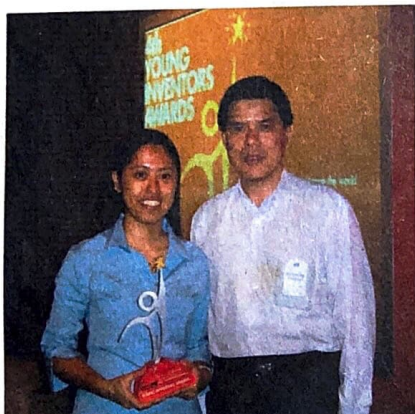


## Young Inventors Win



**MY DAUGHTER THE INVENTOR:** (Left) Ms Joanna Tan celebrates with her father, Mr Ronnie Tan. (Right) The Air Dynaponics System combines physics and gardening. (Pictures: Hayati Haron & Mr Gregory Chow)

**Two NP graduates beat doctoral and graduate students for the bronze in a regional competition. HAYATI HARON and CAROL LIU bring you their victory.**

Building castles in the air may not get you far, but growing plants in air helped two Ngee Ann Polytechnic (NP) graduates beat degree and Ph.D. holders in a regional invention competition.

Ms Joanna Tan Hwa Lay and Ms Ginny Tan Jue Hui, Biotechnology (BIO) graduates from NP's School of Life Sciences & Chemical Technology (LSCT), bagged the bronze award in the 4<sup>th</sup> Young Inventors' Award 2003, organised by The Far Eastern Economic Review (FEER) and Hewlett-Packard (HP).

Speaking at a press conference on 15 January at HP CoolTown Innovation Centre, Ms Joanna Tan, 20, was doubly pleased over the win, as her entry was the only one from a polytechnic.

Joanna's father, Mr Ronnie Tan, 47, a service and quality manager with a tour agency, said, "I'm

very proud of her".

Supervising lecturer Mr Gregory Chow, said in an e-mail that he was impressed because, "they're competing against doctoral and graduate students with strong overseas collaboration with huge funding. And what's great about this is that they, the poly[technic] students, can do just the same with the correct guidance and support from the school."

One of the judges agreed, telling Joanna that what gave them the edge was "[that their] design is simple and elegant".

More importantly, 10 times less energy is needed now without producing any excessive heat that could potentially harm the plants.

It took failure, though, to spur the students on, as they killed a crop of butterhead lettuce when they forgot to turn on the generator that provided

minerals and water through the regular method of 'aeroponics'. The accident led to months of brainstorming to devise a system that would lessen the likelihood of such a mishap, and would sustain crops using minimal energy and water.

Joanna was watering plants when the fountain-like spurting of the hose inspired her to develop the 'Air Dynaponics System'. The system uses the physics principle of speeding up airflow.

According to Mr Chow, the system works by air being pumped through a flexible tube, leading to a nozzle secured on a piece of floating polystyrene. At the nozzle, the increase in air velocity (due to narrowing of the nozzle) causes a pressure reduction.

"This difference in pressure creates a lift. Since the nozzle is positioned just below the water level, it pushes the water upwards in the form of droplets towards suspended plant roots, which are supported by a polystyrene panel. The spray does not dissipate heat as no pressure is produced."

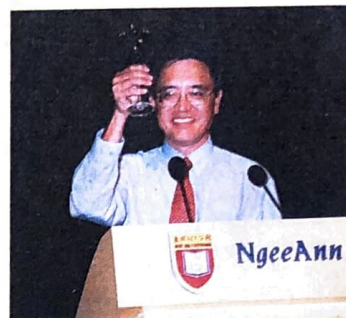
Mr Chow added that the uniqueness of the new way is that it is unlike aeroponics "whereby cooling is needed to grow temperate crops. This project can encourage... the [Singaporean] public that growing one's own vegetables is a possibility and not to rely on imports".

The 'Air Dynaponics System', their third-year final project, took Joanna and Ginny almost six months to complete under Mr Chow. Both 20-year-olds received a trophy, US\$2,500 [S\$4,260] worth of HP Computers and an all-expenses paid trip to HP Labs situated in Palo Alto, California. On top of that, NP also received a US\$2,500 grant from The Far Eastern Economic Review.

The gold award went to Ryuji Inai of the National University of Singapore for his project which grows human tissue while the silver award went to Sangjin Han, of Seoul National University, for his creation of a "new, highly conductive carbon material, for use in fuel cells", according to channelnewsasia.com.



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## Attain Shopping Prestige With NPSU Privilege Card

BY JACK SAI  
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If you have been putting off that shopping spree, restaurant treat or haircut because of your wallet, you probably don't realise that your student card can help.

Since Jan 1, Ngee Ann students have been the only Polytechnic students who can enjoy discounts from 10 to 25 percent by flashing their student cards at some 74 participating outlets that bear the Ngee Ann Privilege Card decal.

In addition, students celebrating their birthdays can enjoy bonus treats.

The Prestige Privilege Card Scheme was introduced by the Ngee Ann Polytechnic Students' Union (NPSU) in July 2001 but lapsed because of the lack of sustained publicity efforts.

However last August, the present Executive

Committee resolved to approach various outlets again with the aim of re-launching the Prestige Card. After three and a half months of negotiations, the EXCO eventually confirmed the 74 participating outlets.

Said the Students Union's Students' Welfare Secretary, Desiree Tan, "Initially we called them up but found that a lot of shops wanted to see our face. So to make it more sincere, we asked our committee members to go down to the shops to ask personally."

"Some of the shops took part in 2001 so they were quite agreeable... but some needed to discuss with their co-partners," added the 20-year-old Building & Real Estate Management (BEM) student on why the process took so long. All discounts are offered until the end of the year.

New participating outlets include Zouk, Paperdoll, and Toni & Guy Education Salon.



**INSTANT DISCOUNTS:** Look out for Prestige Card decals at shops and restaurants. (Picture: Jack Sai)

The NPSU has printed flyers as well as booklets showing the full list of participating outlets and put up banners showing the Prestige Card decal around campus.

The flyers and booklets are available from the Students' Union Office at Block 73, #02-27.



# Finding Hope Amid Darkness



BY CANDICE CHAN  
candice\_tribune@mail2world.com

We are not far into the new year, but all sorts of pronouncements have already been made about it. As usual, it is too easy to miss the projections of good economic performance and growth, better bilateral ties with our neighbour Malaysia, and see only the bad news.

Jolting us at the beginning was the avian influenza (better known as the bird flu) spreading in Asia and claiming lives.

Although Singapore has not been directly hit by the virus – and hopefully, will never be, our country is also affected by this regional crisis. Poultry and egg prices are going up as stall vendors suffer and even Singapore's signature dish, the Hainanese chicken rice, is losing popularity.

This is even after reassurances that the virus cannot be transmitted via consuming chicken meat. And fears of human transmission are growing at press time, suggesting something worse than the SARS scare that could cause possibly many more lives to be lost.

Here on campus, Tribune found that NP students are taking the bad news in their stride: neither paranoid, nor unconcerned about the lives lost, even if these are far away.

The same compassion is shown by the efforts of another group of students for children, also removed from our daily lives, in Cambodia, through the writing, design and sale of *The One Word - Hope for Cambodia's Challenges Today*.

I believe it is not the oft-blamed complacency of our generation that has given us this quiet confidence in the face of crisis.

Rather we can remain calm because we have learnt to look for and see the silver lining in the dark clouds.

It is that same ability to see the potential for good in the bad and to never lose hope that has probably accounted for the success stories we feature in this issue of Tribune, that of NP's floorball teams, our top students, our student and

staff researchers, our budding filmmakers and the two Ngee Ann graduates featured on our cover.

These individuals never allowed the lack of a coach, parental objection in the choice of studies, the remoteness of the disease they were studying, the absence of project funding or even abject failure in their experiment to blind them to the good they could achieve.

Their triumphs against the odds are now here for all to see.

Graduates Ginny and Joanna Tan, in particular, persevered even after their mistake killed a crop of butterhead lettuce. By refining existing methods and techniques, with a determined attitude, they developed a revolutionary cultivation method – one which earned them many well-deserved praises.

It may sound cliché, but this is proof that we can be comforted knowing that for every downturn and trauma, there is the opportunity for growth and wisdom.

As the rest of the year looms ahead, we can be sure that some failures will be waiting for us. The only thing we can control is our response to them.

And that will make all the difference in the world. **U**

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

**TRIBUNE**  
Ngee Ann Polytechnic's campus newspaper

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For more stories: <http://www.nptribune.com>

Tribune, 2004

# Students Sound-Off: Bird Flu

BY AMANDA TAY  
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Bird flu (avian flu) is a crisis fast making its way around the region. With messy government cover-ups, mass culling of millions of chickens all over Asia, an increasing number of human deaths and the ever-present fear that the disease may make the leap to human-to-human transmission, bird flu is no laughing-or squawking – matter.

Tribune finds out how NP students feel about this poultry matter and whether they're still in the mood for a plate of chicken rice. **U**

"The bird flu virus still cannot [be] transfer[ed] from people to people right, so [I] don't think it's as dangerous as the SARS. There is not much else [the infected countries] can do, [they] can only kill the chickens."

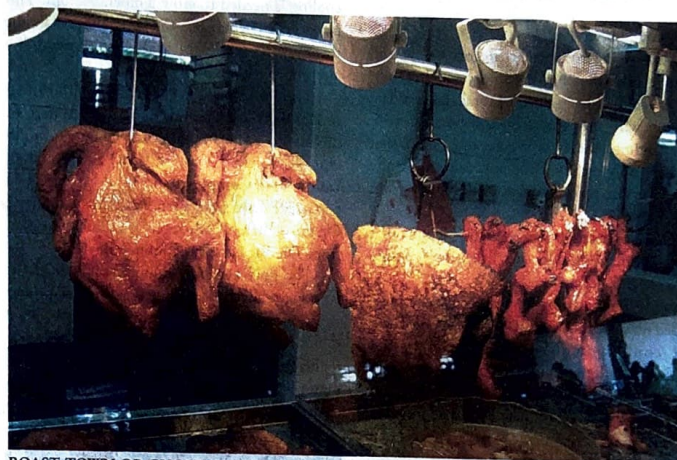
**Chew Ming Yong, 24, InfoComm Technology (ICT) final-year**

"I think it's still safe to eat meat. [The infected countries] have a bigger [land area], that's why it's harder to control. But they're actually doing it quite well."

**Er Ya Qin, 19, Chemical Engineering (CE) second-year**

"Yeah, I think we'll be prepared if [bird flu] comes. That's one thing about Singapore, we're always prepared. My mother doesn't really want me to eat chicken, but I'm just carrying on as per normal."

**Vijaya d/o Pawade, 18, Mass Communication (MCM) first-year**



ROAST TOWN OR GHOST TOWN?: Students still swear by their chicken dishes. (Picture: Mugilan R.)

"No, it won't come to Singapore unless you import the infected chickens. I think Singapore should take more precaution[ary] measures. I think these [infected] countries are not well-developed, so their ability [to handle the outbreak] may be lesser than a developed country. But I think Singapore might reach out a hand to help."

**Wu Di, 17, Building Services Engineering (BSE) first-year**

"I think the bird flu outbreak is quite bad, especially since it follows so closely after the SARS period... But I think even if it comes to Singapore, the government will also be ready for it."

**Amit Sapra, 19, Accountancy (ACC) final-year**

"I think now more [infected] countries are owning up that they have bird flu cases... Singapore government is quite strict, so there's not much worry here."

**Gwendoline Ng, 18, Business Studies (BS) second-year**

"[The bird flu is] very scary, and very cruel because so many chickens and ducks were killed. I think they should check [whether the birds are infected] first. Yeah my parents have told me to be more careful, so I eat lesser chicken now."

**Perry Chee, 17, Business Information Technology (BIT) first-year**

## Upcoming Events

**Creative Comics Competition 2004**  
1 March (Closing date)  
Categories: "Free And Easy" and "Computer Art". Interested participants can get application forms from the NPSU office at Block 73 #02-27.

**Kaleidosound 2: Isle of Fusie**  
20 March (6.30pm to 9.30pm)  
Convention Centre  
Multilingual performance spanning various musical genres by the Song Composing Club. Tickets at \$6 will be sold from 9 February. Contact Tan Hwee Ling at 98327700 for ticket details.

**Polypmics 2004**  
10 to 13 February (Registration)  
15 to 27 March (Event)  
Annual NP-wide event featuring seven popular sports. Contact Huang Weiqi (97477532/ weiqi@np.edu.sg) and Daren Ng (93681481/ darenng03@yahoo.com) for details.

**Annual CASSC Performance**  
27 March (7.30pm to 9.30pm)  
Convention Centre  
Concert by Cultural Activities and Social Service Club (CASSC). Tickets (\$6) will be sold in mid-February. Contact Joel Yang at 96539662.

**Nostalgia 2004**  
28 March (7.30pm to 9.00pm)  
Convention Centre  
First concert by the Muslim Students' Society, the Malay Cultural Club and the Silat Club. Tickets are available. Contact Siti Fatimah at 91734535.

**Light of Life Part II**  
17 May to 7 June  
Student-led Youth Expedition Project to help refurbish classrooms in a kindergarten in Hanoi. Maximum cost is \$500. Contact Koh Shu Yong at 94554432, Michelle Ow at 97426479 or Mr Mohd Rohan Ismail at 64608186.

By Loreeta Neo. All details accurate at press time.



# Continued Vigilance For SARS

Though bird flu is the issue on everyone's minds right now, SARS is still not forgotten in NP. MELINA WONG and EUGENE KHAW investigate NP's contingency plans on-campus and abroad.

Although sometimes eclipsed by the threat of bird flu, new and suspected Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) cases in the region have got Singaporeans' radars up and on the alert.

Here in Ngee Ann Polytechnic (NP), a one-day SARS readiness exercise was conducted on 18 February. The aim of the exercise was to remind staff and students to remain vigilant about the SARS threat, as well as to familiarise and educate them on SARS-related procedures, said Mr David Lui, Chairman of the SARS Action Group (SAG).

These included temperature-taking of students, staff and campus visitors, monitoring movement at the

Atrium and Library, and restricting movement across the three colour zones, which were reinstated for that day.

"NP can be ready in one day's notice. The physical arrangements such as the barriers and temperature scanners can all be set up within half a day, and within one day, all the SARS precautions can go into full swing," he added.

Mr Lui is also confident that once the physical safeguards are in place, NP students will be sensible enough to comply with the measures implemented. He believes that 90 percent of the students will comply within two days, while the remaining 10 percent will need some form of enforcement to comply.

Contact tracing is also being tested here to control and track the virus, should the situation arise.

This system monitors the conditions of all the people who came into contact with an infected person.

Should a SARS situation

arise, and contact tracing is necessary, the procedure will be conducted by the Zone Contact Collation Teams (ZCCT).

There is one ZCCT for each of the three colour zones on campus. Each team is made up of various lecturers and staff from that zone.

Mr Lui said that the "contact tracing team is very important because they are the first ones who are able to generate the data on cases. Only then can the Ministry of Health and Ministry of Environment take over".

He added that the actions taken last year, such as the closing of the polytechnic, were very severe.

This year, given the precautionary and educational measures undertaken, it is unlikely that there will be a spread within the community or that the polytechnic will close again.

Still, he says, "We can minimise the threat, but we can never eliminate [it], unless you close Singapore."

## NP Travellers Reassured

With SARS revisiting and recent outbreaks of avian flu, students going on overseas attachments and enrichment and their parents can be rest assured that NP has precautions in place to protect students' health during travel.

According to Mr Bernard Tan Yong Seng, an Overseas Industrial Training Officer with the

Student Development and Alumni Relations (SDAR), students going on overseas attachment programmes have "pre-departure [briefings]" and have to pack along their SARS kits.

Even for community service trips to third-world countries, otherwise known as Youth Expedition Projects (YEPs), which 217 NP students went on last year, checks are made with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and organiser the Singapore International Foundation (SIF).

The YEPs were affected this year because of bird flu when a scheduled May trip to bird flu-hit Vietnam was put on hold.

At press time, 12 people had died from bird flu in Vietnam, the worst-hit in terms of casualties.

Mr. Vickneshwaran T., a Student Services Officer with the Student Services Office, told Tribune that NP will adapt the lessons learnt from SARS for the bird flu and as a result there are responsive measures like evacuation plans which NP will carry out should any outbreaks occur where students are. He also said, "We would like to reassure students, especially parents, ... that if we're sending students elsewhere, we'll make sure it's safe to go."

He added that they would "monitor the situation closely" and NP will not send any students if there was "any element of risk involved".



COLOUR DIVISION:

The lanyards serve to remind us of the 10-day zoning exercise in July 2003.

[Picture: Mugilan R.]

## Hope for Cambodia

BY KEVIN TAN  
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Students of Ngee Ann Polytechnic (NP) launched their seventh book in 18 months, *The One Word - Hope for Cambodia's Challenges Today* at York Hotel on 9 January.

The coffee-table book by students of the Book Writing & Publishing elective encapsulates the difficulties Cambodia faces today into five problem areas: homelessness, land mines, AIDS, prostitution and destitute children.

This is arguably the first time a book on the work of Non-Governmental Organisations (NGO) in Cambodia has ever been published and for a good cause too: all proceeds from book sales will go to Sok Sabay, a residential shelter for victimised children in Phnom Penh.

Researched and written by Mass Communication (MCM) graduates Rachel Fang, Amanda Koh and Kimberly Mah, while they were in their final year, the Cambodian ethnography was edited by the elective's lecturer Mr Desmond Kon. He also persuaded renowned photojournalist, Mr Alan Lee, to volunteer his expertise to capture the essence of what he calls his second home on film.

The team, helmed by the 32-year-old Mr Kon, made two trips to Cambodia.

The then-20-year-old writers, unused to poverty and dire circumstances, suddenly found themselves face-to-face with prostitutes who were sole breadwinners, children crippled by land mines, and Cambodians rendered homeless by the atrocities of Pol Pot's regime.

The team encountered first-hand the hardships that the Cambodian people endure such as playing with children who had not taken baths and going to the rubbish dumps seeing the children scavenge the mountains of garbage in search of useful items and food.



FACES OF HOPE: *The One Word* team was inspired by the Cambodians they met. [Picture: Mugilan R.]

"Well after meeting those Cambodians who displayed such determined resilience despite their desolate conditions, I wanted to be able to tell their story in a way that would do them justice and emphasise on their hope," said Ms Mah in a telephone interview.

In another telephone interview, Mr Kon said, "Instead of going to Cambodia and just doing volunteer work, working with these three students has been special, because together, we document the volunteering experience in this book."

Specially framed photographs of Mr Lee's were also put up for sale at the gallery Chateau d'Arts on 6 February. Part of the proceeds from this sale will go toward helping the children of Sok Sabay, which is supported entirely by donations.

In a telephone interview, Mr Lee, 57, said, "The book is really for the children of Cambodia. It's not about me, it's all about the children, the country. I hope something good comes out of this."

*The One Word - Hope for Cambodia's Challenges Today* is available at Goland Books, ResearchBooks Asia, Select Books and Tango Mango Bookshop and will be available island-wide soon. Hardcover and softcover copies retail at \$59.85 and \$38.85 respectively, after GST.

## Making the Grade

BY AMANDA TAY  
amanda\_tribune@mail2world.com

Ngee Ann Polytechnic (NP) students may have noticed some additional information on their last examination result slips namely, credit units and the grade point average. Just what are they and what can they do for us?

The Grade Point Average (GPA) is a grading system commonly used in many foreign countries such as America and Australia for admissions into their universities.

It was introduced in NP since last semester. The change was announced in the accompanying CD of the Students' Handbook. A notice was also placed under the General Information section of the NPAL Student website (<http://npalstudent.np.edu.sg>).

Knowing your GPA score will come in very useful if you have considered pursuing further education overseas.

Mrs Yola Lim, 48, Deputy Director of NP's Academic Affairs Office, explained that NP had felt it was the right time to introduce this grading system.

She said, "The adoption of GPA will help the overseas universities to assess our students' academic standard consistently with all others using the same measurement and yardsticks."

However, there are variations to the GPA calculation system. For example, some universities use a seven-point system, while others use a five-point system.

NP has chosen to use a simple four-point system, where an A grade equates to four points, a B grade is three points, a C grade is two points, a D grade is only one point, and an F grade gets zero points.

One hour of study per week per semester equals to one credit unit for each module.

The GPA score is calculated by using the total grade points divided by the total number of credit units for a semester. (NPAL Notice offers a more thorough and detailed example of the GPA calculation.)

"A GPA of 3.5 and above is generally indicative [of] very good academic performance and 3.75 is excellent," said Mrs Lim.

Mr John Tan, 29, Assistant Manager of Projects and Training at IDP Education Australia, a non-profit company that specialises in education in Australian institutes, thinks that a student's GPA score plays a big part in university applications.

He explained, "[It is] quite important. Australian universities process applications based on the grades awarded to polytechnic diplomas."

Some students in their graduating semester are however saying that the introduction of GPA came too late.

"It should [have been] introduced a lot earlier, because now I'm in my third year and in my last semester," said Katherine Loh, 19, a Business Studies (BS) student.

She added, "For selfish purposes, I would rather they [had introduced] it either earlier when [I was] still in Year One, or after I graduate, not somewhere in between like now. [That way I] can keep track of my GPA record better."

Previous NP graduates did not have such benefits.

"It's a pity NP only started this after I graduated," said Jeffrey Seah, 21, who earned his diploma in Information Technology (IT) last year.

"If I had the intention to go overseas to study, I would have to know my GPA score and whether I fall short of a particular university's requirement." He added, "It could have helped me decide my future options better, but it's obviously too late for that now," said the Full-time National Serviceman.



# Record Number of Academic Achievers

NP's Outstanding Academic Awards ceremony hit a high note this year with 166 winners. JENNIFER KOH walks the red carpet of academic achievements.

A record number of 166 students, 10 more than last year, were recognised this year with Outstanding Academic Awards (OAA) for topping the sub-level of each course in Ngee Ann Polytechnic (NP). Of this number, 23 of them also got STAR Awards.

The Special Trophy for Academic Achievers Awards (STAR Awards), which commend those who continuously topped the sub-levels of their courses for at least three semesters, was introduced in 1999 by Mr Tang Teck Chye, then head of the former Academic and Public Affairs Office (now the Academic Affairs Office). Only 12 won the first STAR Awards.

New courses such as Aerospace Technology (AT), launched last year, helped the number of top students in the January and July semesters of 2003 to swell in the awards ceremony held at Lecture Theatre 26 on 10 January.

Of the VIPs invited to the award presentation ceremony, quite a few were teachers from various secondary schools who had been invited to share the joy of their former students' success.

"With the increased number of OAA recipients each year, we will consider holding

ceremonies in the Convention Centre," said Ms Ang Wei Wei, 27, Examinations Officer from the Academic Affairs Office, in an e-mail interview.

If and when this happens, the ceremonies will be much grander affairs as the Convention Centre can hold over 1,000 people. Peers, course mates and extended family members of the award recipients will then be able to join in, unlike now, when each award recipient can invite only two people to the ceremony. Lecture Theatre 26 can seat only 410 people.

At this year's OAA Presentation Ceremony, Guest Graduate Speaker, Mr Tea Chee Tiong, a 1998 NP graduate who was also a Lee Kuan Yew Award Winner and received a Gold Certificate in CCA that year, urged students present to, "Study hard and play hard, plan for the future now and have faith and a positive attitude."

First-time OAA recipient, Indonesian Siswati Yeo, 21, a first-year Quality Management and Engineering (QME) student has tenacity as an added virtue. She pleaded with her parents to allow her to pursue her tertiary education in Singapore. Despite studying at the last minute, she scored three ADs and one A+ for her core modules.

Another OAA recipient, Liu Weiliang William, 17, a first-year student from Building & Real Estate Management (BEM) said that his interest in playing with Lego building blocks when he was younger spurred his interest in the construction and real estate field.

William was surprised that even with three B+ grades on top of his two ADs, an A+ and an A last semester, he could still get an award.

It's not all work and no play for OAA recipients, however. Several have managed to juggle their studies and outside pursuits such as community work.

Ian Tan Jin Hong, a 20-year-old final-year Mass Communication (MCM) student, runs events for the South East Community Development Council in his free time.

Underlying the pageants, fashion shows and fund-raisers that he organises are important anti-drugs and anti-gang messages to today's youth.

Ian, one of 23 who also received a STAR Award, for having topped his course for three semesters, attributes his success to his need to keep challenging himself. He said, "No one is a greater opponent than himself."

## New Facilities Management Diploma

BY EUGENE KHAW  
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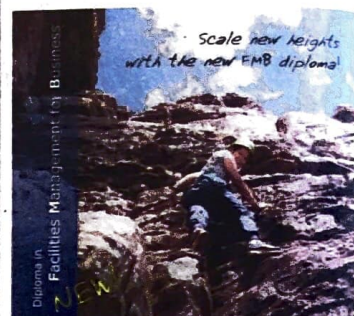


Image courtesy of Building & Environment Division

Ngee Ann Polytechnic (NP)'s newest course, the Diploma in Facilities Management for Business (FMB), got a promotional boost thanks to an on-campus Business Continuity Planning forum organised by the Building & Environment (BE) Division.

According to the course prospectus, the course, which begins next semester, will be the first full-time diploma programme in Singapore to offer a "multi-disciplinary course [covering] the basic principles of management, building, mechanical and electrical services, and environmental management". FMB students will also be trained to manage crises in the industry.

Managing the new diploma course are BE lecturers Mrs Geraldine Lim Hui Ying and Mr Alan Thng Tien Chye. Guest lecturers from the industry will also be drawn from the forum.

Speakers at the 30 January "Forum on Business Continuity Planning and Outsourcing" at the NP StaffHub included Mr Henry Sim, a class of 1985 NP alumnus and Commercial Director of ELYO Pte Ltd, a multi-national facilities management company, and also Dr Goh Moh Heng, the Executive Director of the Disaster Recovery Institute Asia.

The forum was attended by more than 30 professionals from the estate management field and other industries, as well as third-year Building & Real Estate Management (BEM) students.

Dr Goh said during the forum that "business continuity planning [which the diploma will specialise in] is the in-thing now" because "if you [the companies] have an issue, what are [the] critical business [factors needed] to continue [operating]?"

He added that the area of Business Continuity Management and Facilities Management (FM) is a relatively young "15-year-old profession", which has only "2,000 professionals certified".

Mr Henry Sim said, "Today, FM is discussed at the Boardroom level," reinforcing the growing importance of facilities management.

While the forum was targeted at industry professionals, BE did not forget their prospective students. A "FM Solutions for Business" seminar ran at the NP Convention Centre on the first day of the Open House.

BE invited speakers from Ascendas, a major home-grown estate management company that specialises in conceptualising technology parks.

With high-profile exposure to the industry at such an early stage, the future certainly looks bright for the new course.

# Wannabe a Red Hot DJ?

NP's own Radio Heatwave took secondary school students out of the classroom into a radio studio during Open House and a one-day radio camp. Look out, Glenn Ong, you've got competition.

BY PATRICIA HO  
patricia\_tribune@mail2world.com

Ngee Ann Polytechnic's (NP) second amateur DJ quest, "Wannabe2004", one of several highlights in the school's Open House, was almost 50 percent oversubscribed this year.

Said Sasha Shahira Bhanu, 20, Programme Director of campus radio station organiser Radio Heatwave (RHW), "We have [more than] hit our target of 45 participants. Having 62 participants from 14 secondary schools was overwhelming."

The final-year Mass Communication (MCM) student added, "Even after the cut-off date on 30 January, a lot of schools called us at the office to arrange for another date as they couldn't make it on the media camp which took place on 31 January."

The newly-introduced one-day radio camp saw students participating in activities such as a mini-test on radio terms, scavenger hunt around campus, mingling during lunch and hands-on experience at the Daler system (a console which DJs use to play music and sound effects in a radio show).

The programme was so attractive that even a teacher from Christ Church Secondary School participated too.

An impressed Ms Aisah Rasol said the camp allowed her to "mingle with my students, get to know about radio production and expand my networking circle".

Students interviewed were almost

unanimous about the value of the experience.

Said Nuraini Jafar, 16, from Braddell-Westlake Secondary School, "I feel great after the radio camp. If I can, I'd join Ngee Ann for the Radio module. I like it because I love to listen to Perfect 10. Jean Danker's my favourite and I didn't know [she was] from Ngee Ann!"

Elaine Tan, 16, from Singapore Chinese Girls' School agreed. "I feel very excited because we got to do a lot of fun things like DJ-ing in the studio. The scriptwriting [segment] taught me how to present with more emotions and expressions. Actually I want to do Mass Comm [Mass Communication] in NP. So I felt it was to be a very good experience for me to start on this first. My parents are very supportive because at least I like what I am doing."

Lecturer-in-charge Mr R. Yokanathan, 43, felt

"the event was more organised" this year and "Students [were] given ample time to learn how to increase the level of excitement [each time they present]."

He added, "By encouraging them to present themselves individually - with much enthusiasm and creativity - we see different personalities showcasing their talents."

After being assessed throughout the day, 10 finalists were selected. The finals held on 7 February, the last day of NP's Open House, were designed to promote interest in radio presentation and encourage creative thinking among secondary school students.

Six cast members from MediaCorp's Light Years sitcom - including Randall Tan and NP alumna Rosalind Pho - were judges and signed autographs after the competition.



Image courtesy of Radio Heatwave



# Malaria Kit Breakthrough in LSCT

BY CAROL LIU  
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A team of four students and a lecturer from Ngee Ann Polytechnic's (NP) School of Life Sciences & Chemical Technology (LSCT) has found a "quicker, more accurate, and more efficient way of detecting" two of the most common and internationally problematic parasites that cause malaria, said Dr Sara Zaman.

"It is one of the most important diseases now, and there are about 500 million cases worldwide, and 1.5 [million] to 2.7 million deaths annually," said the lecturer and chief investigator of the malaria kit project.

According to statistics found on the World Health Organisation website (<http://www.who.int>), areas struggling with malaria, such as Africa, can spend up to 40 percent of their total public health expenditure on the disease alone.

Malaria can cause problems from mild flu to anaemia and jaundice (skin turning yellow) to the loss of red blood cells in the body.

The NP team managed to combine the tests

for the two most common malaria parasites - plasmodium falciparum and plasmodium vivax into one kit, which would show which disease-causing parasite is present.

Using the Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) technique, which was also used to detect the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) virus, the kit also cuts down on human error as the parasites "actually look very similar" when viewed under the microscope, the conventional means of detection, she said.

"500 million cases worldwide and 1.5 [million] to 2.7 million deaths annually."

- Dr Sara Zaman,  
Lecturer  
School of LSCT, on the  
number of malaria deaths

a lot of time". Final-year Biotechnology (BIO) student Tan Kin Hup, 24, thinks that the project is important to Ngee Ann students because "it's a platform for students who want to work on certain infectious diseases".

Although they spend about three days in the

KEEPING PARASITES AT BAY: NP students toil in the laboratory to produce a kit that tests for the two most common malaria parasites. The kit also reduces human error and provides a useful platform for students who wish to work on infectious diseases in NP. (Picture: Carol Liu)



laboratory running tests on the parasites each week, his classmate Melody Teo Min Ting, 19, said that she has "thoroughly enjoyed the project".

Dr Zaman and her students are working on two other projects, one of which is to find out the resistance patterns of malaria, to help the treatment of the disease. The other is being done by another group of students who are also using the PCR method to find out about the resistance of the bacteria called *Sudamona*, a fatal disease that

can cause secondary infection to patients in the Intensive Care Unit (ICU).

"I think that anyone who works on infectious diseases... [has] very valuable type of research... I think our battle against infectious diseases is ongoing so we have to keep on doing research, keep on finding out more about [these infectious diseases] to combat them effectively. And to find antibiotics to 'help fight the diseases,'" said Dr Zaman.

## Library Day Information Resource Tour

BY MELINA WONG  
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The complaint for years has not been finding insufficient information, but too much of it. If either is your problem,

"Survival in the Cyberworld", the Ngee Ann Polytechnic (NP) Library's one-day guide to its vast resources would have been just the antidote.

Organised for the first time on 9 January, the event saw the setting-up of eight different stations, each

designed to highlight the usefulness of the particular information resource, as well as skills and strategies to best optimise the resource. Library Reference Manager Mrs Lim Bee Ang explained in an email interview that "the theme 'Survival in the Cyberworld' was chosen as it encompass[es] the various searching skills that students need to acquire to enable them to find information effectively using internet search engines, Online Public Access Catalog (OPAC) and electronic resources." She added that "such searching skills are lifelong survival skills [needed] in this virtual environment".

A quiz was held where students were required to work through at least five questions from five different booths covering different information resources. Attractive prizes included Borders book

vouchers, computer speakers and headphones. Feedback from students and staff participants showed they found the skills and tips useful.

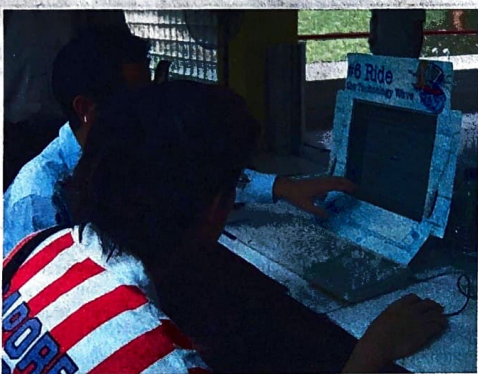
These included constructing search strategies, tips and tricks to use internet search engines effectively, using OPAC advanced search, finding archived newspaper articles in Factiva, full text journals, and browsing through e-books.

Lim Wei Bin, 17, a first-year Business Studies (BS) student was among the 255 students who participated in the quiz. He said that "[he is] not doing this for the prizes, but more for the knowledge. [He has] learnt something new from each station, and the staff are very helpful and friendly. If you don't know the answer, they don't give you the answers straight away, instead, they help you with hints."

Another participant, Yee Yee, 19, a second-year Electrical & Computer Engineering (ECE) student finds the skills taught "will help [her] a lot in [her] projects".

She also said that "at first, [she] did not know much about the resources, but the staff taught [her], and now, it becomes easy".

Students can access information resources through either the internet or intranet networks. Off campus, they must dial-up through the school's intranet. Information on how to dial-up through the NP intranet can be found on the NP Library home webpage.



A GOOGLE OF RESOURCES: NP students learn how to use various library information resources such as Factiva. (Picture: Melina Wong)

## Practising Your French on the French

BY DAVID PILLAI  
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The town of Rouen, 120 km west of Paris, will be home to 10 Ngee Ann Polytechnic students for one week during the holidays.

The 12-day trip from 15 May is meant to expose students to French culture, economy, education, industry and people.

Organised by the School of Interdisciplinary Studies (IS), the trip is extended to all Ngee Ann students who speak French either from taking the language elective offered by school or elsewhere.

According to Mrs Sally Chew, IS's publicity chairperson, the first immersion trip was organised to Japan last year for students taking the Japanese language elective.

Admission to the educational cum pleasure trip will depend on the student's motivation and language proficiency, because the programme is likely to be oversubscribed.

Mr Jean Ghesquière, the organising lecturer explained that "this semester there are nearly 400 students enrolled in the French elective" but only 10 students will be deemed eligible to go. This exclusivity will allow for more in-depth interaction with the French as "Students will stay one week with a French family, one student per family."

He hopes to offer "a total linguistic immersion" to the students.

The itinerary even includes university and company visits in France, like automobile maker Renault. This is so that NP students will be able to make potential employment or study contacts if they wish to live or study in France one day.

But it won't be all work either, since they will also take in tourist sights such as the Louvre museum, Notre-Dame de Paris cathedral and the Champs-Élysées.

Timothy Teo, a second-year Civil Engineering (CE) student said, "It is good such activities are



A FRENCH ROAD TRIP: The School of IS is arranging a 12-day immersion trip to France for 10 lucky students. (Pictures: Mr Jean Ghesquière)

"10 students is a very small number, I don't think I will qualify."

- Timothy Teo,  
19, second-year  
Civil Engineering student

being planned," but he is not optimistic about his chances of being chosen.

"10 students is a very small number, I don't think I will qualify," said the 19-year-old.

Some students taking other foreign language modules offered by IS, however, felt short-changed because only one immersion programme is being offered. Those keen on French will be heartened to know, however, that Mr Ghesquière is planning to make it a yearly affair. He also hopes to advance the whole initiative into a student exchange programme, if the budget allows.

"It will be good if we can have a student exchange programme with French universities in the future," he said.

However, Mrs Chew added that "This would be subjected to funding and other considerations."

The trip is expected to cost \$2,500 per student and selected students will be granted a partial subsidy.



# Council Chairman Bids Adieu to NP

BY SUMMER NEO  
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Mr Choo Chiau Beng, acknowledged as "the lead architect in the Polytechnic's governance team" by Ngee Ann Polytechnic (NP) Principal Mr Chia Mia Chiang in a press release, stepped-down as 2004 began, after nearly nine years of service as the school's Council Chairman.

Mr Choo, also the Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of Keppel Offshore & Marine Ltd, Chairman of Singapore Petroleum Company and Singapore Refining Company, is replaced by Mr Tan Hup Fui.

Mr Tan is the Chief Executive of Trans-Island Bus Services Ltd and Deputy President of Singapore Mass Rapid Transit (SMRT) Corporation Ltd.

A dinner was held in the Convention Centre on 8 January to show gratitude for Mr Choo's years of service and to bid him farewell.

Dr Ng Eng Hen, Acting Minister of Manpower and Minister of State for Education attended the dinner with Mr Chia and some 100 NP staff, student leaders and alumni members.

In line with Mr Choo's vision for NP, the dinner theme was "Inspire to Aspire", and it featured performances by NP Co-Curricular Activities (CCA) groups, alumni members and school staff.

Cheng Hon Wee James, 18, a second-year Chemical Engineering (CE) student who performed as a member of the NP Harmonica Troupe, said, "Definitely, this is an honorable experience for me and my troupe. It is the least

we can do to thank him [Mr Choo], as we do appreciate his hard work all this time in Ngee Ann."

Some of the reforms under Mr Choo's leadership were the implementation of the Ngee Ann Learning Model (NLM) and Mobile e-Learning system (MeL), and the establishment of the School of Interdisciplinary Studies (IS), according to the press release.

NP students were also encouraged to benefit from active CCA participation and learn about "different cultures and perspectives through overseas exposure" as Mr Choo was a firm believer that these initiatives would enhance "total student development".

Jean Lim, 20, a final-year Building & Real Estate Management (BEM) student, and a member of Ngee Ann Polytechnic Student Union (NPSU) said of her usher duty that night, "I was glad that I could contribute to the dinner though it wasn't a major part. It's not only the performance that forms the whole event but also the little part like the ushering that makes the whole dinner a success."

Towards the end of the dinner, principal Mr Chia and the dinner guests toasted Mr Choo who returned the toast.

Mr Choo took the opportunity on stage to thank the Council members, Principal, staff, student leaders and alumni members of NP who had a hand in organising the meaningful dinner.

Dr Ng Eng Hen represented NP in presenting a gold plating of nine Christiana Ngee Ann orchid flowers to Mr Choo and a gold plating of the first bloom of the orchid to Mrs Choo as a token of appreciation for his time in NP.



TOAST OF THANKS: Mr Choo Chiau Beng raises a toast in celebration of the eventful past, and in best wishes for the next chapter in NP's story under the new Chairman. (Picture courtesy of Ngee Ann Polytechnic)

Mr Choo was also given a scrapbook entitled "Thank You Mr Choo", put together by the organising committee with the assistance of the NP Library as part of a tribute to Mr Choo's past contributions to NP.

The scrapbook held testimonials for him written by NP staff as well as news articles and photographs featuring significant past events such as last year's NP 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebrations.

Mr Choo was also not forgotten by NP students. On behalf of the student population, the Ngee Ann Polytechnic Student Union president and vice-president presented a NP sports jacket and a sketchbook to Mr Choo as mementoes of the good times he spent with NP students.

Instead of just being sentimental and nostalgic,

Mr Choo graciously shared the spotlight with his successor, who is also the Managing Director of TIBS Taxis Pte Ltd, TIBS Motors Pte Ltd and Singapore Shuttle Bus (Pte) Ltd.

In his thank-you speech, Mr Choo said that he was glad to hand over an institution "of such calibre" to Mr Tan Hup Fui, as he was sure that Mr Tan's many years of corporate experience would help to bring NP to the next stage of development.

Just as confident that the new chairman will do an excellent job guiding the Council, student usher Jean said "A new chairman means new blood is injected and that fresh ideas and activities would be introduced into the committee that would benefit the welfare of the students in Ngee Ann Poly." ■

## Alumni Medisave Workshop

BY EFTONI TANG  
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Ngee Ann Polytechnic (NP) Alumni organised a workshop called "The Workshop on Medisave Enhancement and Writing a Will" on 14 January to encourage alumni members to start planning early for the future. According to online legal firm Jus de Associates, less than 10 percent of Singaporeans have a properly drafted will.

It was the first time that NTUC Income proposed to Ngee Ann Alumni (NAA) association to hold the workshop in school because they wanted to provide more information for alumni members regarding different ways to enhance one's Medisave and the importance of preparing a will.

NTUC Insurance kicked off the workshop to 10 alumni members by introducing IncomeShield, a policy plan said to be more beneficial than the government's MediShield offering. They also highlighted how IncomeShield covers a higher proportion of medical bills and lower deductibles among other benefits, all of which are crucial when dealing with effective planning for early retirement.

Insurance Advisor for NTUC Income Mr Leslie Lim, in his 40s, said, "The minute you start working, you can start planning for an early retirement."

Indeed, NTUC Income's alliance company Jus de Associates made it simple to draw up a legal

Will and Testament at home. The copyrighted JusEASY Will Instructions Form was developed by experienced attorneys and is legally valid in Singapore. There are no fixed fees as draft charges are based on number of clauses, but the final fee will be chargeable upon completion of will.

The following hour of the workshop was presented by Mr Kevin Lum, in his early 30s. The founder of Jus de Associates stressed that not drafting a proper will often result in disputes over inheritance should the court appoint a total stranger to handle the deceased's assets. Despite the low attendance, the workshop was a success.

Alumna Charmaine Tan, a 36-year-old financial analyst said, "It is a useful and informative workshop, but it was a bit rush[ed]." She looks forward to more workshops, especially [those] that cultivate good thinking skills.

The Alumni Relations Unit will try to organise monthly activities for its 1,600 members.

Alumni Relations Officer, Mariam Mohamed Sali, who is in her late 20s, added, "The types of activities or talks that we organise include self-improvement, learning a new skill or sport, outings to local attractions, trips to neighbouring countries, general group entertainment and fun activities." ■

The NP Alumni Clubhouse is in its second phase of development. Log on to <http://www2.ngeeann.com> for more information on the Ngee Ann Polytechnic Alumni.

## Wireless Surfing Outside

BY MELINA WONG  
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The Local Area Network (LAN) card Ngee Ann Polytechnic (NP) students have been issued for wireless surfing on campus may give you inexpensive access at some 22 eClubs islandwide if a proposed collaboration with People's Association (PA) goes through.

These are the community Information Technology locations set up by the PA at community centres.

Although this convenience will cost \$10 per month, an electronic survey conducted by the Computer Centre on the NP student home page, showed that 60 percent of the 1,050 respondents were in favour of this service.

The majority (65 percent) of them also felt that the price was reasonable and affordable.

The top three preferred locations by the NP students were Clementi, followed by Buona Vista and Choa Chu Kang.

Sylvia Huang, 20, a final-year Accountancy (ACC)-student feels that it is ideal as "students can go to somewhere nearer [to] their home to surf the internet [and] don't have to travel all the way to school. \$10 a month is reasonable because

broadband subscription is about \$50 per month [moreover] since many students already have the LAN cards, all they have to do is bring their laptops to the eClubs."

Currently, students with the wireless access LAN card can already use them at 300 hotspots islandwide by service providers like Singnet and Starhub. However, internet usage at these hotspots is costly at 20 cents per minute.

Although McDonald's also allows free wireless internet usage at 119 of their 129 outlets, this offer is only for a limited period of three months starting from 2 February. After the first three months, undisclosed charges will also apply.

If PA is satisfied with the response rate of the survey, Angela Wong, Systems Analyst at the Computer Centre, feels that the go-ahead for the collaboration will come in "at least 1 to 2 months time as PA has to tie up the administrative and technical issues."

"Computer Centre is constantly on the lookout for alternative avenues to help students [and will] monitor the market offerings closely to see if more collaborations are needed." ■

"\$10 a month is reasonable because broadband subscription is about \$50 per month..."

- Sylvia Huang, 20, final-year Accountancy student



# School Army Recruitment

BY CAROL LIU  
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Barely four months after their career recruitment drive in September, the army was back in Ngee Ann Polytechnic (NP) between 6 and 7 January.

Recruitment Officer Captain Koh Tai Wee explained that this annual awareness event was unlike September's "recruitment drive or a roadshow".

In fact, all army vacancies had already been filled, and would only open later as "the army work year will end in April, so the new set of targets will come out in April".

Despite the primary aim of maintaining the army's presence, he welcomed new applications, adding that "There are always certain number of figures to fill up, but we don't want to reject people just because [we] don't have the vacancies now."

The event was held in the Atrium, with a paintball competition played on the school field.

Many students from secondary schools, Institutes of Technical Education (ITE) and other polytechnics, had received direct mail invites to the event as well.

To reduce costs of mailing everyone, mailers were sent to school departments, rather than individuals in some cases, and posters and banners were also used to publicise the event.

This awareness event was much bigger and more elaborate than the roadshow in September.

Due to that, an events company was used to



**SECOND RUN:** The SAF set up camp in NP from 6 to 7 January, featuring attractions such as free gifts, treasure hunts, rock-climbing and paintball activities. Visitors could also be photographed on-board military vehicles such as tanks.  
[Picture: Carol Liu]

hire artistes like TV actor Randall Tan and writer/poet Alfian Sa'at to be hosts of the roadshow, where they entertained students and visitors with jokes and invited them to play games.

There was also a large screen monitor where videos of army life were being shown.

The events company also hired helpers to hand out surveys. Free gifts such as table calendars and pens were given to those who returned finished surveys.

Other attractions included treasure hunts and rock-climbing and paintball. At one local paintball

field, players can expect to pay \$15 to \$20 each, before paying for the use of paintballs, which could be another \$25.

Military vehicles such as tanks and rescue vehicles were on hand for visitors to look at or climb on to take a photo.

With the hive of activities and free gifts, the costs of the event were probably quite high.

However, even after several probes for an estimated figure on the costs for the event, Captain Koh still declined to give the amount spent, only saying that it was "not that expensive".

# NP's Canteen One Undergoes Facelift

BY KAYAL VIZHI  
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Gone are the days when Canteen one was sweltering and dated-looking. It has since been revamped with a dash of color.

Located at Blk 73, the canteen has undergone renovations amounting to \$180,000. Renovation works include new signboards for food stalls, wall fans, an extended area sheltered by canopy, as well as a 10 percent increase in tables and chairs.

The canteen, previously painted dull blue and grey, now boasts colourful murals, definitely an eye-catching addition.

Adeline Hau, a 19-year-old second-year Accountancy (ACC) student feels that, "The canteen looks more vibrant now, and it's much cooler with the new wall fans too."

With cost-cutting measures in place now due to the economic downturn, Tribune asked Estate Management's Director, Mr Mui Cheng Hock, if the renovation was necessary.

"We are always prudent when we embark on projects, and there was a need for the renovation of Canteen one. There were requests for more seats and for the ventilation to be improved. All the old rusty chairs were also badly worn out due to fair wear and tear. Issues such as lack of tables, poor ventilation, rusty tables legs were taken into consideration, thus this was a need-driven project."

"This renovation, like all upgrading projects, are carried out to improve the school's environment and for the benefit of students," added Mr Mui.

Two more stalls have also been added to the canteen, giving students a wider choice.

"There is now a greater variety of food available for me to choose from and it's much easier to find seats," said Joanne Renu, 19, a second-year Business Studies (BS) student.

While appreciating the positive changes, Lena Pay, 20, a third-year Early Childhood Education



**CANTEEN ONE REVAMP:** New fans, new signboards, new sheltered eating area, new chairs and tables - all meant for the benefit of the same old NP lunch crowd. The renovations cost \$180,000 in total, though food prices are relatively the same as before.  
[Picture: Mugilan R.]

(ECH) student, had a different view.

She said, "There are so many chairs that it looks very congested. I also think the canteen should be air-conditioned instead of having wall fans as it can get very suffocating with the lunchtime crowd."

"The installation of additional wall and ceiling fans has improved the ventilation at the canteen. Air-conditioning the canteen is not considered because it will be very costly to operate," said Mr Mui, explaining why the repeated calls for air-conditioning have never been taken up.

Though students in general approve of the renovation works, the canteen vendors do not appear to be won over, yet.

Cavana stall owner, Mr De Rozario Hilari Alvin, 53, said that sales have plunged compared to last year even before the bird flu scare.

But he said, "We had wanted to renovate the stalls ourselves, so it was a necessity."

The vendors paid for the newly renovated signboards, which has cost them a few hundred dollars each.

Despite the additional spending incurred, the renovation of the canteen has not affected the price of the food or the portions.

"Only the price of the chicken wing has been increased by ten cents. It was previously 30 cents, other than that, we have not increased the price of food," said Mr De Rozario, adding that he might take some time to recover the money spent on renovation. He also assured Tribune that the servings of the food have not decreased and will not in the near future.

Now that Canteen one has been renovated, can we expect the other three canteens to be renovated as well?

According to Mr Mui, students can indeed look forward to their favourite canteens going through a facelift.

"The renovation for Canteen one was done also because a new tender for this canteen was recently awarded. The tender for Canteen one vendors was to be renewed last year, thus we did the renovations for Canteen one first. Next to undergo renovations will be Canteen two, followed by Canteen three," said Mr Mui.

He also added that there have been "slight renovation works done to Canteen four, such as changes in the seating arrangements and the other canteens will undergo minor upgrading similarly when they are due."

# Smart \$ Management

BY HANIS HALIM  
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Secondary 3 students in the south-western part of Singapore will be learning to manage their finances in a programme developed and facilitated by lecturers from Ngee Ann Polytechnic's (NP) School of Business & Accountancy (BA) as an enrichment course.

The \$mart Money Management Programme is a recent collaboration with Credit Education Singapore (CES), a non-profit organisation set up by South West Community Development Council (SWCDC) and assisted by the Subordinate Courts.

The programme aims to give students stronger money management skills to help them spend wisely in future.

According to section head of Banking and Finance Ms Sylvia Ler, this was done to address the Subordinate Courts' concern on rising credit

*"Student participants mentioned they acquired a better understanding of money matters and at the same had loads of fun."*

- Ms Sylvia Ler,  
Section Head  
Banking and Finance

card debt problems and bankrupt cases.

Secondary 3 students have been chosen because they are mature without being burdened with preparations for major examinations.

The four areas covered in the programme include budgeting, spending, saving and credit.

Two pilot runs were held last October and November in three secondary schools - Jin Tai, Kent Ridge and Nan Hua - all part of the SWCDC, which fully sponsored them.

In an email interview, project leader Ms Ler said, "The programme is designed to ensure that learning of an important life skill i.e. basic finance is accomplished through fun and interactive activities. Participants are engaged in role plays, quizzes, interactive group discussions and creative activities including a collage."

"We are encouraged by the very positive feedback received from the students in the pilot run. Student participants mentioned they acquired a better understanding of money matters and at the same time had loads of fun."

The team of lecturers and CES are still deciding the costs and whether subsequent enrichment courses will be charged to schools or individual students when the programme is fully implemented in secondary schools in the SWCDC district later this year.

From there, it may move on to other secondary schools across Singapore.



**DOLLARS - AND SENSE:** The \$mart Money Management Programme hopes to empower teenagers with financial know-how and acumen.  
[Picture: Mugilan R.]



# Playing It Safe On Campus

BY JACK SAI  
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The recent fire incidents at a Toa Payoh factory and a home in East Coast, which claimed five lives and did great damage to property and assets, have reaffirmed that safety precautions should never be taken for granted, whether at the workplace, home or on campus.

But as students go about their daily lessons in classrooms, laboratories and other venues, most might take for granted the safe environment in which they zip in and out of.

"Seriously, I don't really care about the safety measures and stuff, I don't see why I should when the relevant authorities should be taking care of it," said Jannie Ashley, 18, a first-year Film, Sound & Video (FSV) student.

However, there are others who hold a different perspective. Said Benjamin Lim, 19, a second-year InfoComm Technology (ICT) student, "The school fees we pay shouldn't just be used for lecturers' salaries and utility bills, but also for safety measures for everyone on campus."

The Estates Management Office (EM) said that in Ngee Ann Polytechnic (NP), each department has measures unique to their own premises. The School of Life Sciences & Chemical Technology (LSCT), for example, has a LSCT Biological and Chemical Safety Committee, which enforces a set of comprehensive safety regulations for the department. Safety rules which students

must adhere to are pasted on the doors of all 14 labs. All LSCT freshmen are given a one-hour training course during orientation day on safety rules and practices in the labs, at the end of which they have to sit for a test. Those who are absent or fail the test must undergo a re-test; that is how seriously the committee holds safety.

Senior Lecturer and Chairman of the committee Mr Chang Yoon Ching said that, "Members of the committee conduct safety audits of the laboratories regularly, about once every two months. This is to ensure that the safety rules are being complied with and to determine if the safety facilities in the laboratories like first aid kits and fire extinguishers are maintained."

Where the chemicals and solutions are concerned, all of them have to be properly labelled, stored in metal cabinets and used only by authorized personnel.

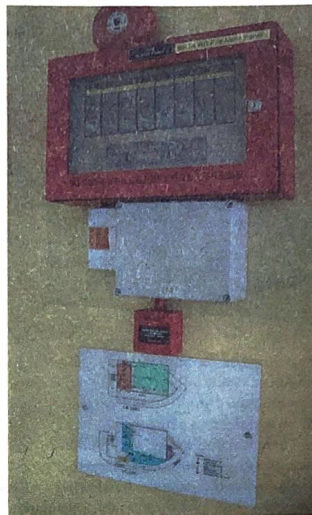
Mr Chang added that training courses are conducted for LSCT staff to keep "them up to date on biological and chemical safety as well as to provide a forum for exchange of information and experiences on safety".

While each school has its own safety committees and regulations, there are also programmes for NP as a whole.

According to EM, an annual Safety Week is organised for first-year students involving safety talks, quizzes as well as the distribution of brochures and booklets to educate students on the importance of safety.

In keeping with the Singapore Civil Defence

Force's (SCDF) requirement for a Fire Emergency Plan, NP also conducts fire drills during Safety Week with SCDF to better prepare students and staff for an emergency. [P]



**SAFETY PRECAUTIONS AT EVERY CORNER:** Fire Alarm Panels, such as these, are placed strategically at high-traffic areas. (Picture: Mugilan R.)

## Trapped In Lift

Sasha Shahira Bhanu, 20, climbed out of a lift in Blk 50 to rush to her class.

The third-year Mass Communication (MCM) student found herself trapped at about noon on 13 January.

Recounting the incident, Sasha said, "It was really scary, hot and [it] was really dark. [Furthermore], I was running late for my class at 12.30pm, so I decided to do something about it."

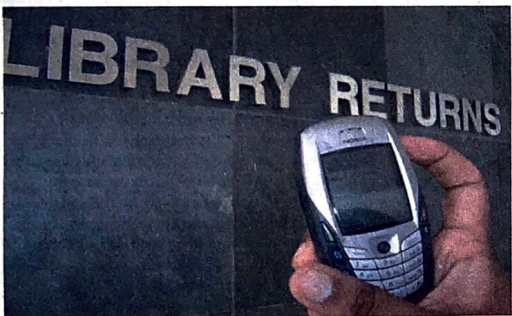
After calling the EM to report the breakdown, she decided to take things into her own hands by prying open the doors of the lift.

She succeeded, but as the lift had not completely stopped at the ground level, she had to climb out with the help of a friend who was outside. The lift technician arrived shortly after that at about 12.50pm.

### What to do if it happens to you

Following this incident, EM issued a set of proper procedures to follow in the case of a lift breakdown.

- Stay calm and press the alarm bell inside the lift panel
- Call the number of the lift company listed on top of the lift panel
- Wait for the lift company to carry out the rescue
- Do not try and force open the lift doors
- Do not attempt to climb out the lift by yourselves; it is safer to remain inside



**A MOBILE LIFE:** A pilot project by the NP library will soon see students and staff making facility bookings and being updated on new titles through mobile phones and PDAs. Usage, however, will depend on ease of access. (Picture: Mugilan R.)

## WAP Mobile Library

BY DAVID PILLAI  
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It will not be long before Ngee Ann Polytechnic staff and students can be informed of new titles and make bookings for facilities in the school library through their mobile phones or personal digital assistants (PDAs).

Mrs Lim-Tan Bee Lan, the library's Deputy Director, Technical & User Services, revealed this in an e-mail interview with Tribune. This is an enhancement of the Wireless Application Protocol (WAP) services offered by the Library since last September to provide easier access and convenience to users.

That pilot project enabled users to check their loan records, reservations, fines and even renew items. But after initially "encouraging" response to the service, interest and usage fell.

She believes that the lagging enthusiasm can be attributed to a number of reasons: "Some of the causes for this include the high cost of telecommunication charges imposed by service providers, difficult configuration set-up for some models of handsets [and] limited screen display area on handsets."

These obstacles aside, others like Jason Lee,

19, a second-year Mechanical Engineering (ME) student, need more practical services to convince him.

"Perhaps they could allow us to check on availability of books or even let us reserve books or rooms through the WAP service," he suggested, functions which are already in the pipeline.

A first-year student who would only give his name as Adam said, "I heard about it from my friends, but I have never accessed the site myself."

He added that he remembered the WAP address to be "very long and tricky" and suggested that it be shortened or simplified. This, too, is feedback that should be heeded, as the site at <http://libwww1.np.edu.sg:8088/wap/library.wml> is indeed a challenge to remember.

With an easier to remember site name and more functions, the future may look rosier for WAP services within campus. As of last November, the Infocomm Development Authority (IDA) listed 3,437,300 mobile phone subscribers in Singapore.

With third-generation (3G) phones expected to be popular this year, Mrs Lim-Tan Bee Lan is optimistic that the pick-up rate for WAP will increase even further. [P]

## EZ Top-Up at Atrium

BY JACK SAI  
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Ngee Ann Polytechnic (NP) students and staff can now top up their EZ link cards at the Add Value Machine (AVM) in the Atrium, as the school is the first tertiary institution in Singapore to have such a machine.

Located beside the automated teller machine, the new prototype developed by TransitLink was set up last November. It allows users to top up either regular or concession-rate EZ-Link cards.

"Initially there were some suggestions to have a machine of this capability to be on campus so that students and staff can top up their cards on campus instead of going

and queuing up at the various interchanges," said Student Services Officer (SS) Mr Vickneshwaran T., 33, who oversees this project. The SS thus started negotiations with TransitLink last August and with the help of Estate Management Office, the AVM was installed and fully operational in November.

Mr Vickneshwaran said, "The staff have mentioned that they are happy that they can top up their cards on campus... and I just hope students are aware that there is a machine on

campus."

Second-year Chemical Engineering (CE) student Leong Gar Hein, 18, said, "It is good that

people who only take buses to school can now top up their cards without going to the MRT station or interchanges."

The nearest interchange to campus is Clementi, which is 15 minutes away by bus.

"The only thing is that only those with NETS can use it. Maybe one more machine should be put in one of the canteens too," added third-year Business Information Technology (BIT) student Koh Hwei Neng,

who has used the machine a few times.

SS had actually requested for two AVMs but Mr Vickneshwaran said that TransitLink was concerned about the usage. He added that if there are enough users on the AVM on campus, which he has targeted to be around 70 percent of the school population per month, TransitLink might install another one.

The success of this pilot AVM will determine whether TransitLink will want to install them in other institutions of higher learning. [P]



**TOP UP YOUR CARD THE EZ WAY:** EZ-Link proves a big hit with NP staff and students. (Picture: Jack Sai)



# NP Students Cha-Cha for Sport

BY JACK SAI  
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With hip-hop culture being as influential as it is, it is hard to imagine youths being passionate about the traditional competitive ballroom dancing also known as Dancesport.

Students from Ngee Ann Polytechnic's own Dancesports Club are not afraid to craft their own path. Seven couples from the CCA took part in the first Singapore National Dancesports Championships on 10 January at the Hougang Community Club. One of the reasons the Singapore Dancesport Federation (SGDF) organised the competition was to rank the dancers at the national level so that the best can be chosen to compete in international championships.

SGDF Publicity Manager Sharon Tan said in an e-mail, "The tertiary level can offer a broad base for feeding new talents into our national squad, and we would like to... groom some of these talents to be regional champions. It is SGDF's vision to... provide more opportunities for youngsters to be exposed."

To raise the standard of Dancesports among youths, SGDF provided a ranking event on a tertiary level in the Latin Polytechnic Closed

category, for the first time. Ngee Ann was the sole contestant. The absence of competitors, however, was not to take away from the victory of Elrond Chen and Amanda Cho, who clinched the first prize after an invigorating display of the Cha-Cha.

One of the judges, Sabrina Sim, who is a 10-time Southeast Asian Latin Dancesport champion, praised the couple in a telephone interview, "They have shown vast improvement and are even on par with some of the open category dancers. If they put in more effort, they will have lots of opportunities at national representation. It is very possible as students because they have the youth and the time as compared to a working adult."

Eventually, although none of the seven NP couples won in the open categories, that was to be expected



VICTORY DANCE: Amanda and Elrond Cha-Cha-ed their way into the judges' favour. (Picture: Patricia Ho)

as 11 of the 14 were first-timers.

What the couple lacked in experience, they made up for with sheer zeal and gusto as they performed.

Said Gabrielle Gan, a first-year Mass Communication (MCM) student, "I was actually very nervous when asked to join the competition... [I] was very doubtful because back then I couldn't even do my steps properly and I didn't want to bring shame to the school."

"I wanted to make sure that [I] at least get my fundamentals right but as time went by I actually took up three private lessons which helped a whole lot and when I made it there, I was very happy," added the 17-year-old first-timer.

On the other hand, Elrond Chen Wu Da, 19, said he was honoured to have danced alongside dancers better than himself, which has motivated him to work even harder.

The third year Electrical Engineering (EE) student added, "Learning a dance is easy, but it's the polishing by the instructors that takes a long time. So it may take about one month plus just to make a particular step look perfect. In the whole routine you really have to take a few weeks to make it look very smooth and the minor details take a lot of time."

Yet all the hard work is no deterrent, even for those who can compare it to other forms of dancing.

"I took hip-hop before. I love hip hop (and) there's nothing wrong with [it] but I find Latin dancing classier. It's very arty and sophisticated... Now that I have met Latin I don't think I will ever go back to hip-hop," said Gabrielle, who hopes to advance in her grade as a dancer and go competitive.

Elrond echoes similar sentiments; he dreams of representing Singapore one day. He added, "Ballroom dancing has been here for so many decades and it hasn't been kicked out of fashion yet. I think it's just the beginning in Singapore." The 2<sup>nd</sup> Singapore National Dancesport Championships will take place in March. ■



LIGHTS, CAMERA, ACTION!: Young filmmakers Low Zu Boon and Wai Xiao Wen re-enacting a scene from their maiden film effort titled *Park View*, which was written and will be produced entirely by themselves. They are hoping to finish shooting in June. (Picture: Mugilan R.)

## NP's Very Own Auteurs

BY KAYAL VIZHI  
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Final-year Mass Communication (MCM) students Low Zu Boon, and Wai Xiao Wen, are about to produce and shoot a short film using their own funds, a feat which saw them featured in Today newspaper.

The teenage producers were described in the article as resourceful and making good use of their holidays. The 15-minute film, titled *Park View*, is about teenage infatuation within a drugged landscape. Zu Boon gives much credit to his Short Film & Video Scriptwriting lecturer, Mr Leonard Yip, for helping him polish his script, which was his final project.

"I received much help from my lecturer, Mr Yip... It changed a lot when compared to the original treatment and draft. I think that through his critique, the script has become tighter in many ways."

Zu Boon added, "Park View is thoroughly self-indulgent, being based on my own experience, which was brought into a surrealistic dream-like situation, exaggerated and all. Other than that, I watch films daily, like I am on speed. So that definitely inspired me to go forth."

Mr Yip, an NP alumnus and award-winning filmmaker himself, said that Zu Boon was a very

self-motivated writer with a unique vision.

On whether the topic might strike a chord with teenagers, Mr Yip said, "I hope that Zu Boon's story connects not only to teenagers and the film savvy, but to an active audience."

*Park View*'s shooting was slated to be completed in December. After much rescheduling, the film will be out by June.

Xiao Wen said, "Our lead actress, Joyce, an FHM model, has many commitments throughout these few months. The rest of us are all from Ngee Ann Poly and are currently feeling the pressure of school. Furthermore, many shoots were cancelled in December due to the rainy weather."

Despite these obstacles and in the pressures of the graduating semester workload, the 19-year-olds remain upbeat about getting their film made, adding that it is not difficult nor expensive to make your own film.

Zu Boon, who hopes to see "more regular people... embracing the amateurish aspects" of filmmaking, added, "Making a film now is relatively easy. All you need is a script, a cheap DV camera and software."

*Park View*'s \$3,000 budget is entirely self-funded. Zu Boon said, "I used my savings to invest in a reliable DV camera and some other equipment and that's it. The talents and film crew are all working for free. So if you have an idea for a film, just go out and shoot it." ■

## X-treme Jamming

BY SUMMER NEO  
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Five Ngee Ann Polytechnic (NP) students proved which tertiary institution was the real school of rock by coming in victorious at JamX 2004.

It was the first time that NP had won in the annual inter-tertiary band competition in its six-year history. Last year NP came in second. Organised by the National University of Singapore (NUS) Cultural Activities Club, the 17 January JamX finals at the Atrium @ Orchard attracted over 100.

Winner Soul'D Out, the five-member band complemented with two vocalists, outshone seven other bands with their cover version of the song, "Attitude Dance" by Tower of Power. Guitarist, Muhammad Ashraf, 20, a final-year Film, Sound & Video (FSV) student said of his band's victory, "I felt it... paid off all that hard work of practicing... until 11[pm], until the security guard chased us out. It was all worth it."

Besides Muhammad Ashraf, the band includes keyboardist Kenneth Teh, 19, and saxophonist Gerald See, 18, both Information Technology (IT) students, bassist Revel T. Ramos, a 21-year-old Business Studies (BS) student and drummer Justin Teo, a 23-year-old Electrical Engineering (EE) student. With the exception of Gerald, who is in his second year, the others are in their final year of studies in NP.

Their two vocalists, Suhaili binte Aziz, 21, and Mathilda Emiliana D'Silva, 23, are not from NP. Suhaili is a part-time vocalist with Suria while Mathilda is an undergraduate at Murdoch University in Perth.

Besides months of intensive practice, choosing

the right kind of music that suited the band's style of playing was also one of the important elements to success. The music they played for this competition was a combination of genres such as funk, soul and rock.

"At the very first note that we play, you already feel like dancing so it's the kind of song we want to play. And everybody gets the chance to showcase their skills, so that's the right song," added Ashraf.

The band members felt the band "t-issue" from NUS, was their strongest competitor and felt "pressurised throughout the competition, but we were well prepared".

Gerald said, "The other groups were fantastic... We enjoyed ourselves a lot and I'm sure the other bands also enjoyed themselves."

One of the judges, Mr David Chia, a producer and sound engineer from Power 98, remarked on the success of Soul'D Out in an e-mail interview: "For a seven-piece band to coordinate and play as one is not an easy task, let alone creating good music! But this band certainly proved everyone in the audience and the panel of judges wrong."

"They not only got their act together, they technically surpassed a lot of local bands, even international ones in terms of skills, showmanship, creativity and artistic integrity."

"This is one band I have to shout about!" he said.

He was impressed by "their professionalism and their seriousness in making music" and described them as "extraordinary".

He was also confident that "they'll be BIG one day if they don't lose sight of what they have set out to do - Making Good Funky Music".

Taking part in JamX 2004 helped strengthen the band members' friendship and their skills. Said drummer Justin, "We get exposed to the local scene and gain experience." ■



FROM LEFT: Justin Teo, Revel T. Ramos, Suhaili binte Aziz, Gerald See, Muhammad Ashraf, (behind) Kenneth Teh, and (squatting) Mathilda Emiliana D'Silva. (Picture courtesy of Soul'D Out)



# 外籍同学 在新过节

梁思慧报道

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每逢佳节，当您与家人共享天伦，或和朋友欢聚时，可曾想过校园里那一群离乡背井，千里迢迢来到义安理工学院 (NP) 求学的外籍同学是如在新加坡度过节日的呢？

留在新加坡过节还是回返自己国家，取决于假期的长短和路程所需耗费的时间。很幸运的，对就读电子工程系二年级的马来西亚籍同学庾祥健而言，往返家园并不是个大问题。“我通常会回去马来西亚过节，因为爸爸妈妈都在马来西亚。如果只有一两天假期的话就会留在这里（新加坡），跟朋友出去。”

另一名就读电子工程系一年级的中国籍同学黄斌就没那么幸运了。由于家在远方，他因此不能经常在短暂的佳节期间回国与家人团聚。除了年中和年尾较长的两个月假期外，其余的节日都得在这儿度过。黄斌觉得在新加坡过节“是有一些风俗上的差别，但这里华人很多，所以大致上是一样的，只是有点小小差别而已。可能就是在气氛方面，感觉上不会那么浓烈。”

样健也赞同本地春节气氛并不像其他国家那么浓郁。比较之下，他感叹地说：“在马来西亚过年‘可以’放鞭炮，比较热闹。这里多数是组屋，比较冷清，没那么热闹。”

据了解，NP专为国际学生而设的国际学生中心 (ISC) 经常在佳节期间举办一些如一日游和节日庆祝会等社交活动，让外籍同学能有机会认识到新加坡的文化和进一步促进外籍同学之间的交流，丰富他们的校园生活。

参加过几次由 ISC 主办的节日庆祝会活动的黄斌认为最难忘的就是在屠

妖节和几位外籍同学受邀到一位大众传媒系的印族讲师家中做客，“体验一下他们 [印族同胞] 过年的喜悦。”以外地朋友居多的他更兴奋地透露今年的农历新年，他将会到一位马来西亚籍同学的家中小住几天，感受一下马国过年的气氛。

在异乡能有参与这类庆祝活动的机会，对外籍同学而言的确别具意义。尽管本地同学和师长们对外籍同学怎样的关怀和照顾，但每逢佳节，他们对家人的思念总还是免不了会油然而生。

佳节期间参加由 ISC 主办的节日庆祝活动，和其他外籍或本地同学结伴出外庆祝，或是到邻国度假，这种种方式不仅能让同学们更了解彼此的文化习俗，更能促进彼此间的感情，也替身在异乡的外籍同学解去许多思乡之愁。

看来，外籍同学们在 NP 里的校园生活可一点也不象一般同学们想象中那样的单调和寂寞。相反的，他们的节目或许还比一些本地同学来得更有意义，更多姿多彩呢。

# 文娱晚会 庆猴年

何碧莹，邓家幸联合报道

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义安理工学院 (NP) 国际学生中心 (ISC) 为了要替不同种族和来自不同国家的同学庆祝春节，特别举办了猴年农历新年庆祝晚会。

这次由二十位学生负责安排的晚会一共吸引到了九十多名到场者。

ISC 副主席余奕璇同学表示：“今年我们所安排的节目与往年不同。晚会地点搬到户外，也加入了寻宝游戏。这是我们以往没有过的。”当晚的节目还包括了舞蹈表演和烧烤会。

同学们的心思也得到了老师的赞赏。在 NP 任教了二十多年的李丽英讲

师说：“这群学生十分用心的安排了个晚会，真辛苦了他们呀！”

据了解，为了防范非典型肺炎再度爆发，今年中国学生将一律不准回国。如有特殊情况，而非要回国的话，他们必须申请校方的批准；在回新以后，十天内不许上课。

回一趟中国麻烦多，因此半数以上的中国学生就选择不回国，而留在新加坡度过春节。

但塞翁失马，不回国不见得就得过个乏味的新年。

电子工程系在一月十九日举办了一年一度的“才艺表演文娱晚会”，让同学们大展歌喉，一显才华。

一百多位国际同学聚集在充满欢声笑语的讲堂里，兴奋的等着节目开始。

揭开序幕的是由 1 B 1 1 班级所呈现的“恭喜恭喜”。只见观众一边拍手，一边跟着放映在墙上的歌词唱着，场面可是一片欢乐。“恭”是本地人耳熟能详的贺年歌曲。不说可能没人知道，中国同学们可都没听过这首歌呢。

接着上场的是正在修读二年级的徐大维和他的二胡伴奏佩玲所献的扬琴曲“竞赛花捷报飞”和“赛马”。大维在接受访谈时说：“这两首曲子代表着‘胜负’，我觉得很有意义。这也是我和佩玲最熟悉的曲子，所以弹起来比较有信心。”

第三环表演由来自中国的同学萧龙独挑大梁。戴上墨镜，打扮成谢霆锋模样，萧龙在台上模仿着他的偶像演唱时，的确似模似样。要不是中间有一小

段的忘词，可真是满分的演出。但台下的观众听得陶醉；还是直到掌声过后，当萧龙透露自己忘了词，大伙儿才知情，还因此大笑了一场。



文娱晚会效仿美国节目“Are you hot?”，把现场气氛搞得沸腾万分。[照片：邓家幸]

当晚的压轴非“Are you hot?”莫属了。这效仿美国极受欢迎节目的游戏是由正在修读一年级的关力宝和其它几位同学联手合办的。由学生挑选出的十位他们心目中最性感的同学必须表演出他们认为自己最亮丽的一面，争取裁判们的青睐。

虽然到了最后“Are you hot?”没有胜利者，但十位有份参赛的俊男和美女都当晚受人瞩目的明星。

晚会的最后项目是由中国湖北省的张阔同学所呈现由他自编自舞的现代舞蹈。张阔随着富有节奏感的舞曲，将当晚的气氛带入高潮。

从十四岁就开始练舞的张阔总会在繁忙中抽空练舞。他说：“我甚至会在图书馆听音乐时站起来跳舞！”

文娱表演的确把当晚的气氛推向极了，也达到了促进学生互相交流的目的。

# 有话说！

有话不怕说，就怕没得说！Tribune 每期都会以街访的方式征求您对一些热门时事话题的意见和看法。

这一期的话题：2003 年爆发的沙斯疫情搞得大家人心惶惶。不到一年的时间，亚洲多个城市又出现了禽流感的踪迹。病菌不断猖狂肆虐，您对此现象有什么看法？

“我觉得真的是世纪末日即将到来。天灾人祸天天都有，好象麻烦不够多似的。现在还要应付这类动物病毒，真不知世界要变成什么样。”

李伟彬，20岁，三年级电子工程系

“我搞不懂有什么好大惊小怪的。不如意的事每天都有。只要懂得应付就可以了。比如说现在政府不是说有信心在 SARS 再 [爆发] 时控制 [疫情] 吗？研制出疫苗就会没事了吧。还有禽流感也应该不会 [传到来] 新加坡，所以无须担心。”

吴再杰，18岁，二年级生物医疗工程系

“这一连串的瘟疫我相信是人类的报应。是动物对我们的一种抗议。我们平时为了满足自己的须求，在动物身上进行残忍及不人道的行为。现在只不过在自食其果。”

唐寺婷，18岁，二年级生物科技系

“很怕。不知道还会不会再有人死。以防万一，我现在已经减少吃鸡肉了。”

王士贤，17岁，一年级机械工程系

“我觉得只要平时有注意自己饮食的话，应该无须过度的担忧。尽量多吃蔬菜，水果和减少在外用餐，因为外头的食物含味精，而且也不太卫生。”

欧敏，20岁，三年级商业系

“最近整天都有这种事情发生，没空去想那么多。如果是猪有事的话就不吃猪肉。如果是鸡有事的话就不吃鸡咯。”

陈慧如，17岁，二年级品质保证工程系

“多做运动和注意卫生咯。以前会和几个朋友一起喝同一杯水，不会想到朋友的口水会不卫生，现在不会了。连吃饭之前都会先洗手。总之，防范功夫我都会做齐，如果这样都还会感染到病毒的话就算我倒楣咯。”

李子聪，19岁，三年级电子电脑工程系

“我是佛教徒，所以我觉得人类会有天灾人祸是我们的报应和造化。很多事都是注定的，想改也改不了。现在唯一能做的就是做多点善事，积多点阴德，以减少我们的罪孽。”

林瑞恩，17岁，一年级建筑服务工程系

“我觉得这一切都是人类所造成的。要不是我们喂那些家禽吃些基因饲料，他们身上的细菌也不会有机会变种。还有那些喜欢吃野味的人真恶心，有的东西不该吃就吃到，如果真的要真是病毒是从那些野味身上传给人类的话，那他们就真是活该了。”

谢秋仪，19岁，二年级会计系



# 50% of Pre-Enlistees Say Yes to Two More Months

BY SREEDHARAN K.P.  
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Half of the 100 male Ngee Ann Polytechnic (NP) students surveyed by Tribune were unperturbed about having two more months of Basic Military Training (BMT) if they fail or achieve only bronze in the National Physical Fitness Award (NAPFA).

Interview figures also show, according to a numerically ranged scale, 21 percent consider the fitness test to be unimportant while only 10 percent place great importance in NAPFA testing. The rest fell in the middle ground.

Of the 59 percent that do not intend to train hard for the NAPFA, 37 percent stated that NAPFA was not a priority whereas 44 percent of the same pool said that academic constraints were the cause for them not to train hard.

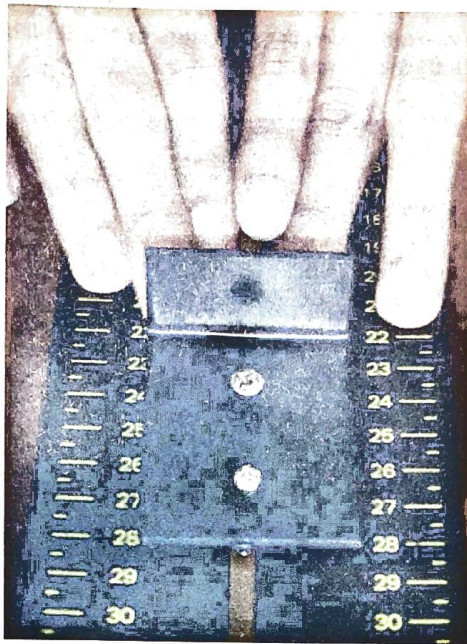
About 17 percent had other reasons for not training and only 2 percent claimed that the test date was too early for them to train adequately.

Student Development Officer (SDO) and team leader for NAPFA testing, Mr Abdul Jalal bin Mohammad Tahir, said he was not surprised by these findings.

He added that students had already told him that "they don't mind five months [of BMT]".

Mr Jalal acknowledges that this widespread sentiment makes his task of trying to lift NP from "being one of the lowest [among the polytechnics] in terms of [pre-enlistees] passing" an uphill one.

He thinks, therefore, that getting students'



**FALLING SHORT OF THE MARK:** NP students have fared poorly in the NAPFA in recent years. (Picture: Muplan R.)

support, meaning getting them to simply turn up and have a "positive" attitude in NAPFA testing

or training, is vital to improve the results.

The fact that NP is "the only polytechnic that offers Sports & Wellness in the first year... implies that we take fitness as a crucial part of our lifestyle and if they don't care I'll still try", elaborated Mr Jalal.

Students should take saving two months of BMT as a sense of "personal achievement", Mr Jalal commented. He goes on to state that "changing mindsets [of students] takes years [and] it's a two-way process".

Currently SDOs appeal to the various academic schools to send interested students to participate in mass training for the NAPFA testing.

According to fellow SDO, Mr Mohammad Rohan bin Ismail, another strategy is to "target the pre-enlistees who get bronze" as it is not that difficult to push them to achieve a silver award.

For students who lament that any effort is too little and too late, Mr Jalal is confident that students can meet their NAPFA goals if they are disciplined for one or two months.

*"...the only polytechnic [NP] that offers Sports & Wellness in the first year...implies that we take fitness as a crucial part of our lifestyle and if they [students] don't care I'll still try."*

- Mr Abdul Jalal bin Mohammad Tahir, Student Development Officer and team leader for NAPFA

Pang Jian Song, 19, a second-year Electronic & Computer Engineering (ECE) felt students who do not bother with training hard are just "lazy...[and should instead] get [it] through and done with".

Agreeing, a second-year Chemical Engineering (CE) student, Siaw Kiat Meng, 18, said that most students would probably "rather enjoy three years and spend" just two months suffering.

To these people Mr Jalal guarantees that the SDOs will do everything in their power to guide students from small groups of 20 to large groups of 100 to better fitness.

In fact, he suggests that freeing some time in students' time-tables, like having the 8am to 10am slot on Saturday set aside for this purpose might be a good idea.

## Drawing Fresh Blood



**PAINTING THE CAMPUS RED :** Poly Stage F'Actor on the hunt for fresh talent. President Muhammad Fadhil bin Azmi, 20, a final-year InfoComm Technology (ICT) student, basked in blood-red limelight as visitors to the CCA Fiesta smeared "blood" on his body in his take on performance art. (Picture courtesy of Lian Jiaxuan)

BY KEVIN TAN  
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Students were able to enjoy the year's first CCA Fiesta in cool, air-conditioned comfort without having to contend with crammed conditions.

Organised by Student Development and Alumni Relations (SDAR), the walkthrough of NP's CCA activities and sports was held for the first time at Blk 72 Exam Hall from 15 to 16 January. The CCA exhibits ranged from the mildly informative and interesting to the downright bizarre as the clubs and CCAs vied for students' attention, despite the disappointing turnout.

President of Poly Stage F'Actor, Muhammad Fadhil bin Azmi, 20, urged visitors to smear "blood" on him while he paraded in simulated blood-stained clothes.

In a telephone interview, the final-year InfoComm Technology (ICT) student explained, "The person represents the art, when you pour new blood into the art, it becomes lively; we need fresh talent to make the arts lively."

The less adventurous representatives, though, were content with banners to proclaim themselves and simply providing more information about their CCAs.

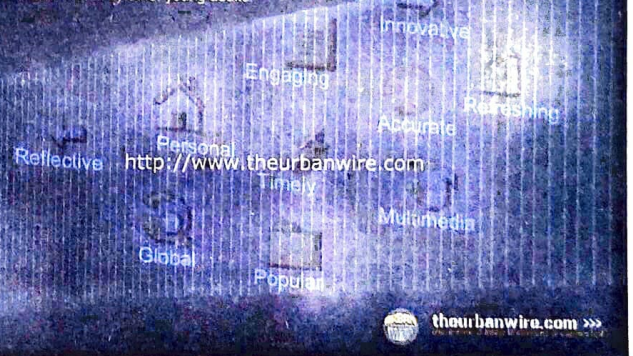
Some, like NP Strings, allowed interested visitors to handle musical instruments and gave short beginner lessons on how to play them.

## hype

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Watch out for the APRIL Issue!

UrbanWire is an online entertainment/lifestyle newsmagazine produced by final-year online journalism students. The magazine exists to give its target audience of 18- to 25-year-olds a voice, community and engaging and relevant reading through features, style, nightlife, people, gallery, wired life, reviews (music, movies, food, events, TV and games) and sports articles written by other young adults.





# Amazing Survival Challenge Success

NP's take on the reality show genre, sans cameras, has received a rip-roaring reception from students. SREEDHARAN K.P. survives the challenge to tell you more about the Ngee Ann Polytechnic Students' Union's (NPSU) three-day event.

Students' time management and survival skills were put to the test in the Ngee Ann Polytechnic Students' Union's (NPSU) inaugural adventure-themed camp and competition, titled the Amazing Survival Challenge (ASC).

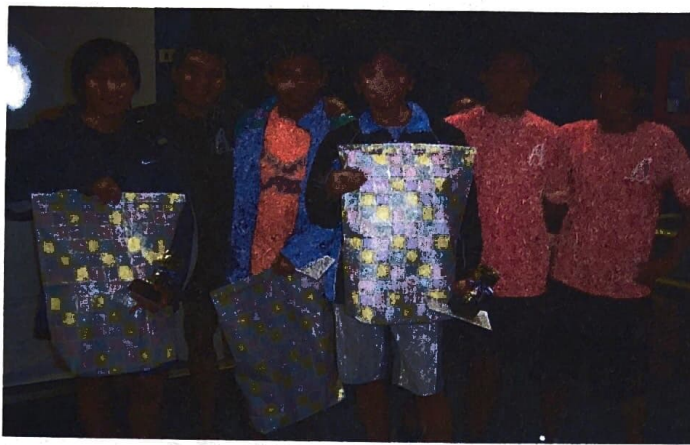
The inspiration for the event came from the two popular primetime television series: *The Amazing Race* and *Survivor*. Chairperson of the event, Christina Ser Peixian, 19, a final-year Mass Communication (MCM) student said that the idea to amalgamate the two shows struck her "while watching TV one day".

The three-day event took place from 16 January. Teams of four played Survival Games on the first day and ran around Singapore for the *Amazing Race* the following day. The final day was reserved for photo-taking and clean-up duty on campus, where they had played the games.

Participation in the competition was free after SU dropped their initial plans for a team registration fee of \$32. 11 teams signed up.

Christina said, "NPSU events are for NP students, hence most of our events are free [-of-charge] for students to participate."

The ASC was based on a point system and a total of 80 points were up for grabs with 20 points to be won from the *Amazing Race* portion and the rest from the Survival Games, explained Christina.



**THE SMILES OF SURVIVORS:** The eventual winners of the ASC: (from left) Ooi Sen Chep, Koh Shu Yong (NPSU President congratulating winning team), Koh Hor Yee, Hong An Hao and the two group leaders, Sun Tian, 21, a first-year MTE student and Weng Jun Hui, 18, a first-year MMC student. (Picture: Sreedharan K.P.)

Participants Katherine Tan, 18, a second-year Business Studies (BS) student, and first-year MCM student Anita Lo, were delighted that the ASC did not turn out to be a typical race.

Katherine added that she was ecstatic that she "got to experience [canoeing as it was] something"

she never had the chance to try before. Anita, on the other hand, was glad to have a go at some Xbox gaming at one of the stations, "and not just adventure".

Apart from the Xbox challenge at Bukit Timah Shopping Centre, the areas covered by the

participants included the Jurong Swimming Complex, Toa Payoh bus interchange, Changi Village, Bedok Jetty, Kallang Sea Sports Club, Sentosa and the now defunct Haw Par Villa.

The winning team consisted of Koh Hor Yee, 21, a final-year student of Building Services Engineering (BSE), Hong An Hao, 20, a second-year student of Business Information Technology (BIT) and Ooi Sen Chep, 21, a final-year student of Civil & Environmental Engineering (CEE). Each of the trio, excluding the Group Leader who made the group a quartet, who clocked slightly over 9 hours to complete the event, took home a trophy and hamper worth \$35.

Christina feels that the ASC was a success as the "committee, crew, group leaders and participants are happy".

With the event objectives met, she only wished that the number of sign-ups were higher.

The very first ASC may have provided much adrenalin rush and excitement to the participants but those looking to catch the next installment of the event might have to wait.

This is because the NPSU President, Koh Shu Yong, 24, a third-year Marine & Offshore Technology (MOT) student, said in an email interview that the competition has not been confirmed as a permanent fixture.

He added that NPSU "will review the whole program again before making any decisions".

## First-Ever Floorball Win

BY PATRICIA HO  
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After only six months of training, Ngee Ann Polytechnic's (NP) men's and women's floorball teams won the third and fourth places respectively in their first attempts at the Institute-Varsity-Polytechnic (IVP) Games 2004, which ended on 30 January.

For various internal reasons, including the lack of a coach, neither the men's or ladies' floorball teams have taken part as a full team of 23 players since the club's inception in 2001.

Part of their strategy and training involve changing players after two minutes so that "they'll be refreshed to play again after their turn" for each 45-minute match, said President and captain of the men's team, Daren Ng Kok Chin.

This helped them beat Nanyang Technological University, Singapore Polytechnic, Singapore Management University and Nanyang Polytechnic.

Daren added "our new SDO (Student Development Officer) has helped us a lot. Whenever we ask for things, like booking of the court, he'll do it for you on the spot."

He also thanked Mr Gopi for supporting the

team in most of the IVP matches.

Player Liang Kang Wei, 20, a second-year Electronic Computing Engineering student, said, "our men's team has improved a lot since Daren, Hong Zhen and Sathis joined us. Daren has helped us a lot too."

The club's third president is a national player

for Singapore's Hockey Team and so has a de quare background knowledge to guide the team, in place of a coach. The second-year Chemical Engineering (CE) student feels "players are better trained" and "there are more members this year".

"I have

a tight regime scheduled for the guys and they are focussed enough to follow it, especially when the IVP Games drew nearer," added the 21-year-old.

Kang Wei, who scored the first goal against Singapore Polytechnic on 26 January felt that his achievement was "a lucky shot and [it was because] I was not guarded at all".

The ladies' team headed by Chitera Noorasslina, 20, a third-year Accountancy (ACC) student scored an amazing 7-2 against Singapore Polytechnic during the IVP.

Shaen Marican, the team's goalkeeper, was happy over their win against their rival but "felt we can do better at the next round".



**HEADS UP:** The NP Men's floorball team prepares to square off against their rivals from SP. (Picture: Patricia Ho)

## BA Amazing Race

The NPSU wasn't the only CCA to be inspired by reality TV game shows. The Business & Accountancy (BA) Society held their own version of *The Amazing Race* across Singapore.

BY MELINA WONG  
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To win at the popular reality television show *The Amazing Race*, you need speed and malice.

The version by Ngee Ann Polytechnic's (NP) School of Business & Accountancy (BA), however, places more importance on the interaction and teamwork fostered during the race.

Team-building games at the various checkpoints were evidence of this aim.

"We just want to bring out the adventurous sides of all the BA students, especially the quieter students," said Michelle Tay, 20, a second-year Banking & Financial Services (BFS) student who is in the planning committee. Organised by the BA society for the first time, the camp and competition was open to their students only.

Some 13 teams, with four members each, raced to be the first to complete all the required tasks and pass through all the checkpoints.

Each team is required to have members of both genders. Michelle explained, "The whole idea of having girls and guys within a team is for them to mix around, and not for them to just stick to teams of the same gender. We also hope that the competition is made fairer this way, because an all-guy group would probably have a strength advantage over an all-girl group."

During the morning briefing, packages containing energy food like muesli bars and crackers, as well as the clue to the first checkpoint, were given out to each team. To ensure fair competition, all the participants were only allowed to take public transportation.

The checkpoints were not only all over Singapore - Yishun, the Central Business District, Lim Chu Kang, and Bukit Batok, a few were even in Pulau Ubin and Sentosa.

Some 16 tasks (10 on day one) had to be performed by the teams over the two days. These included looking for people and items, or performing certain stunts. They had to complete their tasks at each station before getting their clue to their next destination.

Teams that had cracked the clue used Short Message Service (SMS) to send answers back to the headquarters (HQ). For every wrong answer, a penalty of 30 minutes was added to the team's final race timing.

The participants were exhausted, but in good spirits. Jose Chou Hong-Ping, 20, a second-year Business Studies (BS) student, felt that "the tasks were both challenging and interesting because you have to think [fast] to crack the clues."

One activity he especially enjoyed was shooting at the Air Rifle Range in the Yishun SAFRA. For him, it was a "very good experience, as it was something [he] had never tried before".

In general, the participants faced few accidents or problems. However, Huang Pei Jun, 18, a second-year student also from BS, will always remember an unusual delay on the way back from Pulau Ubin, when her team was stopped by the Coast Guards who were conducting spot checks on small boats.

At the end of just two days, it seemed that the objective was achieved. The students, including the organisers, got to know each other better, making the \$180, \$140, and \$100 prize monies and gift hampers seem like icing on the cake.