

Cleaners' Welfare Neglected?

Since a new contractor took over Ngee Ann Polytechnic's cleaning operations in May, the 150 cleaners on campus have had to contend with a \$100 monthly pay cut each. CHEN SIYA reports.



HEAR ME OUT: Cleaners have many grievances about the payout but are powerless to change their plight. (Picture: Low Youjin)

While July 1 signals a bigger wage increase than usual for about 300,000 civil servants who earn less than \$1,200 a month, another low income group in Ngee Ann Polytechnic (NP) is doing worse.

Madam V. Gomathi, 39, a cleaner, is one of them. When a new cleaning company took over our campus cleaning operations since May 1, she was among the 90 percent of the old staff retained. Her working hours and duties have not changed, but her monthly salary is \$100 less.

The monthly pay of other full-time cleaners re-employed by the new management, City Building Management Pte Ltd (CBM), have been cut by between \$100 and \$120.

According to CBM Site Manager, Mr James Rajan, 35, who oversees about 150 cleaners on campus, his full-time cleaners are paid about \$730 now.

Said Madam Gomathi, "But why do they want to deduct our salary? We are doing the same job. My husband is a heart patient. Now, he can only do light duty contract work. When they cut my salary, I really suffer now because I have three kids."

CBM said it has its own problems. Mr Rajan acknowledged that the deduction would cause unhappiness, but said, "But they should be happy that they have retained their jobs, because I was instructed to get in a new breed [of cleaners]... but I took pity on them, because they might lose their jobs. So I asked them before the contract commenced, and they said okay."

According to three cleaners, they must also pay \$20 for two sets of new uniforms. Previously, the uniforms were provided by the former contractor, BNL Services.

This amount, docked from their first pay, is refundable when they leave the company.

Mr Rajan said, "We can easily spend \$1,000 a month on providing uniforms. With a smaller budget, I have to come up with all these [measures]. If I don't cut costs, if I don't perform, my job is at stake."

He added that after three months, confirmed cleaners enjoy medical benefits and are entitled to annual leave.

Cleaners are also entitled to a salary increment of between \$50 and \$100, based on their supervisors' feedback on their performance.

Mr Mui Cheng Hock, 53, Director of the Estate Management (EM) Office, said CBM recently won the bid to be Ngee Ann Polytechnic's cleaning contractor for two years. The contract is worth \$2.64 million.

A committee made of five EM officers evaluated each bidding contractor based on the following: the contractor's track records, job references, client portfolios and interviews.

Although not the lowest bidder, CBM was chosen for its reputable track record.

BNL's monthly contract was about \$145,000, about \$35,000 more than CBM.

Like all government institutions and statutory boards, NP must hold public tender exercises to award jobs to the most competitive contractors. Said Mr Mui, "As a government institution, we have to ensure that our [school's] budget is prudently used."

"We have no control over how much the cleaning contractor pays its cleaners. We want all workers in Ngee Ann to be happy, be it direct or indirect employees, but we cannot go to the extent of dictating to the contractor how much

they should pay their cleaners because we are not their employers."

Mr Mui added he would bring up the cleaners' grievances to the CBM management at their next monthly consultative meeting.

The cleaners' salary deduction contrasts starkly with recently announcements by the government to bridge the income gap between low-wage workers and high-income workers in Singapore. On June 2, the Public Service Division (PSD) announced plans for a one-time payout of \$200 and a mid-year bonus for all civil servants earning below \$1,200.

A number of NP staff and students expressed sympathy for the cleaners.

Mr David Richard Francis, 28, a visiting lecturer from the School of InfoComm Technology (ICT), said, "The concept of cost-cutting should not go overboard, overlooking social concerns."

Chia Shuan Min, 19, a final-year Chemical Engineering (CE) student, shared similar views. He said, "I think they (CBM Management) should not reduce the pay of the cleaners, as the school is still as clean."

However, IS lecturer Mr Lawrence Lai, 33, was more pragmatic about the situation. "Companies should pay their workers their fair due or the market rate for the work that is done. Ngee Ann is not the employer and thus, not in any position to influence the salaries of these cleaners. The salary of workers is an agreement between employer and employees."

On CBM's wage policies running counter to the government's efforts to help low-wage workers, Mr Rajan said, "It is also the same government who believes that the lowest tender should get the contract." ■



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Ultimately, People Matter



BY KATE LIM HWE LING
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As the semesters I spend in NP flash past, I get so absorbed by my studies that sometimes I forget about people.

I say this because from my observations, we tend to limit our social circles to those with similar backgrounds to us. We do this so often that we forget that we depend on others performing their own unique functions, small or big, for society to function properly.

Yet, isn't one of the functions of education to teach us to respect people and treat them fairly, whatever their occupation? In fact, one

of the hallmarks of journalism, we learn here, is precisely fighting for those who cannot stand up for themselves.

Take the cleaners in our school, for instance. Theirs is a thankless job. Yet they keep at it and we benefit in having clean surroundings.

How many of us show our appreciation for them by greeting them or thanking them for cleaning our plates? Some students rationalise that by leaving their mess on the table, they are doing the cleaners a service by ensuring that they still have a job.

Yet even when they retain their jobs, some cleaners continue to be at an unfair disadvantage. Their financial struggles can so easily overwhelm them when they receive even a small pay cut.

While we moan about not being able to afford that nice pair of branded shoes, or the latest mobile phone, or make a game out of Monopoly money, for some of these cleaners, managing their day-to-day finances poses a major challenge.

Curiously enough, when the recent story broke of an elderly brother and sister who had moved to their flat's void deck because they owed HDB about \$40,000, the people The Straits Times reported as helping the two siblings with

supplies, and even gifts of a wardrobe and new altar, were a stall assistant and her husband, a part-time cleaner.

Their generosity despite their humble circumstances is beyond inspiring. Do we care enough to help others? Will the new modules, facilities and educational approaches in Ngee Ann Polytechnic (NP) not only make us more creative, entrepreneurial and better thinkers, but also more caring people?

Do we see the need in others around us, whether they are anonymous faces who work around us, fellow students or even alumni like filmmaker Bertrand Lee, whose fate has forever changed after a major accident?

More importantly, are we moved to do something about this?

Only time will tell.

Meanwhile, some NP students came back from a School of Interdisciplinary Studies (IS) Cambodia trip during the holidays, appreciating the things they take for granted in Singapore. Let's hope we grow from appreciating things to appreciating people.

That's because as clichéd as it sounds, people do matter. ■

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

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NP: That Something X'tra

BY MEENAKSHI D/O SHUNMUGHAM
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It's been more than a month since the start of the new semester. **Tribune** finds out from the first-year students what sets Ngee Ann Polytechnic (NP) apart from other polytechnics. ■

"Unlike other polys where the people are rather unfriendly, the people here are very considerate and accommodating."

*Goh Shiyong Melissa, 17,
Information Technology (IT)*

"The environment at Ngee Ann is better compared to other polytechnics [and] the library here is just great."

*Denise Lee Rongai, 17,
Banking & Financial Services (BFS)*

"NP is in a relatively centralised location and this makes it easier to head down to places like Orchard and Hougang."

*Zhu Renzhi, 19,
Real Estate Business (REB)*

"Some of NP's CCAs set NP apart from other schools... I came to this school because of NP's Song Composing Club."

*Redwan bin Hamzah, 17,
Business Information Technology (BIT)*

"NP's a very established institution and it is known to have produced some big shots like Sim Wong Hoo and Cheryl Fox."

*Tan Wee Eng, 17,
Information Technology [Mobile
Computing] (MBC)*

"Being a wireless campus is what sets NP apart from other polys. Also, almost everyone in NP gets to own a notebook."

*Muhammad Sharime, 17,
Marine & Offshore Technology (MOT)*

"NP's students are NP's biggest attraction... NP has prettier girls and more handsome guys compared to other polys."

*Yang Liying Patricia, 17,
Electronic & Computer Engineering (ECE)*

"NP has many established courses and the reputation of these courses sets NP apart from other polys."

*Kerr Jia Qi, 19,
Business Studies (BS)*

"NP offers its students quite a number of hands-on projects relating to potential jobs, such as running a radio station."

*Liu Litong, 20,
Mass Communication (MCM)*

Web Wonder in Helsinki

BY LIN SHILONG
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AARON OF HELSINKI: NP harbours big dreams for the upcoming WorldSkills competition after Aaron Tan clinched a bronze medal in Finland. (Picture: Chiu Kok Lan)

An Information Technology (IT) graduate from Ngee Ann Polytechnic (NP) won a bronze medal and a cash prize of S\$3000 at the recent WorldSkills Competition 2005 in Helsinki, Finland, setting the benchmark for future competitors.

Aaron Tan Wei Cheng, 21, was Singapore's only representative in the newly-introduced web design category at the bi-annual event held between May 25 and June 1.

Mr Lim Fang How, 46, a lecturer from the School of InfoComm Technology (ICT) who led a team of coaches that groomed Aaron specially for two years "expected him to get a medal, because he had given his best and is technically very skilled".

Mr Chiu Kok Lan, 54, who helped set and mark the project in Helsinki thought that Aaron

performed very well considering that the test project was of a "high standard".

However, Aaron thought that he was "overly careless [having] forgotten to work on part of the programme [as assigned]" and attributed his carelessness as a major reason why he "ended up with only a bronze medal".

Having competed and interacted with global competitors, he is confident that Singapore is in a strong position to do better in the web design category for the next WorldSkills to be held in Japan in 2007.

"As far as I can see, there are not really a lot of countries that are good in this area, with the exception of Korea," he added.

Mr Chiu is anticipating a post-mortem to evaluate Aaron's performance and to discuss how to improve for next year's competition. ■

Second "Atrium" Coming Up

BY SERAPHINA WOON
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The creation of another "Atrium" for students to study and start a business is one of a few plans in the pipeline to develop more facilities for Ngee Ann Polytechnic (NP) students.

This second hub, to take over the premises vacated by the previous staff restaurant in Block 18, is slated for completion by early November. Mr Mui Cheng Hock, 53, Director of the Estate Management (EM) Office revealed to **Tribune**.

Originally intended to house a fast food restaurant, it will now be dedicated to the development of NP's students, with one section allocated to the development of student entrepreneurship and another to provide a study corner for students.

The entrepreneurship area will most likely house two to three pushcarts. The school will not restrict the type of product sold as long as it can most appeal to NP students but Mr Mui stresses that the businesses must also "be decent". He quoted having hairdressing services as an example of a business that students can set up.

Mr Mui said, "The school gives a high priority to entrepreneurship and also it's a good area for such an endeavour. Student academic development is one thing, but preparing them for the real world is another."

Three students whom **Tribune** spoke to have differing views about this new hub.

Ang Chin Jung, 19, a final-year Accountancy (ACC) student, said, "I think it's a good initiative



PUSHCART FOR SUCCESS: Expect to see pushcarts like these at the new students' hub in early November.
(Picture: Kate Lim Hwee Leng)

on NP's part. Because obviously students have more areas to hang around and [this] also will attract more students to come to NP. A fast food restaurant would be nice but a [entrepreneurial] area is more feasible to help students' development."

Rena Silva, 20, a final-year Business Studies (BS) student, said, "The study area concept is good but I would rather a fast food restaurant over the (entrepreneurial) area. A fast food place is good because students can work there as well. So it's a win-win situation."

Rengarajoo Balasamy Lakesh, 19, a final-year Accountancy (ACC) student, said, "Having another Atrium is a good idea. But I think the school ought to use each Atrium for different purposes. Maybe, the current Atrium can be used for bazaars and other events, whereas the upcoming one can be used for studying purposes."

To ensure that the study area is not disturbed by student activity, it will be sectioned off from the mobile stores.

Mr Mui said, "Students have complained about too many stalls set up in the Atrium and

how noisy the Atrium has become. This new students' hub will be different."

"Because the Atrium is located so near the library, the concern is that the noise level will affect those studying in the library, but with this second students' hub... not as big a factor."

Mr Mui also believes that the new students' hub will not overshadow the Atrium.

"The second students' hub is not meant to take over the Atrium. [It] is meant to provide more space for students to study and also to be a testing ground for their entrepreneurial skills."

The school will be renting out pushcarts to students who are interested in running a business at the students' hub.

Mr Mui has declined to disclose the rental cost of these pushcarts. However, he said that these mobile pushcarts will be cheaper than those located at Parco Bugis Junction due to subsidies.

Tribune found out that the rental cost of pushcarts located there are \$150 on off-peak days and \$210 for peak seasons.

Mr Mui said, "Cost should not be a stumbling block [when doing business]. However, we cannot charge [rent] too cheaply because we want to impress upon them (the students) that [doing] business always has a cost."

The construction for the second students' hub will start next semester. Mr Mui revealed that the students' hub is expected to be ready by early November 2005.

Students who are interested in renting a stall at the new students' hub can register at the EM office at Block 74 with a business proposal of their marketing plan. ■

Show Some Solidarity

BY BRIANNA WONG
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DO YOUR PART: Donate generously to our alumni through the boxes in your department offices.

Next to the \$750,000 that the Singapore Film Commission is trying to raise for Bertrand Lee, Ngee Ann Polytechnic's (NP) fund-raising efforts for its own alumni is a drop in the bucket.

The Bertrand Lee Fundraising Screening at the Convention Centre on 17 June raised only \$3,180, not even half the \$8,000 target.

Said Vanessa Thomas, 19, one of two main student helpers involved in the drive, "We ... thought people weren't generous but I'm impressed by their sincerity."

"People gave money even when they couldn't come, so I thought it was a success."

The final-year Film, Sound & Video (FSV) student learnt that the award-winning local filmmaker was very appreciative and touched.

Bertrand, 27, faces a long recuperation after an accident in India while he was filming. Three operations left him with an amputated left leg, a rod in his right leg and an irreplaceable pelvis.

The Straits Times said he will need \$750,000 for medical bills and recovery over a decade.

Ms Jacqueline Tan, an FSV lecturer in her late 30s, helped organise the appeal with some final-year FSV students.

Ms Tan, who remembers Bertrand as a "quiet and focussed student who knows what he wants in life", said, "If someone in the NP community is in need, we would be more than happy to help."

Although the fund raiser is over, you can continue to help Bertrand via:

- cheque donations made to Lee Siao Ming Bertrand, addressed to The Bertrand Lee Appeal, Block 734 Upper Changi Road East, #02-19, Singapore 486862.

- transferring money to POSB savings account number 136-07730-9

- dropping your donation in boxes in each department office in NP.

To receive a receipt, include your name and home address. ■

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Changing Mindsets in SoE with Creativity Module

BY LEON SEOW CHERN MING
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Few people think of engineering and creativity in the same breath, but some students' mindsets are targeted for change with the introduction of a new module - Engineering - A Creative Profession, aimed at first-year engineering students.

Students from the Electrical Engineering (EE) and Mechanical Engineering (ME) Divisions will be among those taking the module.

This is the first time a module is being taken by students in different engineering divisions, because previously, students only studied modules related to their main field of practice.

Mr Cheah Choo Lek, 56, Deputy Director of the ME Division who initiated this module, said its main objective is to motivate the first-year students to do well in their studies by "exciting them early in the course with what is ahead" in their studies and careers.

He explained that the module will help students identify the importance of engineering in society and make them "proud" to be part of a creative profession.

To do so, this non-examinable module will inform them of the main functions of their various diplomas and provide them with an overview of their roles in the industry.

Module leader Mr Hui Tin Fat, 44, said the new module will teach them less technical skills such as researching from the internet and proper citation methods.

He added that the students will have to apply these skills to find creative solutions, the stress being on creativity, to various assignments based on the design process of products taught in engineering modules.

Mr Cheah said the module will also highlight the "professional responsibilities, values and ethics" of engineers.

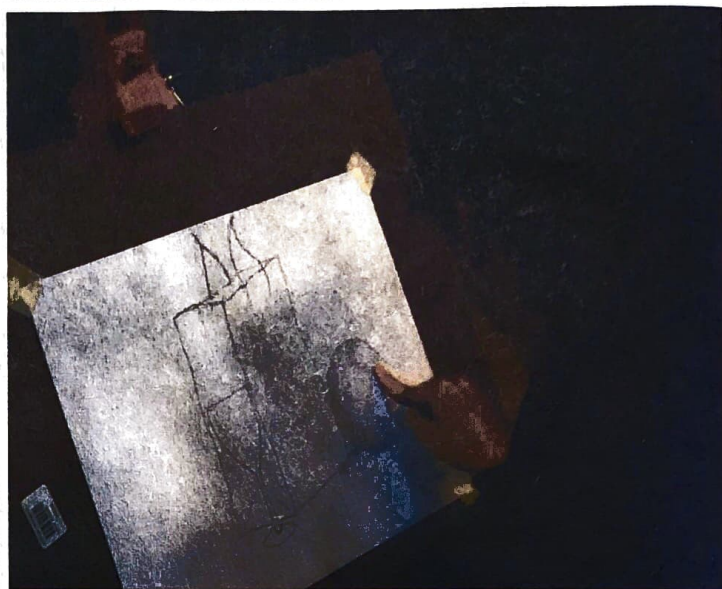
He hoped that by highlighting engineering's history, impact and ethical dilemmas in today's society, through the use of case studies, the students will understand the importance of the engineering profession and be inspired to do well for their course.

He explained that this will, in turn, add greater value to Ngee Ann Polytechnic's (NP) engineering students when they enter the industry as fresh graduates.

First-year Mechanical Engineering (ME) student, Muhammad Amir Hussein, 19, said, "With this module, we know something more about engineering and what engineers do to improve our lives. They (the final-year students) are missing out on [this]!" ■

MMC Students to become Much More Creative

BY SHAUN HO KIN LOON
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DOODLE IN THE OPEN: The days of secretly doodling in textbooks during lessons are over for this MMC student. (Picture: Low Yaujin)

The Multimedia Computing (MMC) course syllabus has been overhauled this semester to provide its students with more opportunities to be creative.

First-year students in MMC Tribune spoke to were pleasantly surprised to find out that their syllabus now includes new modules that focus more on design and creativity, unlike the old syllabus that was slanted heavily towards technical skills.

Not only will students' time be freed up because they will no longer have homework, they will also enjoy new modules and a component that actively helps them to build up a portfolio, to which even their freelance work can be added.

Under the new syllabus, a first-year MMC student has to concentrate on only one module a day, said Mr Melvin Tan, 31, an MMC lecturer.

This allows students to spend an entire day doing research for their assignments and submitting their answers at the end of the day, hence doing away with homework.

And with the addition of creative modules such as Drawing Fundamentals, Digital Photomedia and Digital Audio Design, students will learn how to create illustrations and edit photographs for the internet.

Previously, MMC students took largely technical and theory-based modules, such as Network Fundamentals (the fundamentals for building a network), which had a strong emphasis on building programming skills.

The refined teaching technique deployed by MMC will also focus more on problem solving and case studies.

Added Mr Tan, who teaches Digital Photomedia, "We intend to use these case studies to hopefully get more creative ideas from our students and to allow them to become better working professionals."

The change in the syllabus was a response to the year-end evaluation survey conducted at the end of every academic year.

Ms Angela Wee, 40, Director for the School of InfoComm Technology (ICT) said, "There was

feedback from past students that they wanted more injection of creativity and that the current syllabus was [too] dry and technical."

Samuel Heng, 19, a final-year MMC student, said, "I feel a bit cheated because I came here to do multimedia but instead the syllabus was more technical... which was not what I wanted [to pursue]."

He is among those seniors who feel that the changes have come too late for him.

He said, "What if there is someone who has the same diploma as you but knows more things than you? Wouldn't you lose out to him?"

Ms Wee feels the second-year and final-year students should not feel shortchanged as "everyone benefits from this change."

She continued that additional modules, such as Audio & Video Fundamentals, have been incorporated in the second-year curriculum to provide the senior students with equal opportunities to express their creativity.

Meanwhile, Mr Tan said that the first-year students will explore their creative horizons through expressions of artwork and design.

"The focus for the new batch of students is more in their [creative skills] rather than their software skills."

A new Digital Entertainment Centre has been constructed to house the new facilities and equipment required.

These include a research room for students, a gallery to showcase their artworks, new consultation rooms, an audio mixing room and a studio that boasts a blue screen, which allows backgrounds and digital effects to be inserted seamlessly behind people who stand in front of the screen.

Renovations have cost almost \$60,000. This excludes the cost incurred in purchasing new equipment such as the editing decks, digital video cameras, as well as the digital photo cameras.

Six new lecturers have also been added to the staff strength at ICT to teach the new modules that have been introduced to the MMC curriculum recently. ■

Souped Up E-mail System for Ngee Ann Students

BY JUSTIN DEIMEN
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Ngee Ann Polytechnic (NP) students can now get online reminders of what they need to do each time they log on to their school e-mail accounts because of a new e-mail system for all students introduced at the start of this semester.

Singing its praises is Jeremiah Decosta, who said, "The last system... used to crash my browser when I logged on, but this is faster than the last version. I think the 'To-do' feature is the most useful as I check the school's e-mail inbox often and this way I have an online list to remind me."

The 20-year-old, final-year Biotechnology (BIO) student finds the new system "more slick" than before.

NP students will encounter faster loading school e-mail accounts and a more user-friendly interface as the current system completes its transition to a new email client.

The latest system was implemented for its stability and more user-friendly interface according to the Computer Centre (CC), which was behind this rollout that replaced the five-year-old previous system.

The sophisticated system also offers newer and better features.

Ms Tay Shu Ming, who declined to reveal her age, the Assistant Manager of System Services and Operation for CC, said, "It has a nicer interface, easier spam management, follow-up flags, more control over display options, new mail notifications and better calendaring and address book features, just to name a few."

"The CC continually looks into improvements to our systems and this new system offers just that. When viable solutions are available, we assess them through months of planning and when satisfied, we follow through on those plans."

She added, "Semestral breaks are usually the best time for system upgrades and maintenance as they result in the least disruption to a student's e-mail usage."

Ms Tay also said that the CC views the students' concerns as top priority when upgrading, using comments received to gauge what features need to be improved the most.

"We are, obviously, unable to fulfill all requests and feedback, but each one is given its due consideration," she explained.

"The last system... used to crash my browser when I logged on, but this is faster than the last version."

Jeremiah Decosta, 20, Final-year Biotechnology student

"Having the basic desktop tools at one convenient stop will... help [NP] students be more effective in managing their busy schedule. [due to studies and other activities]." ■

Better Dining Experience at the Atrium

BY NUR IDAYU SUPARTO
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Ngee Ann Polytechnic (NP) students and staff can enjoy a wider variety of food at the Atrium from this semester, thanks to a revamp initiated by the Ngee Ann Consumer Co-operative Society (Co-op).

Four new food items: Beef Stew, Maryland Chicken, Baked Dory Fish and Olive Spaghetti have been added to the menu along with a broader range of coffee, with new eatery São Paulo Pride replacing Splash in the Atrium.

The Co-op, a separate entity from NP, is in charge of the Atrium's eateries, Canteen Five and the stationery shops around campus.

The Co-op Manager Miss Lily Wong, who declined to reveal her age, told Tribune that the revamp was "necessary" as the food selection at Splash did not broaden the range of food already available to NP students at the Atrium.

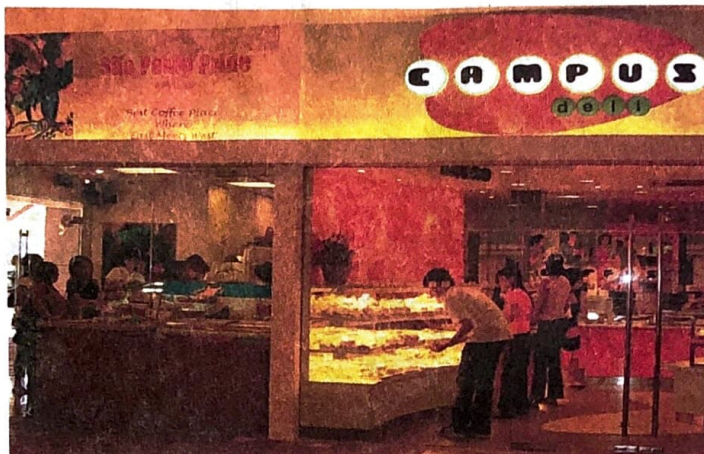
Miss Wong explained, "Splash used to sell some things, like ham sandwiches [and salads], which were already available in the Deli. Because of that, we [felt that] there should be a bigger range of items."

The Co-op decided to replace Splash with São Paulo Pride after assessing the other bidders for the location Splash used to occupy.

She said, "Four Leaves [which brought São Paulo Pride in] tried hard to retain their place. We decided to stay on with them because we thought the new range was more attractive."

After deciding on São Paulo Pride, the Co-op suggested a revamp for the Deli too.

"Since they were going to change the kind



NEW SEMESTER, NEW LOOK: Students may look forward to spiffier eateries with a new range of food items along with old-time favourites. (Picture: Nur Idayu Suparto)

of business they were operating, we requested them to also look into upgrading as there were still many areas for improvement left," explained Miss Wong.

The Campus Deli has since been renovated and is more attractive with its sunny theme, a brightly lit interior and new food display.

She added, "There's better product display [and] layout. Last time, there was no distinct queuing system. Now, there's a smoother traffic flow [within the Campus Deli]."

Despite having to pay \$100,000 for the revamp, Four Leaves has not increased the prices

of food at the Campus Deli and is earning a marginal profit.

Mr David Low, 49, Manager of São Paulo Pride, said, "[Our profit is] low because we're selling... quality food for a cheap price. So we have to sell a lot [in order to increase our profit]."

Miss Wong hopes it was money well-spent. "We hope [that] by revamping, there will be more people buying and the sales will improve. We do have a commission scheme with them. So if they improve, our revenue also improves," she said.

Both São Paulo Pride and Campus Deli said that their sales have improved since the revamp.

Mr Low said, "So far, it has been encouraging. We have customers coming back. They give us very good feedback. Generally things are good and we hope to maintain the standard."

However, he admitted that "it will take some time" before São Paulo Pride can meet its undisclosed profit target.

Miss Jennifer Lim, 50, a staff at the Campus Deli, was more cautious of attributing the sales increase solely to the revamp.

She said, "[Sales have] improved a little but because we just opened for two weeks, we don't really know."

The 10 students Tribune spoke to had mixed reactions on whether the revamp to the eateries was even necessary.

Tan Hong Wei, 18, a second-year student from the School of Life Sciences & Chemical Technology (LSCT), said, "I think it is better that they renovated [the Campus Deli]. [It has] improved a lot [and] looks newer."

However, he felt that the revamp was unnecessary. "I thought the old place was okay already," he reasoned.

On the other end of the spectrum, other students felt that the improvements were a welcome change.

"The Atrium looks nicer and the food has more variety now," said Eswari Annavee, 19, a second-year student from the School of Engineering's Building & Environment Division (BE).

Lin Liang Zhen, 18, a second-year student from the School of Multidiscipline Engineering (MDE), said, "If the food is nice, people will still go and buy." ■

Omnicraft's a First for MOT and Singapore

BY KATE LIM HWEE LENG
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Forget the Duck Tours, prototypes of Singapore's first omnicrafts, vehicles that can travel on land, sea and air, are being built in Ngee Ann Polytechnic (NP) by students from the School of Engineering (SoE).

Two groups of three Marine Offshore Technology (MOT) students each are embarking on this ambitious project, designing, developing and creating prototypes of the these independently by November.

The man behind the idea is Mr Subrata Chandra, 43, an SoE lecturer from the Mechanical Engineering division (ME).

Last year's grouping of Aerospace Technology (AT), Mechanical Engineering (ME) and Mechatronic Engineering (MTE) and MOT into a single division allows for relevant experience to come together for the students' benefit in this revolutionary project.

Mr Chandra said, "I want to see how... the three technologies come together."

However, the two prototypes to be built are small and will not be able to carry passengers or goods due to certain restrictions.

Although it is not feasible to produce a commercially viable omnicraft as materials have to be light for it to work,

Mr Chandra believes that the "innovative

application of the technology" needed to build the Omnicraft, will exercise the students' "problem-solving and management" skills.

He also believes that this is more important than its commercial value.

Mr Chandra explained, "Cost is one thing; the other thing is the licensing. You cannot fly anything just like that."

Koh Pei Liang, 19, a student working on this project, said, "I feel this project is my aspiration because I... want to build something extraordinary. Something that breaks the rules, something [that has] never been built before."

He hopes his omnicraft will eventually be developed into something that can be used "for military purposes, for exploration and for quick response operations".

Grand plans aside, even in the initial stages of the construction of the craft, Pei Liang has had to deal with difficulties.

He said, "I feel that in some areas we are quite limited, [in terms of] technical aspects."

"We have to search for resources on our own. Like engines, all these stuff we have to find [on] our own because all these things [the] school will not provide."

Despite difficulties, Mr Chandra said the students chose to work on this project because of the prestige and the valuable learning experience to be gained. ■



Precious Lessons from the Region

BY BRENDA LEE SHU FEN
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A group of Ngee Ann Polytechnic (NP) students and lecturers recently conducted a public presentation of their expedition to Cambodia at the Asian Civilisation Museum.

Entitled The Cambodian Expedition Dialogue, it was presented on 25 June, and exhibits two months' worth of hard work in gathering the research and documentation.

The trip and the presentation organised by the School of Interdisciplinary Studies (IS) was not its only one.

During the recent semestral break, three teams ventured off on different IS related trips overseas. Despite differing in location, focus and purpose, team members were equally enthused about what they had gained.

"I would love to go on more of such school trips. Each trip tells us different things and develops us differently," said Irene Koh, 19, a second-year Business Accountancy student.

In April, Irene and 19 other NP students journeyed to Cambodia on a rugged expedition to document the fading heritage and culture of an ethnic village yielding to the increasing social influences of western modernisation.

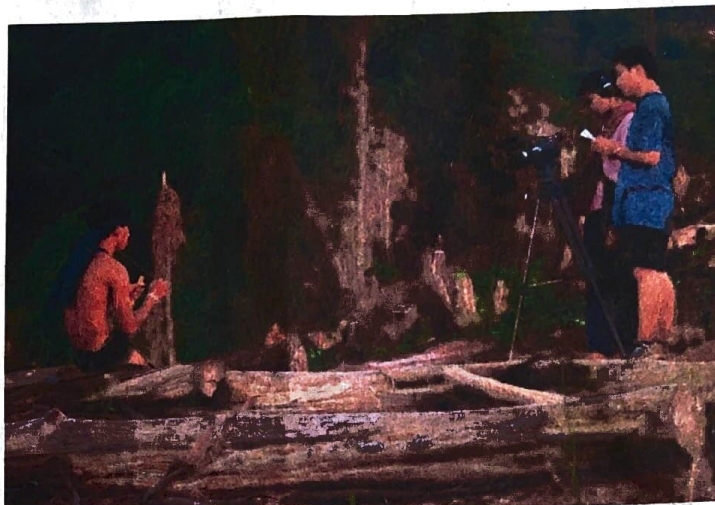
The team was led by Mr Desmond Wee, a 33-year-old IS lecturer who has previous experience in the field of anthropology.

He described this expedition as unique because "unlike most expeditions to help build up weakened communities, we went with humble beginnings, not so much to give but more so to learn and observe".

The students were tasked to gather research and rough it out for 20 days with a strict rule of making minimal impact on the community.

Mr Wee recounted, "We always walked in small groups, were careful not to influence them (villagers) with our fashion, and did not use our hand phones."

Going without modern day devices and living in simple rural conditions thrilled and captivated the members.



JUST SHOOT ME: Students document the rich cultural flavours of Cambodia on tape. (Picture: Desmond Wee)

Elizabeth Lai, 18, a second-year Mass Communication (MCM) student excitedly remarked, "We ate fried tarantulas and cramped up in a pick-up [truck] for about 12 hours."

"And I am talking about all 22 of us. It was a great time of bonding."

Team member Sum Yuan Liang, a 20-year-old fresh graduate from the School of Life Sciences & Chemical Technology (LSCT) added, "Many of us used the same pyjamas for an entire week, and wore the same clothes for two days in a row."

"We appreciate what we have [modern day amenities], because in Cambodia, the power supply cuts off at midnight. There is no shortage here in Singapore... it was a fantastic experience staying in a rural community."

Many students found the trip enriching because they learnt self-reliance.

Elizabeth added, "You became more independent, learned to tolerate people you don't agree with and [were] given an opportunity

to mix with all sorts of people, [from] different schools in NP."

"Personally, I became more determined in things like cooking and being organised."

Apart from the Cambodian expedition, the School also organised a Language Immersion programme to Osaka, Japan, in May.

The trip was led by a 28-year-old IS lecturer, Miss Chishiko Muraoka. Miss Muraoka teaches the pre-requisite advanced Japanese language module for students who are residing with Japanese families while taking language classes in Osaka University.

She said it was designed for students to "practise Japanese and to force them to speak and survive" in a Japanese environment, as well as get over cultural stereotypes.

She commented, "They [Singaporeans] don't know the real Japanese lifestyle."

"People think that watching Japan Hour is [knowing] Japan, but actually that is not true. We

don't eat sashimi every day, and we don't go to the hot springs every day.

"It's nice to see the usual and ordinary Japanese lifestyle through these trips."

Another overseas excursion to India was conducted in April, led by Ms Elizabeth Mary Thorarajoo, 44, who teaches the module Insight into India.

She said, "The objective of the programme is to immerse the students in Indian culture, as well as to [examine] the economic progress of such emerging countries."

According to Ms Thorarajoo, the NP students on the immersion trip "suddenly had a new perspective to India" and there was a "new learning awareness in them".

She also felt that the students picked up the art of "idea generation" during the trip.

"The [excursion] itself became a trigger for [brain-storming]."

"We are not there to offer solutions but opportunities to make it out on their own."

"The ideas will come from them, especially when they start engaging with these new overseas experiences, they start learning new things."

Mohamed Farhan Bin Ahmad, 24, a second-year Electrical Engineering (EE) student said of the Cambodian expedition, "Going overseas with the school is a good idea, I would recommend every NP student to go overseas at least once. What's more, you can mix around with other people from other schools!"

Other expedition members agreed.

Lee Fengnian, 20, a final-year MCM student said, "The school should allow for more opportunities for other students to go on such expeditions. Such experiences not only put our physical abilities to test but also challenges our mental strength."

Mr Peter Tham, 50, an IS lecturer who led the team with Mr Wee fondly added, "It is a learning experience, something that you will not get from [a] textbook, something you know you will obtain in return... and that is a guarantee. You will grow." ■

Find Work on NP's Campus, Online

BY KATE LIM HWEE LENG
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Offering jobs on-campus, a first for Ngee Ann Polytechnic (NP), and from external employers since May 31, the online Career Portal is a boon to financially-stretched students.

Mr Vickneshwaran T., 36, manager of Student Services Office (SS) explained that launching the Career Portal at the start of the new school term would help to "reach out to students who would want to work during the semester."

He considered this a "Ngee Ann initiative" because it was created in response to "students' feedback from various channels".

He explained that the on-campus jobs was introduced to help students who "have to work part-time to pay for daily expenses".

Prior to the Career Portal, staff who needed students for part-time jobs would normally approach them directly.

The problem with that approach is students who need jobs might not know the staff who require part-timers.

JOBS ON CAMPUS: Career options on and off-campus are available at a glance on this new online facility. (Picture: Kate Lim Hwee Leng)

Similarly, NP staff might not know enough students to fill up the vacancies.

This is especially difficult when part-timers are required for jobs needing specific skills.

In this new system, jobseekers are required to register their details with the Career Portal. Their details will then be reviewed by SS to see if they are academically strong enough to work while

studying. They will then be matched with jobs according to their skills and abilities.

Students can see the description of the on-campus jobs available and the skills required in the portal, so that they can respond to the suitable employment call.

The response has been good so far. At press time, there were already more than 150 registrations from students. Five students are already working on jobs in school.

Shila Naidu, 18, a second-year student from Mass Communication (MCM), is working as an administrative staff in the Student Services Information Centre (SSIC).

The biggest incentive for her to work on campus is the reduction of travel time from school to work. However, she thinks that it would be better if publicity for the Career Portal could be stepped up.

Kenny Cheng Chi Hong, 20, a final-year Accountancy (ACC) student was unaware of the Career Portal when interviewed. He has experienced financial difficulty before and applauds this new online facility. ■

National Accountancy Quiz

BY AMELIA TAN
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BALANCING THE BOOKS: Winning students from Outram Secondary School. (Picture: Courtesy of BA)

A record number of 800 students from 72 secondary schools swarmed Ngee Ann Polytechnic (NP) for the National Accounting Quiz 2005.

"It's the first time we are experiencing a huge response in such a large scale for this event in its second year... last year we had about 700 students," said Mrs Anna Yap, 35, a lecturer-in-charge from the School of Business & Accountancy (BA).

Explaining the increase, she said, "Due to the success of the first accounting quiz and also through publicity by the Singapore Society of Commercial Teachers (SSCT)... more schools became aware of the event."

NP and SSCT are the initiators and organisers of this national event which is being held for the second time.

Along with the participants, 200 student helpers from the School of BA, 150 guests, staff and teachers were also present for this event.

Guests of honour included Ms Chan Lai Koon, Director of CPA Australia (Singapore), Mr Alan Goh, President, Singapore Society of Commercial Teachers (SSCT) and representatives from main sponsor Certified Practising Accountants (CPA) Australia.

Mrs Yap said, "Ngee Ann students were involved as emcees, helping with the logistics, traffic as well as marking of the quizzes."

Jointly organised by BA and SSCT, the event was held on 25 May at NP's Convention Centre and the Exam Hall at Block 72 level 2.

Ms Linda Ng, 35, a BA lecturer and quiz facilitator said in an e-mail interview, "This event is a national-level event, where the Singapore secondary schools that offer Principles of Accounts were invited to participate."

NP's joint partner, the SSCT sent the invitations out to various secondary schools offering the pre-requisite subject two months before the National Accounting Quiz.

Despite the competition being held during the exam period for most secondary schools, the response was impressive.

"The response was overwhelming, considering the fact that the students participating had just completed their exam," claimed Ms Ng.

She added, "The quiz comprised of a preliminary round which had students attempting 30 multiple choice questions pertaining to accounting and a final round. [The final round] was similar to the popular game show, Who Wants to be a Millionaire."

Last year's quiz included an outdoor adventure segment where student teams had to take part in a campus-wide race while answering accounting based questions.

Ms Ng continued that in addition to winning attractive prizes, "The National Accounting Quiz was a good training ground for the secondary school students, [because] they could apply what they learnt [in Principles of Accounts] in school to good use".

The winning team was from Outram Secondary School. The team won \$1,000 cash, a champion trophy, medals and participating certificates. Last year's winner was from Ngee Ann Secondary. ■

Playing With Play Money

BY KUTHSIYYA PEER MOHAMED
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MONEY, MONEY, MONEY: BE will be using Monopoly to introduce tertiary students to the real estate business. (Picture: Courtesy of BE)

The Building & Environment Division (BE) of School of Engineering and Hasbro Singapore Pte Ltd, a world leading toy and games manufacturer are organising a Monopoly competition to interest tertiary students in the real estate business.

The upcoming Monopoly Campus Challenge, which offers a top prize of \$10,000, will have qualifying rounds at Suntec City from August 5 to 6. The semi-finals and finals will be held on August 7.

Following the top prize, the second prize will be \$1,000 and third prize \$500. All the top six winners will have cash rewards. According to Senior Lecturer Mrs Tan Lay Har, 46, it will be open to all tertiary students, at least 17 years of age and own a student card.

Interested parties may register their names at www.playmonopoly.com.sg. Each registration costs \$10.

The competition builds on BE's success in running the second annual National Monopoly School Championship with Hasbro Singapore Pte Ltd.

Kelvin Lam, 29, the project manager of Magi Business Arena said that he was expecting a turnout of 5,000 participants for the national event.

Mrs Grace Quah-Oon Gek Neo, 52, Director of BE, said, "Property or real estate is a [vital] part of Singapore's economy and Monopoly, which is essentially a real estate game, is an ideal fit for the students [who] are introduced to terms like mortgage, rental return." ■

NP's Alpha Centre Set for Glory

BY JUSTIN DEIMEN
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After a clean sweep of honours at the Sumo category of RoboGames 2005, in San Francisco in March, and winning three prizes at the Singapore Robotics Games (SRG) 2005 hosted in Ngee Ann Polytechnic's (NP) Convention Centre in May, the Alpha Centre is all geared up to meet its next challenge in the Robocup 2005, which is to be held from 13 to 19 July in Osaka, Japan.

Since its inception in 1995, the Alpha Centre, which is Ngee Ann's Intelligent Robotics department, has been competing regularly at local and international events.

The Alpha Centre is a technology development centre in the School of Engineering (SoE) and offers support and resources to its students.

Final-year students from the SoE and the School of InfoComm Technology (ICT), work hand-in-hand with their lecturers to create and maintain the projects for the different games held every year.

"We treat these competitions as a learning experience for our students as we feel this is the best way for them to apply the theories and knowledge in a practical way outside the



ROAD TO GLORY: Four final-year SoE students are all geared up to bring glory to NP in the Robocup 2005 competition. (Picture: Lim Beng Soon)

classroom," said Mr Hui Tin Fat, 44, the Manager of the Alpha Centre.

"Through the support of the Ngee Ann administration, we have been able to participate in these international competitions.

"[We have been able to put] our best foot

forward because our involvements result in garnering good publicity for the Polytechnic and the Alpha Centre."

Mr Lim Beng Soon, 48, the Supervisor of the teams at SRG 2005 feels that NP are regional pioneers in the field of robotics.

He said, "We have been doing well against the highest level of competition for nearly 10 years. We are considered to be a strong team in the tournaments we take part in." Mr Lim sees winning as a way to "improve NP's image" as it attracts potential talent to the Polytechnic.

Tan Kim Wee, a 19-year-old Mechatronics Engineering (MTE) student who took part in the recent SRG competition feels the competition has enriched his learning experience at NP.

He said, "I got a chance to compete against schools outside of Singapore. They think differently and we can probably learn how to innovate new designs from them, as they are more creative."

Kim Wee added, "By sending me to these competitions, the Alpha Centre has prepared me for more challenges and paved my way to a career in electronics."

Despite its track record, NP is taking no chances with the upcoming Robocup 2005.

After their SRG 2005 victory, expectations are higher for the Alpha Centre as they aim for a spot in the top three.

Mr Hui is adamant that complacency does not take root in the team.

"Our fellow competitors from other schools are constantly looking to improve, so we have to as well." ■

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创作坊前主席打入“绝对Superstar”24强

黄佳仪报道
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维健进入“绝对Superstar”24强后拍的宣传照 [照片: 新传媒]

频道的“绝对Superstar”已播出了四个星期。经过三圈淘汰赛选出入围决赛的二十四强其中有一名是义安理工学院的毕业生——何维健。维健是本校创作坊(Song Composing Club)的前任主席。

在上个学期刚毕业的维健，为了打发时间与实现梦想，决定参加新传媒的偶像选拔赛——“绝对Superstar”。与他结伴参加比赛的还包括一些创作坊的朋友，以及现任主席——郭钟文，但只有维健成功通过淘汰赛

并获媒体投选为“绝对亲善”参赛者。

曾参加过“新加坡偶像”的维健表示：“其实要当歌手的那种‘心机’是在进入了创作坊之后才比较强的。”对维健来说，创作坊就像是一个让他对音乐更了解的‘踏脚石’。他在创作坊学会了创作的技巧。参加创作坊已有三年的维健认为：“让你出名的机会不是很多，但创作坊可以给你很多磨练，例如在学校的表演，对外的表演，让你认识外面的音乐人。”

二十七岁的创作坊负责老师，陈勇升用英语说道：创作坊可以让学生们建立自信，通过歌词、歌曲表达自己。

维健也在创作坊结交了许多志同道合的朋友，并组织了属于自己的乐团，名为“Audio Insanity”。陈老师表示，“Audio Insanity”是创作坊十年以来的第一组乐团。这个乐团共有七位成员，而他们已经创作了七首属于自己的歌。他们也有不少的表演经验及比赛经验。维健就是这个团的歌手之一。“Audio Insanity”让维健在歌唱领域有更好的发展。

郭钟文认为，创作坊让对音乐一窍不通的自己，变得又会填词、作曲和弹吉他。而现任主席也表示学校对于创作坊非常支持，给他们很多表演机会。校长与多名主任也出席他们一年一度的演唱会。

在创作坊，维健经历了许多苦与乐的心灵战役，但他表示整个过程是先苦后甜，苦尽甘来，快乐是加倍的。

没有创作坊，维健认为自己不会有勇气参加歌唱比赛，所以他从不曾后悔自己的选择。他对热爱音乐的义安校友们说：“敢去试试，你今天捡到一块，谁知道明天会不会捡到五十块。”

每逢星期三和四，“绝对Superstar”会在晚上八点半，优频道播出。■

2005年世界宣明会饥饿30青年营在义安举行

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《饥饿30》的节目开始：队长带领着队友们共同喊喊喊口号 [照片: 刘有始]

早餐晚餐，以水代食还得饿着肚子收集旧报纸、参与互动。这也许听起来像是一件不可能发生在你生命中的事。

八百名十五到三十岁的青少年参加了第二次在义安理工学院举行的《2005年世界宣明会饥饿30青年营》。

参加的青少年大多是初级学院的高二生。队长——新加坡管理发展学院传播系的学生沈学圣(20岁)用英语说道：这次会参与是因为之前以露营者的身份参加过《饥饿30》，后来希望可以再为贫穷小孩做一些，所以想再回来帮忙。

六月四日，星期六下午两点钟，在贵宾，卫生部兼社会发展、青年及体育部政务次长，孟理齐博士，敲的锣声下，《饥饿30》掀开了序幕。义安理工学院副院长，陈汉章先生、和新加坡世界宣明会执行总干事，吴英基先生，也都出席了开幕仪式。

《饥饿30》的目的是要让青少年们了解和体验三种困境：饥饿挨饿、露宿流浪以及爱滋病的祸害。

孟理齐博士以英语说：卫生部兼社会发展、青年及体育部全力支持大家参与这个活动，相信参加了这个活动，参与者之后面对危机时会有信心，而他们也将会是一批更有公民意识的青年。

针对《饥饿30》的主题，吴英基先生，受访时以英语表示，每年的内容重点是根据(世界)状况的出现而定的。最近，爱滋病已从非洲蔓延到亚洲，而影响最大的国家是印度和中国。我们这一代在经济贸易上将会和这两国有密切的关系，所以我们必须对爱滋病有足够的认识。

在参加者的努力下，《饥饿30》共收到了大约50,000公斤的报纸和5,900公斤的旧衣服，共筹到大概新币7,000多元。这些钱将拨入世界宣明会，作为援助贫民的基金，款项会平均的捐给蒙古、埃塞俄比亚和柬埔寨的流浪儿童，以改善他们的生活。

来自非洲，世界宣明会莱索托执行总干事，Mr Winstone Nkhoma，出席了《饥饿30》的一个活动，和参加者分享了南非国家——莱索托(Lesotho)的社会问题，在莱索托，天灾连年，人民生活贫困，且爱滋病

肆虐，每三个国民之中，就有一名已患有爱滋病。

主办当局也安排了活动，帮助参加者更深入的体会和想像贫困的现实状况。其中一名参加者，圣安德烈初级学院的二年级学生熊燕妮(18岁)，说道：“我发现生活在艰苦的环境下真的很不容易，所以我会用功读书，不要辜负我爸妈。”

在六月五日，《饥饿30》进入倒数的最后两个小时，主办当局安排了小型音乐会，而主持人就是义安传播系的讲师——杨君伟。君伟是第二次参加《饥饿30》，今年还当上了《饥饿30》的负责人。主持经验丰富的他，在《饥饿30》的音乐会上，妙语如珠，把气氛推到高潮。晚上八点，《饥饿30》在吴英基先生敲响的锣声下，圆满结束。同学们以行动证明了他们以毅力、耐力、体力来战胜了饥饿，完成了饥饿三十小时的大挑战。

七月二十八日到七月三十日，新加坡最大的基督教音乐节将在福康宁举行，票价从二十元起。这个艺术节所得到的收益将全数捐给世界宣明会。想知道更多详情，请上 www.sonicfest.net 查询。■

记者感言：

由于选读的科目和世界宣明会在八月的活动有关连，所以我抱着“了解客户”的心情前来参加《饥饿30》，带着一丝被迫的感觉。可是在这三十个小时里，我却发现过得很充实、震撼、感动、喜悦、欣喜、五味俱全。从中学到了不少知识，也和其他八百名同伴一起体会到了饥饿的滋味。

在这禁食时段，仔细听周围的小小对话，我发现许多同学在禁食后最想吃的不是某某餐厅的炸鱼片，或哪一家咖啡店的“果冻”，他们要求的只是口腹之欲，而不是最困难的食物，只要能填饱肚子就罢了。新加坡人或许多人不曾体验过饥饿，也不曾体会过自己的福气。

三十小时后，我们又回到了原来的环境，我们还是一样的舒适。而周围的孩子还是一样饥饿，我想只是三十小时的饥饿是不够的……

杨君伟新书登场

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Hebe和Selina互殴，因为Hebe很享受头发被拉的感觉。David Tao不喜欢高尔夫球，认为那是一种浪费草原的贵族活动，根本算不上是运动。这是广播，是从广播对话直接写成文字的书。这本《唱所欲言》是由2004年离开了广播界加入义安担任讲师的杨君伟写的。

新书《唱所欲言》已在5月29日正式发表。发表会在新加坡四楼的世界书展举行，吸引了许多支持君伟的朋友、媒体记者、学生以及家长。君伟还在发表会上办了签书会，让读者们可以排队索取君伟的亲笔签名，与他做近距离接触。出席发表会的一名读者黄钰琪说：“阅读这本书时，感觉仿佛正在收听广播，非常轻松、愉快。”

这本书用了一年时间筹备。在UFM100.3工作了三年，访问了一百多个艺人，君伟从中挑选出心目中十五个印象最深刻、最值得收录的访问，而这些受访的艺人都符合《唱》的主题——那就是经历过挣扎、挑战以及面对过阻碍。除此之外，君伟还参与了书本排版、编辑以及设计。

对于写作的动机，君伟说道：“想做别人没做过的事情”。君伟与艺人们在UFM100.3的访谈深受听众的欢迎，于是，他就想：“把它变成白纸黑字，记录下来，出版成书，就可以让更多人知道。如果错过的话，他们以后有机会接触得到，如果听过的话，他们可以再回味。”

《唱》的书本封面是用“CD”(光碟)式的设计。参与封面设计的君伟认为“用音乐这个概念很自然”。那是因为书中所做的访问都是以音乐作为出发点。书里还有时间的记载，让读者阅读时也一样有听“广播”的真实性。

《唱》在五月就已开始出售，据出版社八方文化创作室反映，这本书卖得很好。八方文化市场兼行政执行员，萧慧敏(二十五岁)表示：“《唱》的卖点在于君伟访问艺人的态度、深入的角度，如何让艺人不知不觉的透露。”书展上的销售量在八方文化排行榜上名列第二，只排在内閣资政李光耀的《学以致用》后头。这样的销售成绩确是出乎君伟意料之外。身为一名作者，君伟觉得写本书就好比生个孩子，他表示：“我现在是个非常骄傲的爸爸。”

君伟希望读者能领悟到三点：一、“明星在舞台背后有他们的真实世界”；二、“或多或少学到访问跟沟通的技巧，甚至对访问技巧产生兴趣”；三、“学生可以看到一个DJ的工作不只是提问问题、播歌和讲话那么简单，希望从中可以领悟到做一个媒体人或是广播人他们的重大任务。”

杨君伟希望读者能：“细心体会，慢慢品尝”这本《唱所欲言》。■

《唱所欲言》可在Kinokuniya、大众书局以及各大书局购买。售价\$16.90 (Before 5% GST)。大量订购可享受特别优惠。欲知详情，请联络八方文化创作室。(电话：64665775或416)

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Pageantino Only for Freshmen

BY MARK TAN BING JUN
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A miscalculation in the response to the annual Pageantino and Hop Nite meant far fewer people enjoyed this year's improved programming even though it was boosted by a better budget.

Only about 250 students were at the Convention Centre on June 3 to see Ngee Ann's own Audio Insanity rock the night playing songs from different genres such as Progressive Rock and a fusion of R&B and House. NRA Scratch also made their debut performance with a well-coordinated hip-hop number. Further performances by the Flat Landers BMX Bikers and the dance group, 3 Counts were also a hit with the crowd.

These were only possible because of a more generous budget, although the organisers could not disclose the actual figures.

"We were able to afford things like a good emcee and also have free ice-cream [from Walls] for all those who came. We had about 450 sticks of ice cream," said See Chee How, 20, the Students' Union president.

With more to offer those who attended, it was a pity that the event was only supported by a turnout of 250 students, a far cry from last year's 400 students.

The final-year Banking & Financial Services (BFS) student explained that the Union was instructed not to sell tickets to any second- and third-year students for the event because of



ALL SMILES: The studs and glamoirettes can't contain their happiness despite the poor turnout. (Picture: Low Youjin)

the overwhelming response to the Freshmen Orientation Camp (FOC).

All 700 who attended the FOC were given free tickets to the Pageantino and Hop Nite.

Believing that most of them would attend the event, ticket sales were halted to prevent an overflow of students attending an event targeted

primarily at integrating freshmen into the school through making new friends.

"The freshies were well-informed of the event, so we expected a lot more to come, plus they had free entry," Chee How said.

He added that lack of publicity could also have affected attendance.

Chee How said. "There was only one banner for the event".

First-year Electronic & Computer Engineering (ECE) student, Ng Xuan Yi, 17, said that she felt that "the turnout was pretty decent... most of the people there went to support their friends".

She also commented that the host was really funny but felt the Hop Nite "should have [had] more games where the crowd could interact so that the event would allow students to make more [new friends]".

Last year's Mr and Ms Ngee Ann, second-year Mass Communication (MCM) students, Richel Xie, 23, and Sarah Ng Li-Wen, 20, and final-year Mechanical Engineering (ME) student and the Students' Union (SU) vice-president, James Tan Jun Yuan, 20, formed the judging panel.

The pageant segment drew cheers from the crowd, who spurred the contestants on throughout their dance performances.

Judging the contestants based on their personal style, spontaneity, ability to engage the audience and beauty, the judges crowned Chemical & Biomolecular Engineering (CBE) freshman, Eddie Loke Jun Wei, 17, Mr Ngee Ann and Business Studies (BS) freshman, Tow Xin Yi, 17, Ms Ngee Ann. "Only four of my friends came to support me and all the other contestants are so good. I really didn't expect to win," Xin Yi said.

Despite a disappointing turnout, Chee How said he "still considered the event a big success". He explained that despite the poor turnout, the participants still had a good time. ■

Channel NP: Coming to a Laptop Near You

BY NUR IDAYU SUPARTO
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Other people on campus could be watching you present your works by the end of the academic year.

That is when the Teaching & Learning Centre (TLC) will be launching a new online broadcast channel that will serve as a unified platform to showcase the works of Ngee Ann Polytechnic (NP) students.

Mr Ch'ng Beng Hin, 54, the Deputy Director of TLC, believes the move will also put Ngee Ann Polytechnic (NP) at the forefront of innovative learning as it is unprecedented among local institutions for coming up with such educational tools and techniques.

"As far as we know, no local institution has tried this out yet. That's because this type of video streaming puts a greater demand for a receiving device," he added.

NP is the only polytechnic that makes it mandatory for students to own laptops.

He added, "What makes us unique is [that] we have the production capacity, our own video production crew, video archives."

"[Meanwhile,] our audience have the receiving end, which are the notebooks."

Channel NP, is being pilot-tested and will be airing recorded footage of students' business presentations, short films, final-year projects and community projects.

The TLC, which develops and manages teaching and learning initiatives, hopes that these educational programmes will engage students to learn innovatively.

Mr Ch'ng said, "It is to enrich the learning experience for the community at large."

"We want to extend classroom learning to NP students now."

The move is also in line with the government's efforts to develop Singapore as a media hub.

"We certainly hope to contribute to that since Singapore is working towards becoming a media hub," Mr Ch'ng said.

The journey forward is not without challenges. For now, the Channel NP team has to contend with the sheer range of notebooks being used on campus and how that affects the broadcast quality for the receiver.

It's a marketing challenge but we must be relevant to the students. Without a doubt, we are sure we'll win the viewers over.

Mr Ch'ng Beng Hin, 54, Deputy Director Teaching & Learning Centre

"We have to conduct events to reach out to students and say 'This is the type of notebook you should use to get the signal.' That phase is important to us," he explained.

Although Channel NP is capable of beaming

out its broadcast to the entire campus, he noted that certain notebooks, such as older notebooks, or those that have neither enough Random Access Memory (RAM) capacity, nor an updated wireless driver, may not be able to receive the broadcasts.

In addition, certain configurations within the laptop, such as firewall protection settings, could also prevent students from receiving the broadcast.

While TLC does plan to air "live" broadcasts in future, for its introductory stages, the channel will be broadcasting recorded programmes.

"Our ideal is to do "live" broadcasts but we're not ready yet. Now the screen is small and it's not true broadcast quality. We hope that in two to three years' time, we can position all the notebooks to have broadcast quality."

To do this, TLC plans to set up a 'Students Help Desk' in July to help students configure their laptops. This will ensure that they can receive the broadcast content.

The 24/7 channel, to be accessed at <http://cnp.np.edu.sg>, makes use of existing resources such as NP's intranet to broadcast its programmes to students' laptops.

When the quality of the channel is stabilised and ready for its launch, the broadcast timeslots will be divided among the various schools to showcase their students' works.

Even though the channel is "purely educational", Mr Ch'ng believes students will take a keen approach to it.

"It's a marketing challenge but we must be relevant to the students. Without a doubt, we are sure we'll win the viewers over," he said.

Some might question the need for another

campus channel as NP already has Campus Television (CTV), run by final-year Mass Communication (MCM) students, which airs at Canteen One.

Mr Ch'ng, however, foresees no unconquerable battle for "eyeballs" once the channel commences its broadcast.

He believes the two can co-exist simultaneously without compromising each other's objectives.

He explained, "We're not competing. There's no conflict. CTV is a wonderful platform for students to learn how to run a station but for the audience, the limitations are many."

"Basically, we want to leverage on the notebooks that the students have. We want to make maximum use of the platform."

CTV's lecturer-in-charge, Mr Tan Heng Han, 35, told *tribune* he agreed.

"It will be great that there is Channel NP as there are also other works from other schools. For example, ICT [has] a video and audio fundamental module where students produce their own videos."

He added, "It would be a great gateway for students' work to be shown."

Mr Tan also clarified that CTV would not adjust its programming.

"CTV started off as a hip, campus television. It would be difficult to run educational programmes [in it]."

Both Mr Ch'ng and Mr Tan are keen to collaborate. The latter is interested in tapping on the eyeballs drawn by Channel NP for CTV's programmes and student work in the School of Film & Media Studies (FMS), which have lacked a sustained medium for showcase. ■

NP's Musical Scene Flourishes

BY AMANDA LIM
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The Ngee Ann Polytechnic (NP) Concert Band has recently "delivered" a group of musical babies, with new and smaller interest groups being set up within its ranks, such as the Percussion Ensemble, Brass Quintet and Combo band performing in the CCA Fiesta and the Arts Camp, that were held just before the semester began.

The President of the NP Concert Band, final-year Electrical & Computer Engineering (ECE) student, Merrill Chia, 19, said, "Our purpose of showing the freshmen all our various smaller interest groups is to let them know that the band is not just a boring concert band, and that musical instruments can be used to play more than only one kind of music."

The recruitment strategy has worked for Brian Teo, a first-year Biotechnology (BIO) student, who joined the Concert Band.

He said, "I was impressed by the number of different interest groups that the band formed; I didn't have that in my secondary school. I hope to take over the seniors after they step down."

He was one of 47 new recruits the musical group has signed up.

The committee has expressed their satisfaction with the number of freshmen they have signing up for the band this year, but welcome any more students who wish to sign up for it.

"The percentage of newcomers in the band is much higher compared to last year, when we only had slightly more than 15 new recruits," said Jasper Guo, the vice-chairman of the band's Freshman Orientation Committee for this year.



HOME-GROWN TALENTS: Song Composing Club's Audio Insanity showcasing NP talent out of campus.
(Picture: Courtesy of Hoh Wei Jian)

Morale is high within the musical community in NP.

One of its stars, Hoh Wei Jian, 20, has been impressing viewers on MediaCorp's latest local Mandarin singing competition, Project Superstar. Having beaten 4,000 hopefuls to make it to the top 24 on the Channel U programme, the former president of NP's Song Composing Club (SCC), used to flood NP's lecture theatres with his incredible voice.

Understandably, the recent NP graduate attributes his current success to the time he spent as a student here.

He said, "A lot of us started very small, but the school created many opportunities for us to excel, like organising trips and gigs for us, and (this) really helped boost my confidence."

Some of these opportunities have seen the Cultural Activities & Social Service Club (CASSC) - including groups like the Harmonica Troupe,

Chinese Orchestra, Choir, Dance Group and Stage Art Group - go to Kuala Lumpur (KL) in April for a music exchange programme with three high schools.

70 students went for the trip.

The Chinese Orchestra (CO) then sent five members to Perth, Australia, in May together with various CCAs like the New Revolving Age (NRA), SCC and others.

Four of the five members are soloists on the Yang Qin, Pi Pa, Zhong Ruan, and Di Zi. Each of the students paid only \$60 for the four-day trip around KL.

Clubs have also been invited to take part in many performances outside campus.

These include activities like **Youth Alive! 2005**, a competition for musical groups or solo singers and **WASBE International**, an international music exchange programme for wind bands, where the concert band will host a high school band from Taiwan in July.

Many stage bands formed among NP students have also enjoyed success in annual nationwide competitions such as **JamX**.

Last year, the champion of this competition was a band from NP called Soul'D Out - its members were from the Concert Band. This year, Audio Insanity (Wei Jian is part of it), a band from the Song Composing Club (SCC), clinched third prize in the same competition.

The students in NP have definitely shown a lot more passion driven towards their music recently, and taking Wei Jian as an example, NP looks set to produce talent competent enough to contend with the best of the industry. ■

The Amphibious Race PSF's Caesar's Ballad

BY EUNICE CHIA
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Aquathlon an event-sport that consists of both swimming and running is the latest addition to Ngee Ann Polytechnic's (NP) sports scene and looks set to inspire much of the student population.

Despite being set up just this May semester, according to the Student Development Officer, Mr Edmund Oh, 34, Aquathlon Challenge, has been around in NP for two years.

Said 34-year-old Mr. Oh, "This event was started last year and our aim was to invite secondary school students to the Aquathlon Challenge. We wanted to do it twice a year so that it would coincide with the Open House."

In the recent two years, NP has been holding invitational secondary school competitions as well as the Aquathlon Challenge. These competitions have been receiving a good response of about 90 participants every time.

Added Mr Oh, "Based on the feedback we get from the school teachers, the secondary school students were keen on such competitions."

Given the sport's popularity and the tremendous response during the Aquathlon Challenge, second-year Accountancy student Xylia Chen, 18, President of the Club and her committee members proposed to set up the Aquathlon Club as a CCA.

Aquathlon is a sport for both the mind and body. With its rigorous training programme in place, Aquathlon trains an individual to be physically fit and mentally strong.

Explaining how intensive the programme can get, Xylia said, "Our training programme consists of four phases."

"The first phase consists of [running] one round in campus and ten laps of swimming in the pool. The second phase consists of one round in campus, 16 laps in the pool and five rounds around the track."

"The third phase consists of two rounds in campus and 24 laps in the pool."

"The fourth phase consists of three rounds in campus, 30 laps in the pool and three rounds around the track."

Despite these tough and tedious training programmes, there were many enquires from students at the Aquathlon booth which was set up at Canteen Two, and several even took up the challenge by joining the club.

According to the Vice President of Aquathlon, Ryan Loh, 23, a final-year Electrical Computing Engineering student, there are 10 committee members and 17 newly recruited members in the club.

He said that the club hopes to aim for 50 members or more so that funding for the club will be "justified".

Both Xylia and Ryan share the same vision for Aquathlon and hope that their members become "all rounders" and to share a common goal in wanting to win accolades for the school.

Students interested in joining Aquathlon can call Xylia at 93861974 or contact any Aquathlon committee member. ■

BY JUSTIN DEIMEN
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Poly Stage Factor (PSF) will be staging its first musical, **The Ides of March**, at Ngee Ann Polytechnic's (NP) Convention Centre on 19 August.

The Ides of March will not only be PSF's first musical but also Singapore's first large-scale musical rendition of William Shakespeare's play, **Julius Caesar**.

The musical chronicles the events surrounding and following **The Ides of March** which simply means the 15th of March.

In the original play, Julius Caesar's assassination on this day triggers a series of events that forms the principle storyline in the musical.

Mohamad Shaifulbahri, 19, who serves as the musical's playwright, director and one of its actors said, "The idea came to us in December 2004 when the PSF club members decided to do a musical for our next project."

"Somewhere along the discussion, we joked about doing a musical on Julius Caesar."

"This joke then materialised into something concrete and since I had previous experience [with] Shakespeare's works, I took on the task of writing for the production."

The final-year Early Childhood Education (ECH) student feels that the PSF's adaptation of the play will be "unlike anything that anyone will have experienced before."

He added, "The story for the musical will not be a straight translation of Shakespeare's original but will incorporate other elements."

"Its essence and core remains but slight changes [have been made] just to introduce tension and romance into the political piece."

"This was done to create some mass appeal among the campus as politics and period pieces like this would not normally cater to the majority of the crowd."

"We are convinced that we have made it more interesting for more people."

For a musical of this magnitude, help was sought from the entire campus during the auditions held from February through March this year.

Shaifulbahri is confident that they have found the right cast and crew for this adaptation.

He said, "We have had to concentrate more on our stage presence and obviously the vocals... We need to keep check of our cast as we have a much larger one this time around, up to 50 people could be involved."

"PSF have also worked on the lyrics for the musical and the score was composed by a professional that was hired."

Shaifulbahri hopes that the students give the musical "a chance".

He said, "This is a musical that will be multi-layered and professionally done. I hope that the audience will absorb and digest Shakespeare in a fun medium and take away [with them] an unforgettable experience."

As Ngee Ann Polytechnic's resident English drama society, the PSF had also staged two plays last September for charity, **Bottled Dreams** and **Hide It** for the President's Challenge Week. ■

NPDB All Geared Up for Competition

BY EUNICE CHIA
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The Ngee Ann Dragon Boat (NPDB) team's recent win over Temasek Polytechnic (TP), in the Institute-Varsity-Polytechnic (IVP) heats during the Singapore Dragon Boat Festival, has given Ngee Ann dragon boaters a boost in the run-up to July's IVP race, according to the team's coach, 28-year-old Lynus Heng.

NP's sleek win over TP at the 5th National Dragon Boat Championship 2005 was especially sweet, since TP snatched the third position from NP during the IVP heats. This destroyed NP's dream of making it to the finals.

Last November, at the IVP heats, NP was enjoying a clear lead over TP, until the final minutes rolled in and Temasek's boat cut into Ngee Ann's lane colliding with the team, causing NPDB's boat to capsize and dashing their hopes of making it to the top three where only the best two timings of each heat and the best third timing among the heats get to enter the finals.

Ngee Ann got the chance to make a comeback at the TP Invitational Polytechnic Race category at the Dragon Boat Championship on June 11 at Bedok Reservoir.

Oliver Goh, 18, president of NPDB, and a final-year Civil Environmental Engineering (CEE) student, said, "We just wanted to clear our heads... we never actually thought about beating them [TP]. We [just] wanted to conquer our fears about capsizing."



VERY HIGH FIVE: NPDB's win over TP's Dragon Boat team at the recent 5th National Dragon Boat Championship puts team members on cloud nine. (Picture: Eunice Chia)

We're definitely working towards a good win for the IVP this year. And we're not trying to think about what happened last year with TP. We're trying to [put that behind us] and conquer new [frontiers].

Oliver Goh, 18, President of NPDB
Final-year Civil & Environmental
Engineering student

The Men's team edged out the only other two contenders in the category - Singapore Polytechnic (SP) and TP - by a boat's length and came in first with a timing of 2:35.48 at Bedok Reservoir.

However, the Ladies' team did not perform as well, trailing behind TP and Nanyang Polytechnic, coming in third place.

In firm NPDB tradition, the ladies are using their defeat to spur them on in their training for the upcoming race. They are looking to achieve similar success like the Men's team.

Said Tham See Yee, 18, a final-year Business Studies (BS) student and Secretary of the NPDB team, "It is a rough gauge of where the Ladies' team stand among the other competing polys at this moment. From here, we will work [much] harder and cover up the gaps between the top two polys."

"We believe we will perform better in the upcoming July race."

According to Oliver, the team learnt from mistakes made during trainings and is confident that both the Mens' and Ladies' team will achieve good results.

He said, "We need to learn to conquer ourselves first before challenging others."

"We're definitely working towards a good win for the IVP this year. And we're not trying to think about what happened last year with TP. We're trying to [put that behind us] and conquer new [frontiers]."

"[Right now] we're looking to close the gap with the universities and [polys] to achieve personal satisfaction."

Established in 1985 with just 20 men in the team, NPDB has come a long way since its early

beginnings and has become one of the most fearful teams on local waters.

Previous achievements include a Bronze medal and a Silver Medal in the IVP Men category in November 2003 and June 2004 respectively.

The women's team scored a Silver medal and a Bronze in the IVP Ladies category in November 2003 and June 2004 respectively.

The men's and the women's team each scored itself a Plate Final in the Open Men's and Open Ladies' categories.

With the win over TP at the Dragon Boat Championship under the belt, the team looks set to reposition itself and give its competitors a run for their money.

This event was organised by Singapore Dragon Boat Association, Singapore Sports Council and supported by TP. ■

New Plan to Give Every Club its Own Clubhouse

BY AMANDA LIM
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Clubs and societies located at the Sports Complex (Block 18) are currently experiencing cramped and small clubrooms, due to the shortage of space.

According to Mr Siow Chow Sid, Manager of the Student Development & Alumni Relations Office, the school is already looking at ways to help turn around this situation.

There are about two new CCAs which are formed every year.

The number of facilities needed to accommodate the growing number of Co-Curricular Activities (CCAs), however, has not developed in random.

Clubs that need rooms and studios to practise

are often found clamouring to book the limited number of facilities that are available to them.

And it is usually the five music rooms in Block 72 and the Sports Complex that see intense competition for bookings since they are used by more than 10 clubs in NP.

CCAs such as the New Revolving Age (NRA) Dance Club and Dance Sport have to share a room at the Sports Complex (Block 16). Other clubs have to contend with the music rooms at Block 73.

To make things worse, the regular competition between clubs for rooms heightens during certain times of the year.

18-year-old Rebecca Tay, a second-year Multimedia Computing (MMC) student and NRA member, said, "The bookings and schedules

clash when we have our competitions coming up... [During such times, we'll] schedule our trainings [by avoiding] the room when other clubs use it. For example, we schedule our trainings on other days other than Tuesdays because Dance Sport uses [the common CCA room] then."

Mr Siow, 46, the manager for the Student Development & Alumni Relations Office, said, "The rooms are not being utilised during the afternoons. Everyone wants to use the rooms from 6pm to 9pm."

He added, "the immediate way out would be for the different clubs to re-schedule and stagger their training. If some clubs can find a common break time and have their trainings from 3pm to 6pm on weekdays, the music rooms and dance studios will be more fully utilised then."

However, despite such obstacles some CCAs are excelling in their fields with many achievements and honours being raked in thanks to the excellent environment. (Refer to NP's Musical Scene Flourishes, page 11).

To relieve the clubs of their problems, the school is now looking to renovate and restructure the whole of Block 18, which is next to the Sports Complex, next year.

Block 18 will then be used by the CCA groups for the sole purpose of having practice and training sessions. This plan will allow each club to have their own space and clubhouse. This will translate into the sports clubs getting bigger rooms than they already have.

This plan also hopes to integrate the Sports and Cultural clubs and societies. ■