present in 1999, according to one of the organisers, Student Services Officer, Mr Vickneshwaran Thangavelu, 34.

Jason Toh, 19, a third-year motorcyclist from Electronic & Telecommunication Engineering (ETE) gave the talk a miss. He said, "I can take care of myself. There's not much need for road safety programmes."

While acknowledging that students tend to dismiss such talks as a waste of time, Mr Vicknesh stressed their importance, pointing out that the highest numbers of motorist mortalities tended to fall between 17 to 23 years old - the same age range of polytechnic students.

To counter criticism that the sessions were boring, this year's talk was presented with more graphic images and video clips of road accidents, in an attempt to discourage new motorists from reckless riding and driving.

Also for the first time, the demonstration section of the event, which was conducted by an expert rider and aimed to demonstrate defensive riding techniques, called for students to physically participate by acting as the pillion riders.

Mr Vicknesh added, "I think sometimes students think that the idea behind the talks was to try to tell them how to behave themselves on the road or how to ride very slowly. But that's not the aim. The traffic police talked about practical things, not the theoretical things you learn during your driving test."

Compacency was possibly another reason why so few students attended. After all, NP roads have been accident-free over the past two years.

Motorcyclist Ong Kok Boon, 19, a third-year Electronic & Computer Engineering (ECE)

Alumni Dinner 2003

BY JUANITA DINO
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It was a meeting between old and new. Alumni members of Ngee Ann Polytechnic (NP) sat across tables from cohorts much later, or with lecturers who had not been here when they were students, entertained by current students.

The "Balik Kampung" theme, which ruled the festivities of the grandest, interdisciplinary gathering of NP alumni on 12 July, also played out in the very newest building on the 40-year-old campus - the Convention Centre.

Some 400 alumni and staff attended the dinner function, including the Ngee Ann Alumni (NAA) General Committee, NP Principal Chia Mia Chiang and Deputy Principal/Engineering Mr Lee Tuck Seng.

The entire event was built around a theme called "Balik Kampung", a Malay phrase that translates into "going home". In this case, it refers to a fond trip down memory lane, one that NAA President Mr Lim Kian Seng, also brought us on during his welcoming speech that paid tribute to his former lecturer Mr Tan Ah Sway and retired school counsellor Mrs Molly Khoo, both of whom were present.

In keeping with the idea of reliving the past, the specially-commissioned "NP 40 Video" was shown. Although a lot of airtime was devoted to the various building phases that transformed the landscape of the campus, the video reminded participants of the vibrant life in NP

over the last four decades.

Games and performances were interwoven into the dinner.

The first of three games called for each table of diners to piece together a picture of a collage of some well-known NP buildings.

The second game, called NP Trivia 40 tested participants' knowledge of NP. Participants were given a list of 40 true or false questions and prizes were given to the first table with all the correct answers. The last game was the easiest and only required participants to name a few singers and song titles from the 50s to 80s era.

There were also traditional performances by the Malay Cultural Club, the Chinese Orchestra, the Combo Band, the Harmonica Troupe and the NRA Hip-Hop group. Diners viewed the performances while having their buffet dinner, which was served at thatched-roofed food stalls specially set up for this occasion.

During the dinner, Alumni Mentors were recognised in a certificate-presentation ceremony. These mentors helped out in the Student Development & Relations Office (SDAR) and Building & Environment (BE) Division of the School of Engineering as well as the School of Life Sciences & Chemical Technology (LSCT).

Alumnus Md Rizal bin Abdul Rahman, 24, a 1999 Mass Communication graduate, was proud to be one of the participants of the dinner.

"Walking through the Ngee Ann poly gates again gave me a nostalgic feeling. It's amazing how NP has gone so far to achieve so much. Let's see what the next 40 years will bring," he said.

Student Suggestions for Road Safety

"At sharp curbs or bends [the steep slope between Block 73 (Canteen 1) and the Convention Centre], where it's difficult to see incoming traffic, there should be mirrors installed. Signs would also be helpful, so that both students and motorists will be cautious when they approach that particular area."

- Third-year Biomedical Science student Michelle Leong, 19

"Authorities should station traffic supervisors during evening peak hours at the T-junction near the main gate as that area is usually very crowded."

- Final-year Electronic & Computer Engineering student Ong Kok Boon, 19

NP Maintains Blood Donation Rate

BY TIMOTHY TEO
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Despite moving to the new Convention Centre, a larger and more comfortable venue than the demolished Octagon, Ngee Ann Polytechnic's (NP) July blood donation drive registered only a small increase in donors.

According to figures released by the organiser, the Students' Union (SU), 384 donated blood



FOR A GOOD CAUSE: This year's blood drive can save 13 lives. (Picture: Timothy Teo)

used to save an average of 13 people, was collected this time.

Phylicia Yang Zuomin, 20, a third-year student of Horticulture and Landscape Management (HLM) who headed the donation drive, said: "Even though the increase is gradual, it's a good start for the next two drives that are coming [October and next March]."

Commenting on the low attendance among first-years, she added, "This is the... beginning of the school year, so I think students will be more forthcoming [for] the next event."

Historically, the July numbers tend to be lower than the March figures, in no small part due to the majority of freshmen needing parental consent to even participate in a blood donation drive, having just turned 17.

Phylicia was quick to refute any rumours that blood donation was dangerous because of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS).

She said: "Even though SARS is over, some have heard rumours that you shouldn't donate blood, it will weaken your immune system and you might get SARS easier. But it's not true."

Other common reasons she has heard for refusing to donate include fear of needles, or the fact that they are anaemic or will faint at the sight of blood.

Those who did donate were awarded certificates of appreciation, along with a choice of two souvenirs.

The selection included laptop bags, folders, multi-purpose tools and umbrellas. Donors also replenished their energies with some refreshments provided by the SU.

Mr Chiang Chie Foo, Permanent Secretary for Education, and Mr Chia Mia Chiang, Principal of Ngee Ann Polytechnic, paid a welcome visit to show their support for our donors.

Regular donor, Ms Sim Ee Min, 36, a Life Sciences & Chemical Technology lecturer, waxed lyrical about the benefits: "After you donate blood, and you are hanging around with your refreshments, you actually feel very good. And you feel better over the next day, your appetite improves... I think it is the ultimate high, physically and... psychologically."

Although many people find the pain a deterrent, Ms Sim described it as being "like a pinprick - nothing worse than if your friend comes up and pinches you".

First-time donor, Rabeena Bte Salim, 22, a second-year Business Studies student, responded to the call because she wanted to play a part in the donation drive.

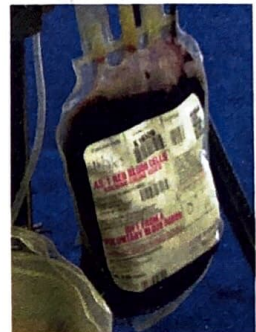
She also assured everyone about the safety of donating blood, saying: "You can see that there are a lot of tests going around."

SU hopes to attract more donors for its last drive of the year in October through publicity drives or educational talks for students.

10 Simple Steps to Blood Donation

- 01 Donor's medical history checked
- 02 Vein tested for suitability for drawing blood
- 03 Donor's arm cleaned
- 04 Arm injected with a local anaesthetic
- 05 Needle is inserted into vein
- 06 Donor squeezes stress ball to pump blood
- 07 About 430g of blood will fill a bag
- 08 Needle is drawn from arm
- 09 A plaster is placed over the injected part
- 10 Donor can rest and have refreshments

Contributed by Dr. Lawrence Kiang, Medical Officer from the Centre of Transfusion Medicine.



GIFT OF LIFE: During this year's blood drive, NP students and staff donated more than 165 litres of blood. (Picture: Timothy Teo)

during the three-day drive that began on 16 July, compared to 377 last July.

More than 165 litres of blood, which can be

Excellence Rewarded

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Some of this year's graduates had an extra something to beef up their resumes with. Almost twice as many Ngee Ann Polytechnic (NP) students and graduates bagged Student Excellence Awards (SEA) as compared to last year, according to Student Development & Alumni Relations (SDAR).

While last year's debut ceremony only saw 141 winners, this year's SEA held on 2 July gave accolades to 257 student achievers who excelled in their studies, as well as Co-Curricular Activities (CCAs) or community service.

Moreover, this year also marked the inaugural recognition of the Arts or Cultural achievers, and national athletes. SDAR's Mr Gopinathan Retnam, 33, who was in charge of the event, explained the increase in the number of SEA winners as a measure to encourage "more students to be well-rounded, [and] not just constrained in their studies".

He added that the SDAR wanted to recognise students who had excelled and achieved very high standards in non-academic areas.

Other SEA categories included the Half Colours and the Full Colours awards, which were mainly won by sports achievers.

For the first time, these two sports awards were also conferred on National Representatives - athletes who have competed and emerged victorious in national competitions. One such group of athletes is the Magnum Force, who has won the National Cheerobics 2003 Competition for three consecutive years.

Magnum Force's ex-President Denise Sum Jian Ying, 21, who won for herself three awards - Full Colours Award, CCA Award and National Achievement Award - was grateful for the recognition she received, but remarked that the incentives from NP might not have been sufficient, especially for athletes.

She suggests that besides giving away trophies, NP should also look into providing sponsorships and student exchange programmes.

Last year, recognition was only given to Institute-Varsity-Polytechnic (IVP) winners.

Another first for the SEA committee this year is the recognition of artistic accomplishments.

Former Mass Communication student and accomplished pipa player, Samuel Wong Shengmiao, 20, and the Indian Cultural Society were the recipients of the Arts Award. Both winners performed at the ceremony.

"[Samuel] also won the International Achievement award, partly because of his involvement in a lot of international performances, and plus the publishing of his book, 'Impressions of a Pipa Player'. That itself is a milestone. Not just for him, but for Ngee Ann", revealed Mr Gopi.

Fellow multiple award-winner, Tan Yanhe, 20, bagged two awards. The Mechanical Engineering graduate, who also co-hosted the ceremony, was one of the top 10 recipients of the Co-Curricular Activities (CCA) Award category and the only recipient for one of this year's new categories, the Outstanding Contribution to Ngee Ann award.

Academic and non-academic associations like the Building and Environment Society and the Leo Club respectively received salutes from NP as well for their active involvement in community service work and student development.

According to Mr Gopi, extending the areas of recognition was also an attempt at establishing good bilateral relations with secondary schools.

"We want to show that Ngee Ann has this, we recognise our people. We don't just ask them to come here, study, and forget [about them]."

It will also help in the drive to "attract more sports [and] culturally adept people" to NP.

For a complete list of the Students Excellence Award winners, visit www.nptribune.com.



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NP Hosts National Inno Fair

BY CHERYL CHIA
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They may have been simple inventions, but a collapsible shirt hanger, a contraption to help you knot your necktie and the "Glo Key Hole" amply proved that Singaporean children have married a sense of practicality with creative problem-solving skills.

The innovations of over 500 primary and secondary school students were unveiled at the Young Innovators' Fair on 26 July in Ngee Ann Polytechnic's (NP) Convention Centre. Usually held in different schools, this year's fair was hosted by NP since it coincided with the opening of the Convention Centre.

The "Glo Key Hole" allows users to fit a key into the keyhole in the dark, and was invented by Daniel Ong, 14, a secondary two student from Raffles Institution (RI). Consisting of two parts - an adhesive ring coated with ultra-violet (UV) paint that is pasted over the keyhole, and a key holder, which uses UV light, this solves the problem of groping about in the dark. He got this inspiration based on his personal experience.

"[It took me] five minutes to come up with the idea, [it was] just inspiration," he said.

These young students are part of the 10-year-old Innovation Programme (IvP) spearheaded by the Ministry of Education (MOE) to nurture out-of-the-box thinkers.

They had six months to work on their creations, guided by teacher-mentors in at least three sessions.

The expert-mentors from institutions of higher learning, together with members from the community, were also invited to look at the students' ideas and inventions, and to aid them

in producing prototypes of their ideas.

"Our polytechnic has lecturers who volunteer... as expert-mentors. That means they will go to their assigned schools... to help the student team to develop their project and ideas," said Mr Heng Song Ning, a Mechanical Engineering (ME) lecturer who is part of the steering committee for this programme.

As NP's representative, he also contributes ideas and helps make important decisions for the programme, which has benefitted about 2,600 students in 10 years.

His colleague Mr Tay Seng How, is one of these mentors who answers questions from the inquisitive students. "We [NP lecturers] have been doing this for a number of years and these past few years we were sent to Henry Park Primary School," said Mr Tay.



THINKING OUT OF THE BOX: Young innovators from various primary schools gather in NP to exhibit their prototypes. (Picture: Cheryl Chia)

Ideas Parked at eGarage

BY CATERINA POH
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Left your laptop at home? No worries, Ngee Ann Polytechnic (NP) students may soon be participating in lectures using nothing more than their Personal Digital Assistants (PDAs) or mobile phones.

A recent pilot study involving third-year students of the School of Information & Communications Technology (ICT) put this technology to the test.

The Interactive Lecture Experience project, developed by recent graduate Soh Poh Chew, aims to "allow more interaction within the lecture environment", said Mr Ng Weng Choh, whose 30 July Windows Applications Development lecture was used as a testbed for the innovation.

Compared to the SMART Lecture Theatres the school already has, the Interactive Lecture Experience application is more "user-friendly and interactive", according to Mr Ng. Lecturers can post "snap questions" to the students to test their understanding and students can also clarify doubts with the lecturer through the system. Attendance can also be taken by logging on to the designated website.

This is but one of the impressive final-year projects done by past students from ICT showcased at eGarage, a strategic partnership between the school and Hewlett-Packard (HP), which "aims to promote innovation and creativity among students", said Mr Ng Poh Oon, the facility's lecturer-in-charge.

"eGarage provides a good opportunity [for students] to have access to current technological facilities, faster, greater opportunities to be involved in new ideas and new innovations, and to mix with like-minded people," Mr Ng said.

Other noteworthy projects that have incubated in the eGarage include S@y P@lm and Drop It Home.

The former allows two or more users to communicate easily and even send handwritten or hand-drawn messages using their PDAs from anywhere in the school.

The product of five tech-savvy former ICT students, S@y P@lm is now licensed to i-Works Solutions Pte Ltd, a company funded by the Economic Development Board (EDB) Startup Enterprise Development Scheme (SEEDS), that specialises in exhibitions.

Drop It Home, the brainchild of former IT student Zach Lim Renjie, was selected by IBM as an "e-collateral" given to attendees at the IBM Convention 2003, held on 22 and 23 July at the Raffles City Convention Centre.

The Drop It Home application gives every user an e-briefcase for the collection of virtually any content that can be downloaded. This can then be accessed from the privacy of a preferred PC, wherever that is, after the installation of the programme on that specified computer.

Drop It Home is patented and also licensed under i-Works Solutions Pte Ltd.

Future plans for the eGarage include lunchtime seminars and competitions within special interest groups.

Allan Ng heads the eGarage club, which officially opened on 1 August during the Microsoft seminar organised by the school.

The final-year Information Technology student is drawn by the eGarage's "ability to provide students with the technology they need to get their hands dirty and try them out".

The eGarage is at Blk 27, level 2, near canteen 3. Interested ICT students can call Mr Ng Poh Oon at 6460 6903 or email him at npo@np.edu.sg.

SARS: Reason for Cleaner Canteens



KEEPING US SAFE:

Although there is no proven link between bad hygiene and SARS, it never hurts to play safe and take extra precautions with eating utensils, food preparation and general cleanliness in the canteens and other public areas. (Picture: Tan Yuyun)

BY MARYAM ABDULLAH
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The prospect of the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) returning is frightening, even though the virus has been contained in Singapore for a few months now.

While there has never been any established link between food and the virus, poor public hygiene has been the fall guy of many an outbreak. So how well fortified and sanitary are NP canteens in our fight against disease?

Said Building Manager Mr Richard Loo, 42, from the Estates Management (EM) office: "Since [the April NP closure], all the canteen staff have had their temperatures taken twice daily."

"And also, the canteens at the end of each day... are cleaned up. The floors are mopped and the chairs and tables are cleaned."

While the practice of daily cleaning has always been in place, the "emphasis on approved disinfectants" like Lysol or Dettol has become more insistent, and the temperature taking is new too, of course.

"Last time, maybe they used soap and water, or something like that. Today, we are more vigilant on cleaning," he said.

Except for the temperature checks that have been suspended since 26 July after the Ministry of Education's announcement, the measures will remain "until further notice", Mr Loo said.

In the beginning of April, NP was closed for

three days after a School of Business and Accountancy (BA) student contracted SARS.

The polytechnic reopened only after it had undergone intense cleaning and disinfecting throughout the closure.

"Our canteen operators, they are responsible for the hygiene and the cleanliness of the canteens. Each of the five canteens has a canteen operator," Mr Loo added, "For this particular closure, they had specifically taken stock and disinfected the place thoroughly."

Since then, every cleaner and vendor has done their part in keeping NP canteens SARS-free.

The food servers in canteens also play a significant role in keeping food hygienic and clean. Those involved in food preparation had to wear gloves at all times, and also had to keep their kitchens and utensils germ-free.

Apart from the use of disinfectants and temperature checks, these measures have always been in place even before the SARS outbreak, said Mr Loo, praising the canteen staff for being supportive of the measures introduced.

"When they were told to wear stickers and take temperatures, they were quite cooperative."

Siti Khadijah d/o Abdul Wahab, 19, a third-year student from Early Childhood Education (ECH), said, "The [cleaners] constantly clean the tables, and within minutes, the plates will disappear. So it's generally pretty clean. I think everybody's doing their best."

More interviews and opinions on SARS affecting canteen hygiene in NP can be found at <http://www.nptribune.com>.

校受染剂 被受争议

学校总给人一种死气沉沉的感觉。多如牛毛的校规更是令人厌恶万分。但随着时代的变迁,义安理工学院(NP)也逐步除却了些较为保守的校规,先后允许同学们携带手机上学和穿凉鞋与短裤。你可知道NP最近又放松了另一项条例,你听说了吗?



Co-op 共有八种鲜艳 Gatsby 染色任你挑选。
[照片: Matthew Au]

近来你如果光顾在NP‘乌节路’的Co-operatives (Co-op), 你就不难发现店内增添了样新产品, 那就是Gatsby牌的新系列染发剂。

对这些染发剂不感兴趣, 就读机械工程系的三年级学生林志文就把大多数受访同学的心声吐了出来。“那时听说能穿短裤, 我就穿咯, 怎么知道还是被校督抓。”

但有卖并不代表有人买。这些染发剂的销售量可差强人意。为探个究竟, 本报访问了六十余名同学, 问问他们为什么?

居了解, Co-op 已和校方达成口头上的协议, 所以所售买的颜色已大制上通过, 应该是蛮安全的。Co-op 的营业主任陈小姐就说: “只要不把头发染得五颜六色, 太过火的话应该是没多大的问题啦。”

Co-op 引进染发剂的出发点虽无恶意, 但却引来了些家长的不满。他们觉得学校公然售卖染发剂是在纵容年青一代崇洋的歪风。林铭耀先生的儿子目前在NP就读大众媒体传播系二年级。他认为学校的政策和他的家教唱了个大反调。“我一向不准他染发, 但学校有买染发剂, 他就说这学校不介意学生染发。这样我说一套, 学校做一套, 怎么教孩子!”

但这位家长可能把话说得严重了。毕竟理工生都是成年人了, 也有分寸。如果家长们能多信任青年, 多与他们沟通的话, 双方互相了解, 和睦相处也会更容易。

中国学生吐心声

还记得在沙斯疫情高峰期时, 若是家人或朋友稍微感冒, 病倒了, 都会把自己急坏。而对在本地求学的中国籍同学来说, 那种日夜为远在祖国里的家人的担忧更是我们的千百倍了。

在二月尾, 当新加坡报道了本地第一起沙斯病例后, 就读义安理工学院(NP)电子工程系三年的北京同学刘彬才得知疫情在他家乡有多严重。

“那时我立刻打回家, 还好家人没事。但是他们不让我回去, 怕危险。”没得回家就仍有天天打长途电话求个心安。刘彬就单单在二月份就交了八百多圆的电话费。

刘彬的另一位同读NP的同乡就没那么幸运了。这位不愿透露姓名的同学就向本报痛诉了她的经历。

“我弟弟染了沙斯, 但是家人怕我担心就没告诉我。...是在他病情危急的是候我才知道。我没几个朋友, 又不敢跟别人说, 每晚就只会哭。”但值的庆幸的是这位同学的弟弟已康复出院了。

长年在外, 无法和家人团聚已经够难受的了, 再加上被身边的人排斥, 滋味想必更糟糕。受访的二十余名中国籍同学中国籍同学大多就谈到了他们在平时所

受的委屈。

就读电子电脑工程系二年级的廖敏莹就觉得来新三年多后还不能融入这儿的。社会。“新加坡人还是以有色眼镜看待中国人。...[新加坡人]拿[中国人]来开玩笑和辱骂我们不是没话说。只不过是不知道怎么样他们沟通。”敏莹与几位同乡在沙斯期间更被人指桑骂槐, 间接把沙斯细菌的传播怪罪在她们身上。“那时候很矛盾。一方面对中国隐瞒真正疫情的真相觉得尴尬, 但另一方面又觉得这不是我的错。我又不是带菌者!”

得道一些国人竟然说出这种话, 就读大众传媒系三年级的陈美琳就说道: “虽然中国是沙斯的起源之地, 我觉得不能就因为这样而把矛头指向他们。国人除了不应排斥中国人, 反而应该给予他们尊重与了解。”

虽然吃了不少苦头, 敏莹仍然表示她很喜欢新加坡并希望毕业后在新就业。她希望国人能多尊重和体谅中国学生的难处。如果我们有朝一日在外公干或度假时也会希望会受到该国人民的礼待。相同的我们也应该给予外国朋友相同的对待。所以下次如果你想说些不客气的话或开些外地人的玩笑时请三思。

‘信’演唱会 数百人到场

七月十七日由义安理工学院(NP)和新传媒Y.E.S 93.3FM 醉心频道联手举办的‘Van, 范逸臣-信仰爱情’校园演唱会吸引了数百名同学到场一睹偶像的风采。

有人欢喜有人愁; 当日因人数众多, 一些赶不及到场的歌迷唯有怀着失望的心情守在门外, 希望能在节目的尾声见到偶像一面。而演唱会中最兴奋的同学莫过于坐在最前排的歌迷朋友了。为能和小范-范逸臣做最近距离的接触, 他们可是付出了代价的哦。一位不愿透露姓名的同学就告诉了本报她是因为怕占不到好位子, 而特地旷课前来‘扎营’。

虽然有些同学不惜逃课追看偶像, 但还好人数不多。大部份同学还是循规蹈矩的等下了课后才赶往演唱会地点, Lecture Theatre 26。当天大约在六时左右, 演唱会入口处已人潮如涌了。正当歌迷们在讲堂外随着音

乐哼着小范的歌曲同时, 小范本人已静悄悄地抵达了演出地点, 积极为稍后的表演做暖身工作。本报就趁此机会与小范做了一小段访问, 并在谈话中发现这位新代情歌王子对人生的态度与信念也和你一样, 简单纯朴。

作为一位新人, 走红后, 随时会被路人认出的感觉是如何的, 相信也是大家想知到的吧? “当红的感觉没什。...对我的隐私也没造成多大的影响”, 反是小范先诉述。虽然对艺人生活没多大的感触, 小范也深知这一切得来不易, 对自己能在短短出道一年里交出如傲人的成绩单表示由衷的感激。

“最要感谢的就是歌迷们对我的支持, 还有丰华唱片。...没有他们, 我也不会那么顺利。”但如果小范没两下功夫也没法子风靡万万万歌迷的心。怒力尝试词曲创作的他认为要在现今今日的乐坛立足已不能单靠会唱,

还要懂得音乐, 尽可能参与幕后的制作过程。

数周连续流行歌曲排行榜的‘停不了’就是小范其中一首亲自创作的曲子。谁不知道, 写情歌这玩意儿嘛怎么说都要有点实际经验。而小范有个交往了两年的亲密异性朋友已经是个公开的秘密。



小范在访谈中畅谈了他对事业和人生的看法。

[照片: Patricia Ho]

了。就不知道这位朋友就是否带给了小范一些创作上的点子呢?

可惜小范守口如瓶, 只以“没什么特别的”形容他的爱情生活。虽然套不出小范的爱情资料, 但却在畅谈其他话题时发现了小范鲜为人知的一面。原来啊, 小范可是对咱们狮城的鸟语花香和一流治安情有独钟哦! 当然这位阿美族的阳光大男孩也不忘答谢对他忠心耿耿的新加坡歌迷咯!

演唱会以一首‘百慕达’拉开序幕。歌迷的欢呼与尖叫声使场内的气氛顿时升到了极点! 小范除了唱了几首歌之外, 也与观众玩了现场互动游戏, 和歌迷们打成一片。节目主持志勇也趁此机会做了些反盗版的宣言。‘信’演唱会最后以一场签名会画上了圆满的句点。

到场的歌迷, 这次演唱会一致赞赏。就读生物科学的一年级新生陈凯纹说“刚刚进入义安不久就有演唱会看, 觉得很开心, 希望以后会有更多这类的演出”。凯纹还笑着道: “多看点明星学校生活才会多姿多嘛!”

本页的设计与报道全由学生记者区柏廉构思及著作。如有任何意见或建议, 请电邮致
matt.au@hotmail.com.

Rocking in NP

BY VALERIE CHEN
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The recent Baybeats 2003, arguably Singapore's largest alternative music festival, involved foreign and local talents, including at least three from Ngee Ann Polytechnic. Tribune asks them what it is about the conditions in NP that help to promote the flowering of musical talent.

Coincidentally, all three of the Ngee Ann Polytechnic (NP) musicians involved in Baybeats 2003 are in their 20s, and presumably that mix of maturity and not as heavy family commitments help them manage their time better.

But there's something in NP that supports their passion for music too.

At least that is what Jeremy Lee, 24, who is in his final year in Biotechnology, will tell you.

He has not let being in his graduating year stop him from playing the bass and doing vocals for two bands - One Wrong Turn and NvRLrN. The latter played at Baybeats 2003.

Jeremy credits his lecturers, "They know that music to me is more than just a passing fad and they give me the support I need by taking time out of the curriculum to help me with my studies."

"That is why I still manage to get relatively decent grades," he cheekily added. "But the key point is of course, still time management."

The active musician has been playing the guitar since he was 13 and the bass since he was 17 years old.

"Music is my passion and there's nothing else I'd rather do. I study for paper qualifications. In Singapore we don't have the luxury of playing music as a career."

He continued, "I don't come from a wealthy family, so I work to buy musical instruments and pay for my jamming sessions with my band mates. Studying will thus get me a good job to help me afford to fund myself."

Gordon Khoo, 27, sings for the band Surreal and actively volunteers for Awakening Productions, which collaborated with Rockstar Collective to stage Baybeats 2003 from 18 to 20 July at the Esplanade.

The mature student was quick to add, "Don't get me wrong, studying is a necessity. Music is a passion, and yet it also can double up as a necessity. Take away music from my daily life and that's going to be very boring."

Like Jeremy, Gordon stressed that meticulous time management is the key to coping with his studies and music.

This includes being disciplined enough to know when he cannot devote time to practise with his



band mates. "It doesn't

mean that I can't jam on my own. I still play guitar and write songs on my own at home."

Those in the School of Film & Media Studies (FMS) would probably have gone down a couple of times to the FMS cage to obtain equipment from the technical support officers.

Affectionately known as "Jenn" among the students, 27-year-old technical support officer Mr Chia Jenn Hui also plays in two bands - Gloria and Claire's Flower Shop.

"I have a family now, no kids, but I have a wife, [so] the schedule of my life is pretty hectic," he laughed, "I think it's [the ability to cope with a family, work and music is the result of] a mutual understanding with my spouse. She knows that I need to do this."

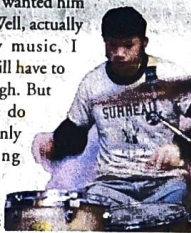
"I told her before that she could make me stop doing anything but playing music because that's what I really want to do."

And what if she wanted him to stop working? "Well, actually if it pays to play music, I wouldn't mind. I still have to make a living, though. But she usually lets me do what I want, not only music but playing football as well."

As for how the NP alumnus manages his time, he admits to compromising with his band members. However this is not a big problem as most of them are either working or studying too.

His advice to NP students who want to be in a band: "Just play. There is sure to be time, it's just a matter of time management."

"Oh, and also let me do some shameless advertising: Come to FSV (Film, Sound & Video) [in Blk 52], you can use the multi-track studios and even record your own bands." ■



Thanks for the Memories...

BY TIMOTHY THYO
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Ngee Ann Polytechnic Chinese Orchestra's (NPCO) sixth bi-annual public performance, titled Reminiscence, was a touching memorial for the late Corporal (CPL) Goh Hui Ling, an NPCO alumnus who died in the RSS Courageous tragedy on 3 January.

Concert committee president, 21-year-old Lee Ting Zien, a fresh Information Technology graduate reminisced: "Most of the time when I spoke to her [Hui Ling], she would be cracking jokes with me... She [was] a very nice person."

Ting Zien, as well as some of her other friends and seniors, initiated the dedication of the concert in memory of the late, well-loved Hui Ling.

Hui Ling played the *liu qin*, a stringed guitar-like instrument that sounds like a mandolin.

He also hoped the event would allow Hui Ling's parents to "realise that she has been a very good friend to us and we remember her, and love her as much as her relatives do."

Hui Ling's parents had kept a low profile at the concert that they were invited to.

See Tah Wee, 20, a close friend of Hui Ling, and second-year student of Electrical Engineering (EE), spoke on their behalf, saying that they enjoyed the concert and appreciated the Chinese Orchestra's gesture.

Guest of Honour, NP Principal Chia Mia Chiang said: "I think it [the concert] is a very nice gesture and a good thought on the part of the Chinese Orchestra to dedicate this to Hui Ling. We all know about the passing of Hui Ling and feel for the family."

Mr Chia added: "I am sure the performance will touch the hearts of Hui Ling's family. I think

this is what it's all about, reaching out to a fellow human being and making sure that everybody is important and is remembered and appreciated."

This year's concert opened with Hui Ling's favourite piece, entitled "A Collection of Theme Songs", arranged by Qu Chun Quan, a well-recognised Singapore Chinese Orchestra (SCO) conductor cum composer. The medley featured some relatively well-known theme songs from Hong Kong television serials such as "The Shell Game" and "The Bund II".

The percussion ensemble, which played "Squalling Ducks", won the audience over with its creativity and playfulness. The song saw percussionists Chen Yan Po and Lee Ting Zien finish off the piece by clapping their instruments and walking backstage like ducks.

The organisers were only expecting a turnout of about 630 people for the event staged in the Convention Centre, with its excellent sound system, but close to 700 people showed up in support and remembrance of Hui Ling.

NPCO conductor, Mr Chuan Joon Hee, 50, and an NP alumnus himself, remembered Hui Ling as a dedicated NPCO member, saying: "Hui Ling used to give up her Saturdays to come back and practise. She deserves to be commemorated at this event."

All in all, despite some flaws in the programming such as a lack of proper introductions to the pieces, Reminiscence was a bittersweet success.

Lee Boon Chuan, a 24-year-old Electronics & Telecommunications student who played the *er hu*, said: "She [Hui Ling] would have felt very honoured that a lot of people still remember her, even though she is away from us. This concert was for her." ■



A PLAYFUL TRIBUTE: The Chinese Orchestra wowed the crowd with its amusing rendition of "Squalling Ducks" during a concert dedicated to alumnus Goh Hui Ling, who died in the RSS Courageous accident. [Picture: Tan Yuyun]

NP Concert Band Woos, Wins Record Crowd

BY TAN YUYUN
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Thomas Carlyle, a famous English essayist and historian in the 16th century once said, "Music is well said to be the speech of angels."

If so, a 1,200-strong audience literally found themselves eavesdropping on a heavenly conversation at the Convention Centre where Ngee Ann Concert Band presented their two-hour Pops 'N' Classics concert on 18 July.

Admitted band president Janice Ang Chai Geok, 19, a final-year chemical engineering student: "It scared us quite a little. Our past record in LT 26 was only 400 plus. With more than 1,000 [people staring at us] some of us were a little intimidated."

"In fact, the main band was quite tensed up for the first two pieces."

As soon as the emcees introduced highlights of the night, the band struck up with the dynamic "The Purple Pageant", a concert march by K.L. King.

The evening's repertoire consisted of 10 songs, including contemporary music, overture and modern classical pieces.

The most riveting piece was undoubtedly the one from the musical "Chicago", a medley arranged by Peter Lopez, and conducted by Wilson Ho who plays the French horn. The melody was sexy, smooth and slick, drawing loud applause from the audience.

All donned in black formal wear, the players appeared calm; their enthusiasm evident through the upbeat music.

Principal Mr Chia Mia Chiang observed, "[The concert was] terrific! In the span of the last two years, [the] concert band has improved tremendously."

The band, which consisted of under 60 brass, woodwind and percussion players, started preparations for this concert as early as February.

Established in 1983, the Ngee Ann concert band holds two public concerts each year - Pops 'N' Classics and Rondeau, and performs regularly on campus, as well as off-campus like at the Ngee Ann Open House and Singapore Arts Festival Fringe respectively.

Members have to prove their worth before being allowed to play for the public.

Practice sessions take up to three hours and are often guided by Mr Yeo Poong Poh, the band's resident conductor.

But it all paid off as far as the audience was concerned. Final-year Business Studies student Soong Laufun, 19, said, "I think the concert was very good and colourful. I enjoyed it a lot."

Janice was gratified to hear that. "We try to have new stuff in [every] concert, if not people might feel bored, coming for the same thing. If we can't be as good as Singapore Polytechnic in musical terms, hopefully our creativity can somehow overtake them."

Explaining why ticket sales were so good, Janice said, "The members had gone to different secondary schools to promote Pops 'N' Classics," she continued, "Our principal Mr Chia was also very supportive of our event... [He] persuaded all directors [of the Schools] to buy a ticket each. And our Students Affairs Officer, Mr Wong, also helped sent out mass emails." ■

Inter-club Soccer: Show us the Money

ZA'ID KHAN probes the remains of last year's cancelled Inter-club soccer tournament and digs deep for the missing loot.

The sum of \$50 is not much, but the principle behind it going missing is important.

A number of teams had together paid that amount to be registered for last semester's Inter-club soccer tournament, but the matches were cancelled without explanation, and half a year later, at press time, when this semester's tournament is about to begin, the money had still not been returned.

"I've consulted them [the organisers] on five different occasions during the last four months, and I'm still left without a satisfactory reply," says Muhammad Tirmidzi bin Saad, a third-year Mass Communication (MCM) student and captain of the Silat team - one of the clubs scheduled to take part. Other captains voiced similar frustration at the situation.

The lecturer-in-charge of soccer activities in school, Mr Rohan bin Ismail, was none the wiser.

Citing field unavailability as the main reason for cancelling, he agreed that once the tournament was cancelled, the fees should have been returned to the participating teams.

He then speculated, "The money is probably still with them, the student committee of NPFC (Ngee Ann Polytechnic Football Club), or it

could have gone to [the] printing of the flyers for the tournament, the team sheet and the referees report sheet."

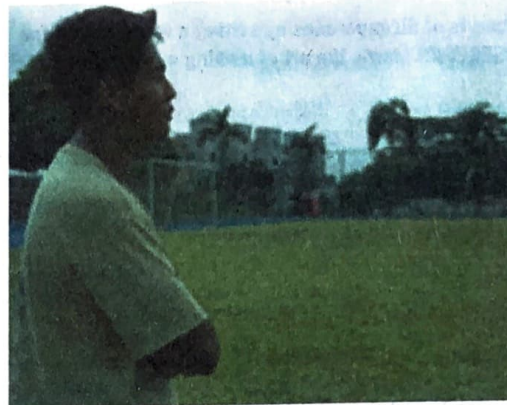
Mr Rohan explained that he did not collect the registration fees, and added that he trusted the student committee to handle such administration details on its own.

When Tribune managed to track down graduate Abdul Mutalib, the former president of the NPFC club committee at the time of the incident showed that the trust was ill-founded.

The then third-year Mechatronic Engineering student apparently was not even sure how much money he had taken from the clubs, claimed he did not know that the registration fees had to be returned, and admitted to not informing Mr. Rohan about the use of the fees for another tournament.

"Our relationship with Mr Rohan would be what I'd say as [just] okay. There were a few hiccups here and there so we decided to just run the club ourselves. It was tedious to return the money, because you would have to call every single one of them. So we decided to use the [money] to run [the next tournament]."

He finally admitted that, "Maybe on our part we did [make a] mistake".



STILL IN THE GAME: Despite not getting his team's registration fees back after last year's fiasco, Muhammad Tirmidzi bin Saad still wants to join 2003's Inter-club soccer tournament. He's still waiting for an answer from the organisers, though, as to where his money went.

[Picture: Zaid Khan]

"The registration fees went to the fund of the club, because our club fund at [that] moment in time was really running very low.

"The money for that tournament was used for a different tournament that we organised later in the semester. It was a Futsal (street-soccer version of football) tournament. We used the money for refreshments, and transportation for the goalposts, because we used an outside transport company... and [some] other stuff."

"I apologise on behalf of my club because of the money problem," he said.

Mr Rohan believes the previous committee has a lot of explaining to do, but since the affected tournaments are over and most of the committee members are no longer NP students, he believes "to punish them at this juncture would be too late".

"But [he] will definitely take action [by] warning the current committee from committing the same mistakes."

To read the full version of this story, please log on to www.nptribune.com.

A Fiesta of Choice

BY MELISSA NG
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The recent CCA Fiesta 2003, held on 22 and 23 July, highlighted the two challenges that co-curricular activity (CCA) groups face in Ngee Ann Polytechnic. Recruitment efforts and funding for their activities have scuttled many a group.

Despite being held at an examination hall in Blk 72 instead of the usual Atrium, and not being able to benefit from the crowds at the annual matriculation fair (which was cancelled because of our measures against SARS), this fiesta reportedly attracted 2,974 freshmen.

This is about six times the number of recruits in January. Because a quarter of the groups did not submit their statistics, no one knows exactly how many freshmen have signed up.

Fiesta organiser, Mr Colin Chiam, 25 Student Development and Alumni Relations (SDAR) officer credits publicity efforts and the various schools' support for the large turnout.

He observed that sometimes clubs fail because of organisational committee inactivity or the inability to retain their members.

Time management is also an issue.

Said Muhammad Azlie Bin Sazali, 19, a third-year Accountancy student, "CCAs are always held after school, so by the time I end my classes in the evening, I'm already too tired to think about CCAs."

It's really tempting to join Hip Hop or the Adventure Seekers, but the thought of having to go home late and rushing my tutorials for the next day made me think twice.

Even for freshmen, time is a big factor.

Nurul Huda Binte Mohamed Maideen, 17, a first-year Mass Communication and Campus Television (CTV) host said: "Besides juggling my school work and being signed on to CTV, I'm taking French lessons. Time in poly is really precious to me."



SITTING PRETTY: Kimberly is no scarecrow; she's the totem and good luck charm for Poly Stage F Actor, having attracted 55 members to their entourage since her debut in the Atrium. [Picture: Melissa Ng]

Creativity Counts

Have you met Kimberly in the atrium? She is the mascot and symbol of the newly revived Poly Stage F Actor (PSF).

Due to a lack of fresh recruits, PSF was closed for three years.

Muhammad Fadhil and Lian Jiayuan, both 19-year-old third-year IT students and members of the NP Debate Club (NPDC), found three other drama enthusiasts and decided to take their interest in drama to new levels by reviving the drama club in May.

Thanks to Kimberly's one-week "stage presence" in the Atrium, days before the July CCA fiesta began; the fledgling PSF recruited 25 new members.

Since the fiesta, they added another 30 members.

Fadhil explained the rationale behind parking Kimberly in the Atrium: "None of us could commit the time to stand around the Atrium and recruit people and we needed more than the usual publicity, so Jiayuan came up with the idea of a scarecrow."

Don't be too surprised if you find Kimberly in the Atrium again. Auditions will be held throughout mid-August for an NP bands showcase on 27 September in the Atrium.

Wishing Upon a Star

BY MARYAM ABDULLAH
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This year, the stars shone a little brighter for Ngee Ann Polytechnic's (NP) Astronomy Club, which clinched third place in the very first competition it has ever joined. The club fielded two teams of second- and third-year students.

Held on 24 and 26 June, the Astro Challenge 2003 was jointly organised by the National University of Singapore (NUS) and Nanyang Technological University (NTU), to increase awareness about astronomy in secondary schools, junior colleges and polytechnics.

Daniel Huang, 19, President of the Astronomy Club, outlined the significance of their win.

He said: "For the past few years, we wanted to build our portfolio and our list of achievements. One of our main objectives is actually to get new equipment from NP. We felt we needed to show that we could achieve something."

Indeed, the club has recently applied for new equipment worth about \$10,000 through their staff advisor, Miss Julie Guok Choo Lee, 29, a Student Development Officer from the Student Development & Alumni Relations (SDAR) office.

She felt that although the request was "a big amount", the club may just receive replacements for their 10-year-old equipment.

Echoing the fact that the club's request was an expensive one was SDAR's Administrative Officer, Mr Siow Chow Sid, 43, who mentioned that monetary "requests from [NP] clubs have usually only been around \$4,000 to \$5,000".

Mr Siow said that he "will still look into the justification" behind such an appeal.

Astro Challenge 2003 was divided into six categories such as Written Quiz and Observation and was designed to test the theory and practical



STAR-GAZING: Biotechnology student Neil Woo, 19, the Astronomy Club programme director, hopes to replace the club's old telescope. [Picture: Melody Tan]

skills of young astronomers.

According to Daniel, the competition's organisers judged that the NP teams, which lost to ones from National Junior College and Raffles Junior College, were the best performers during practical rounds; apparently because they were most familiar with the telescopes, and with locating celestial objects.

Daniel attributed their practical know-how to the club's occasional stargazing activities during weekends.

The club won \$375 worth of vouchers to buy telescopes from a specific dealer.

Besides building a better case to receive funding, Daniel, a third-year Biotechnology student, said his members also needed "exposure to competitions and other schools which have been learning astronomy".

The Astronomy Club's participation, which Daniel said will now be a yearly affair, also expands their contact base.

This is essential for a club that organises annual astronomy camps and programmes for junior colleges and secondary schools.

For the first time this year, they will also hold one for primary schools.

48,315 NP Hearts Score World Record

NP students warm the hearts of Singaporeans by setting a world record for charity. MUGILAN RAJASEGERAN learns the art of making a difference.

If this was not the largest amount of money ever raised by Ngee Ann Polytechnic, it certainly was the fastest.

Close to 2,000 Ngee Ann students who thronged the Convention Centre on 1 August broke a world record and managed to raise \$48,315 for charity in the process.

The event staged by the newest CCA on campus, Club Alliance, saw enthusiastic students folding a record-breaking 48,315 paper hearts in just half an hour.

SingTel pledged to donate a dollar to five children's charities for every heart folded as part of its Touching Lives Fund. Club Alliance, formed to organise charitable events, carried the challenge to unexpected heights.

The idea struck the club's Public Relations Officer, Yeong Kai Xiong, 18, a second-year Accountancy student, when he was reading about the fund in an issue of TODAY.

Kai Xiong then recruited his fellow members. Their staff advisor, PE teacher Mrs Julie Guok Choo Lee, 29, from the Students Development & Alumni Relations Office (SDAR) helped to make their cause a campus-wide effort.

From 21 July to 1 August, Club Alliance collected 51,000 used copies of TODAY papers.

Collection boxes were also placed at the four major canteens in preparation for the event.

The Club faced many challenges, especially in the areas of manpower, and as many as 15 to 20 members sacrificed their time and sleep to stay overnight in campus to prepare 51,000 cut-outs from the newspaper.

NP's principal, Mr Chia Mia Chiang was very encouraging. "I told the [Club Alliance] president there is no better start to Club Alliance than to have something so big that really fires the imagination of so many students. Many other good things will happen for sure," he said.

Kai Xiong himself is no stranger to folding hearts to break records. He said in an e-mail, "The previous record was held by my secondary school, Ghim Moh Secondary. We hit a high of 36,545 hearts in 1999 to create a record, but they were ordinary hearts that held no [monetary or] charitable value."

He added that the incentive to raise a large amount of money for charity was topmost on the organisers' minds and that breaking the record was just a bonus.

Even before the official starting time of noon, students were milling around outside the Convention Centre, where the folding session was to take place. The excited crowd, numbering close

to 2,000, with another 200 waiting outside, started at a brisk pace, unrelenting in their quest to meet the original target of 40,000 hearts.

In fact, the crowd had folded so many hearts within 20 minutes that Club Alliance President, Andy Wong Yuan Wai, a 19-year-old second-year Horticulture & Landscape Management student, decided to up the stakes by encouraging the crowd to set a new record in the Guinness Book of World Records for the most number of hearts folded in half an hour.

Andy said, "We saw that everybody was finishing fast and was requesting for more paper, and if things can go even better why not?"

The crowd burst into rapturous cheers when the time was up, many realising that they had set a new world record.

Third-year Accountancy student, Toh Shu Fen, 21, said that she had been very nervous for fear of not making the target, but added that the event was exciting because an increase in the number of hearts folded meant a similar increase in the amount contributed to charity.

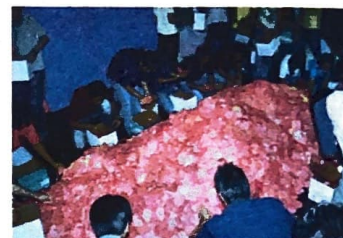
Others were surprised by the response to the event, saying it was a first for Ngee Ann for as long as they could remember.

Said Mr Chia, "Everybody deserves a pat on the back. It is something they can remember for years to come."

For more information about Club Alliance, visit <http://www.nptribune.com>.



SWEET HEARTS: For each heart folded, Singtel pledged to give \$1 to five children's charities as part of its Touching Lives Fund. (Picture: Mugilan R.)



AN EVENT WITH A LOT OF HEART: The final number was 8,315 over the original target, and 11,770 more than the previous world record of 36,545. Held at the NP Convention Centre, the event attracted local media as well as close to 2,000 students who participated in the record-breaking charity endeavour. (Picture: Mugilan R.)



IN TOO DEEP: Despite their efforts, NP lifeguards were unexpectedly left high and dry in the NUS Invitational Lifesaving Championship. Still, the team is holding out for a lifeline in future competitions. (Picture: Timothy Teo.)

Lifeguards Go Under

BY TIMOTHY TEO
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In a shocking turn of events, Ngee Ann Polytechnic's (NP) men and women lifeguards suffered heavy defeat at the 4th NUS Invitational Lifesaving Championship 2003, held at the NUS Sports and Recreation Centre's swimming complex on 27 August.

Defeat tasted even more bitter for the women's team, who went into the Line Throw Rescue Relay as defending champions of the event, only to falter and finish in 9th place out of 15 other competitors.

The women's team clocked in at 2 mins 50.02 sec, which many say was way off their personal best. They hold the NUS Championship record for fastest time in this.

NP's key representative, Lynn Chan Xing Mei, 20, instrumental in creating last year's record for the event at 1 min 17.61 sec was injured just before competing. The third-year Biotechnology student's scraped knee undoubt-

edly affected her performance.

Mei Lynn added: "We were not very confident [at first], because most of our throws (Line Throw Rescue Relay) didn't make it very well. But we practiced till most of us could throw it at one go, so we were hoping that we could win today."

Unfortunately, their hopes were thoroughly dashed at the championships.

Summing up their defeat, Mei Lynn said: "We were too nervous and excited."

The women's relay team pulled out of their remaining event, the Obstacle Swim Relay. Both the men's teams taking part in the Line Throw Rescue Relay were disqualified as they failed to finish within the top 10 teams in the event.

Lifeguard Corps President, Gilbert Lew, 18, a third-year Logistics Engineering & Management student said: "Basically, we came to gain experience. More importantly [we have] to prepare for next year's IVP (NUS Invitational Lifesaving Championship 2004)." ■

Badminton Club: Self-serving?

BY ZAITD KHAN
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A supposed talent-spotting opportunity to help the Ngee Ann Polytechnic (NP) Badminton Club recruit promising newcomers turned out to be just a back-patting exercise for existing members.

As a result, this year's NP Badminton Open was dominated by final-year students who also happen to be senior members of the club. School team captain Sean Ooi, 20, and his mixed doubles mate, Chen Peijia, 19, swept both the singles and doubles of their respective genders. The Civil & Environmental Engineering and Accountancy students also took runner-up position in the mixed doubles.

The pair was only stopped in their third attempt at gold by club president, Mechanical Engineering student Ong Bengwei, 21, and Quality Management & Engineering student, Irene Tan, 20. Bengwei and Irene won the mixed doubles in straight sets, 11-6, 11-4.

Sean said: "I expected to win the doubles competition, but I guess our opponent in the final was too strong."

His loss could be due to physical exhaustion, since the mixed doubles final was the last game of the day. Sean was visibly tired after playing in the men's singles and doubles finals earlier.

His disappointment was compensated by his unexpected win for the men's singles, of which he said: "I didn't expect to be champion for singles. I was injured and I can't even run properly. It was my luck that I won."

Vice-president of the Badminton Club, 20-year-old Lee Yuchen was unconcerned at the way the competition panned out.

The third-year Business Information Technology student said, "The main reason for the tournament is to scout for new talents among the first- and second-year players."

"Furthermore, it is also a base for team selection in relation to the upcoming IVP tournament. The winners of each category will get automatic entry into the school team."

When he was questioned about the week-long tournament's worrying decrease in participants compared to last year, especially in the numbers of first-year students participating, down by 10 percent, Yuchen acknowledged that "most freshmen did not get to hear about it until [it was too] late, as the registration date ended in the first week [of school]."

Yuchen said the lack of available court time was behind the Badminton Club's decision to bring the tournament forward. However, he expressed satisfaction with the turnout and standard of play.

Sean, on the other hand, held a different view. He said, "The standard of [the] NP Open this year has dropped a bit, because we are without a lot of our previous year's IVP team players, who have graduated."

"There is also a huge gap when you compare this year's NP Open to IVP standards because teams like NUS (National University of Singapore) and NTU (Nanyang Technology University) have more quality players - some even from the national team." ■