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Can **MARS** and **VENUS** meet?

When a handbook on relationships used for a workshop at Hwa Chong Institution (HCI) contained stereotypical statements, HCI student Agatha Tan wrote a critical piece which soon went viral. We give our take on whether boys and girls see things differently.

#TEAM **MARS**

BY LUKE ASHLEY CHAN

When a girl says "Do I look fat?" she really means "Tell me I'm beautiful." I confess that when I read that I thought it was so true. Did that somehow make me "sexist"? What was the social stigma behind these mixed signals, and were they still true?

In my experience dealing with girls, I do find it hard to figure out what women really want sometimes. Perhaps, they want us to find out and because we bothered, it means we care. But is this always the case though, and did other males feel this way?

I asked a few guys around campus for their views on the handbook. Many I spoke to laughed when reading the statements, agreeing wholeheartedly. 19-year-old Deepan Raj Valluvan (CEC) student chuckled as he said: "This is exactly it. If your girl asks if another girl is pretty, don't say yes! It's a trap!"

Everyone I spoke to agreed with the statements in the handbook, which just goes to show men and women deal with things differently. But one thing was consistent in all their answers: it depends on the girl.

18-year-old Christian Prince from the School of Engineering (SEG) said: "Honestly, it really depends on the girl. We shouldn't generalise based on just what this handbook says," said Christian.

But he too couldn't resist adding a cheeky line: "No matter what or whose fault, the guy always apologises!"

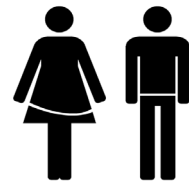
Perhaps couples might shed some light. I asked Vanessa Chan, 19, a student from ITE Central and her boyfriend Jai Kishen, 20, a national serviceman.

They took a sensible approach: girls simply want reassurance. Boys don't need to tell them they look good or read their mind but if they made the effort, it certainly

helped relationships. "Some girls get angry but they don't tell their guys because they want the guys to "man up" without having being told to!" said Vanessa.

So I guess there is some truth to stereotypes after all. Perhaps it's just the way the female mind works, in a more subtle, sophisticated manner. A guy would just charge headfirst into the fold, not coming up for air until they have what they want. Women just aren't like that: they think that men should know where they messed up, and that there is no need to point out the mistake they have made.

There is no cookie cutter solution, no holy grail to consult to learn more about the female mind. Each girl acts differently, and relationships are part and parcel of life. I think Forrest Gump's quote might work for this situation: Girls are like a box of chocolates. You never know what you're going to get. **R**



NO MEANS YES?

On 7 Oct 2014, 17-year-old Hwa Chong Institution student, Agatha Tan, wrote a letter expressing her disappointment in a Focus On The Family (FOTF) Singapore's It's UNcomplicated (IUC) Workshop that her school held.

The same letter later went viral on Facebook. The controversy also received a hearing in Parliament.

She had said that it promoted 'traditional gender roles' and depicted women as being 'hopelessly dependent beings who are totally incapable of surviving without guys'. She was upset that 'the workshop and booklet actively serve to promote rape culture in school'.

On the cover page of the booklet, the words written on it were, "no means yes?" and "yes means no?" Agatha went on to talk about how she objected to these gender stereotypes and said that by telling this to students, they are perpetuating a dangerous message: 'that you should always assume that a girl means something else when really she just means "no".'

Do you get mixed signals from members of the opposite sex?
Tell us your views!

#TEAM **VENUS**

BY SARA KOH

When Agatha's post made its rounds, I went to find out exactly what was listed in the relationship handbook. And indeed, I found many stereotypical statements mainly directed at women more than the men. Some statements included: "If a girl says 'I'm not upset', she really means 'Of course I'm upset!' For boys however, when they say they are tired, then they are tired (no mixed signals there)."

My initial reaction was to agree wholeheartedly with Agatha. Like her, I identified myself as a female who spoke my mind and said what I felt. I see girls in my class who are strong academically, who get perfect grades and lead entire events and they are strong too. I see women in top leadership positions, driving cars and travelling the world so how can this be true? But did my peers feel the same way as Agatha and I did?

I went around campus asking for thoughts and

opinions. Most girls I spoke to agreed that sometimes women don't say what they really feel. Only two out of the five felt the statements were out-dated, stereotypical and cannot be applied to the whole female population.

Michaela Hay, 19 and Cynthia Koh, 20 from School of Technology for the Arts (STA) said some of her male friends shared the same ideas that were portrayed in the handbook.

"Some guys I know have this perception that when a girl says no, they're playing hard to get. Even if they are playing hard to get, you should respect their answers from what you hear, not from what you think they are saying," said Michaela.

Another student, Natalie Ng, 19, a student from the School of Applied Science (SAS) admitted she was guilty of saying the opposite of what she really felt. "Sometimes, when I am not happy with my boyfriend, I don't really tell him. If he asks me if I am

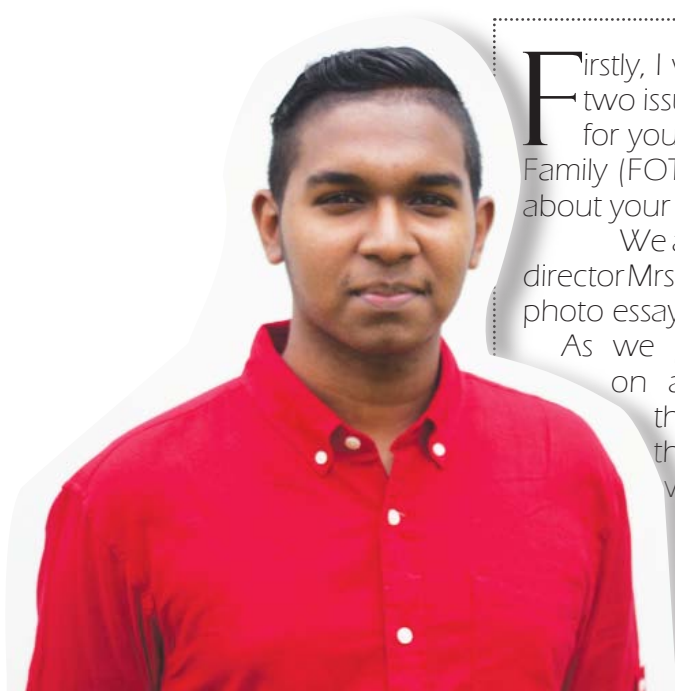
upset, I say no," she said. When I asked her why, she simply shrugged and told me that she wanted to feel as if her boyfriend cared enough to notice that she really wasn't okay and was in fact, upset with him.

It was clear that I wasn't going to get a clear answer. After speaking to my own friends and my fellow students, I realised that a lot of it depended on your individual personality, values and the way you were brought up. No two girls are the same. Sometimes you get a girl who is strong headed and tells it as it is, sometimes you get the opposite.

Sure, women are now more articulate and have more freedom to exercise power in the work place and in personal relationships. But maybe some things don't change; like how they ultimately want to be understood and loved by their other half without them saying anything. And one thing never changes: when we ask our boyfriends if we look fat, they better not tell us the truth. **R**



EDITOR'S NOTE



Firstly, I would like say thanks to everyone who reads The Republican Post. This is the first of two issues that will be put together by this team and we have quite a lot of interesting stories for you. A highlight is our story on Mars vs Venus, following the controversial Focus on the Family (FOTF) saga. Our writers give their take - we'd love to hear what you think. Write to us about your experiences in getting mixed signals, tell us how you see it.

We also have interviews with Senior Minister of State Ms Indranee Rajah and the wife of film director Mrs Eric Khoo. They talk about what it means to be successful. This issue also features a tributary photo essay as we look at how Sri Lanka has rebuilt itself, 10 years on from the Tsunami disaster.

As we prepare to usher in the new year, the writers at Republican Post look back on an eventful 2014 and have compiled the top three albums and games of the year. There is also a list of places to go for Christmas this year. I can't quite believe the year has passed by so quickly. I hope you have had a memorable 2014. Here's to a wonderful new year and merry Christmas.

For more interesting and exclusive stories, please check us out on www.republicanpost.sg

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Mrs Eric Khoo gives rare interview

Ms Kim Eun Choo, better known as being acclaimed Singaporean Film Director, Mr Eric Khoo's wife, recently came down to Republic Polytechnic to spend some time with the students as well as donate to needy students through the "Rose Marie Khoo Foundation".

By JORDON SIMPSON

Ask anyone who is a local film buff and they are likely to tell you about Eric Khoo, one of Singapore's best-known local film makers. Much has been written about him and he is often in the public eye. But when you search for information on his media-shy wife, you come up empty.

Luckily for us, Ms Kim Eun Choo took the time out of her busy schedule to visit Republic Polytechnic (RP) as she attended a tea ceremony, which was arranged to honour the recipients of the Rose Marie Khoo Foundation Bursary Award. This is the second time that the foundation has committed a donation of \$40,000 to the cause.

And she made some time to speak exclusively to The Republican Post after the ceremony.

She first spoke about her mother-in-law, after which the foundation is named. "She stood out because she was always well dressed, yet she was very approachable and down to earth at the same time," said Ms Choo adding that Mrs Rose Marie Khoo treated people from all walks of life well.

Her late mother-in-law was constantly seen in the public eye, having been married to the late business tycoon Mr Khoo Teck Puat who at his prime, owned hotel groups and had large stakes in multi-national banks. Mrs Khoo was well-known for her generosity, and shared the family wealth with the less fortunate.

Money from the fund goes towards scholarships, bursaries and the Student Pocket Money Scheme which are all under the umbrella of the "RP Needy Student Fund". The fund aids students who come from troubled family backgrounds or those who have financial constraints.

Ms Choo married into the family, giving up life as a banker to take care of her four sons with Eric. She said: "Leaving the banking field was a tough decision to make but I applaud those who have a career in finance as well as a flourishing family life."

Her job, she says, is really to be a good wife and mother.

"She stood out because she was always well dressed, yet she was very approachable and down to earth at the same time,"- Ms Kim Eun Choo on the late Mrs Rose Marie Khoo



A WARM HEART: It was all smiles and laughter for Mrs Khoo during the RP donors appreciation tea ceremony.
PHOTO: MUHD ISKANDAR

Ms Choo says she takes the opportunity to add her own creative input to her husband's movies and short films. "Although Eric has a team of people that he works with to generate ideas, he always talks to me and asks for my point of view as well," she said.

Which is her favourite movie of his? "Twelve Stories" and "Be with me". "I like that because they have a strong message about family." Would any of her sons, all teenagers, take in her father's footsteps?

"Yes, my oldest. He has shown a huge interest in film and the arts from a young age. He is currently working on two short films, having already directed one," said the proud mum.

Ms Choo still keeps in touch with some of her colleagues but has ruled out going back to the working world. "My friends have told me that the financial world has changed so much, so there is no way I am going to go back there," she said with a laugh.

As a parting shot to RP students, Ms Choo said: "I think that it is important for one to pursue a career in something that is of interest to them, which you find a passion in, because it really affects your whole life and eventually who you find in terms of relationships and friends." **R**

Do you really need that degree?

Education is evolving in Singapore and as students race against each other to outmuscle their peers in schools, the changes to be rolled out by the Government under ASPIRE may well change mindsets about the importance of a degree. But it may also prove to be a challenge.
DEEPANRAJ GANESAN reports.

The need for a degree in Singapore may not be so indispensable anymore, at least according to Miss Indranee Rajah, Senior Minister of State for Law and Education.

Miss Indranee was in Republic Polytechnic (RP) at a town hall event to attend a dialogue session involving student ambassadors from RP as she gathered responses to the Applied Study in Polytechnics and ITE Review (ASPIRE) committee.

The 51-year-old Member of Parliament, who led the committee tasked with improving the quality of education and job prospects of ITE and polytechnic students, found time to speak to The Republican Post as she shared her views on the need for a degree here.

"It's correct that for the longest time that has been the perception that is the only path but as employers will tell you that's not all they look for. There are some jobs and some industries where obviously the degree is relevant and necessary," she said when asked about how things have changed.

"There are some other jobs where you may not need the degree immediately or you may not need it at all," she added.

One of the committee's 10 recommendations involves helping students make more informed education and career choices. To that end, the committee proposed placing more trained career guidance officers at polytechnics and ITE college to provide counselling session and activities. The Government, which has accepted the recommendations, believes the proposals will provide more opportunities for Singaporeans to realise their potential.

Woon Jie Min, 18, a Diploma in Mass Communication student was at the town hall dialogue session and had her sights set on a degree.

"I feel that there is still a need for a degree in Singapore, especially now with the competitive job sector, I feel that having a degree will help boost my resume," said Jie Min.

When The Republican Post spoke to her

mother, Mrs May Lai, an accountant, she echoed her daughter's sentiments and felt that a degree represented a full circle in an individual's education.

Mrs Lai said: "During our children's kindergarten graduation, they wore a graduation cap. They need to wear a graduation cap during their university graduation days too, and then their education cycle will be considered as complete."

She continued: "I personally feel that being a degree holder will give you the edge over others." It was just this mindset that ASPIRE has to address. Miss Indranee, however, believed an alternative pathway is vital for the nation.

"After graduation from Polytechnic you work and you can either progress just based on the skills and experience you learned on the job or you can supplement this with professional certifications or supplement it by going for further studies. There are multiple pathways and not one size fits all," she said. **R**



Sri Lanka 10 years on...

To celebrate the 10th year anniversary of the Asian Tsunami, 14 Mass Communication students visited different parts of Sri Lanka that were badly hit by the disaster in 2004. Their six-day Student Overseas Trip culminated in a documentary of the lives lost and how those perished were never forgotten.



By HAIQAL SARI AND MURSYID HASSAN



CURIOUS: A child peers through a window of his classroom, intrigued by the world evolving around him. PHOTO: HAIQAL SARI



REMEMBER: Children dressed in white at the Mid Autumn Festival, which was held to celebrate the occasion as well as to honour those who were killed in the tsunami a decade ago. PHOTO: MUHAMMAD MURSYID B HASSAN



BRIGHT FUTURE: Their playground may not be the best, but it certainly did not stop children from having a fun time with students from Republic Polytechnic. PHOTO: MUHAMMAD MURSYID B HASSAN



RAY OF HOPE: Devotees praying and thanking Buddha for the progress of their community since the tsunami. PHOTO: MUHAMMAD MURSYID B HASSAN

MUSIC FOR THE SOUL: Ariani Adam, 19, a Diploma in Mass Communication student, performing in front of the schoolchildren in the kindergarten while filming her trailer for the "Rebuilding" segment of the documentary. PHOTO: HAIQAL SARI





TECH TIME: Once the children at the kindergarten were introduced to the swanky mobile phones of the RP students, there was no pulling them away from these handheld devices. **PHOTO: HAIQAL SARI**



HAPPY: The children at the Singapore-Sri Lanka Friendship Kindergarten were more than happy to dance along to music while the crew captured them on tape. **PHOTO: HAIQAL SARI**



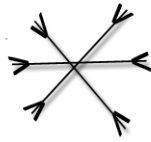
EMPTY: Ruins are what have been left behind when the tsunami hit and swept away not only the houses but the lives in them. **PHOTO: MUHAMMAD MURSYID B HASSAN**



HEARTBREAKING: Gruesome photographs of the tsunami's victims adorn the walls of the tiny tsunami museum in Hikkaduwa, a short distance from the beach hit by the disaster. **PHOTO: HAIQAL SARI**



Ring in the SEASON!



By SAMANTHA NELSON

Whether you are spending the occasion alone or with your loved ones, our Christmas guide has lined up a series of activities to make it a memorable time for everyone.

"Walking in a Winter Wonderland" – Your guide to festive gifts & food.

1.



PUBLIC GARDENS CHRISTMAS MARKETS

Having a Christmas Party? The Public Garden Christmas Markets are a must to visit for all your festive decorative needs. The markets feature a variety of stalls with over 150 vendors selling exclusive gifts & baked products.

Where: Level 16 TripleOne Somerset, 111 Somerset Road
When: 13th and 14th Dec from 1pm to 7pm

"I'm Dreaming of a White Christmas" – A sight to behold

Voted as "Best New Tourist Attraction" by ASEAN Tourism Forum, the Wonder Full - Light and Water Spectacular showcase is back to entertain you with its stunning 13-minute showpiece of visual effects by the waterfront. This is the largest light and water spectacle show in Southeast Asia.

2.



MBS' WONDERFUL-LIGHT & WATER

Where: 10 Bayfront Avenue
When: Sunday - Thursday: 8pm, 9.30pm
Friday & Saturday: 8pm, 9.30pm, 11pm

3.



TANGLIN MALL 'SNOWFALL'

Singapore may not have winter but don't let that stop you from heading down to Tanglin Mall where the annual 'Snowfall' is held. Cover yourself in mountains of cloud-like foam amongst Christmas trees and sleighs. Set a date for you, your family or even your close buddies to the snow fest.

Where: Tanglin Mall
When: Till 2nd Jan 2015, Avalanche at 7:30pm and snow at 7:45pm.
Price: Free

Where: Orchard Road
When: Saturday 15 November 2014 at 6pm (Light up Ceremony)

A yearly affair at the heart of all Christmas celebrations! Orchard Road's Christmas Light Up Ceremony, will have President Tony Tan as Guest-of-Honour at Shaw House Urban Plaza on Saturday, 15th Nov to kick start the festivities. Whip out your cameras and be prepared to be amazed at the dazzling lights that illuminate Orchard Road. Till the 1st of January, the light up will take place from 6:30pm to 6:00am on Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve, 6:30pm to 2:00am on Fridays and Saturdays and 6:30pm to Midnight on all other days. Take a walk down with your family and friends to usher in the festive season with a bang!

4.



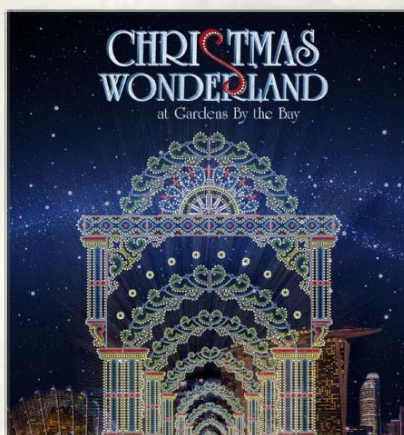
ORCHARD ROAD LIGHT UP CEREMONY

"Jingle Bell Rock" – A walk down childhood lane

5.

More lights await you at Marina Bay as Gardens by the Bay hosts its very own Christmas Wonderland! Described by Gardens by the Bay as one "Nestled in the grove of Singapore's green jewels", the event features Festive Markets adapted from all over Europe including UK's Hyde Park, and France's Champs Elysees Markets Avenue. Shopping, food, and handmade crafts will be available for sale to help you with your endless Christmas shopping.

Where: Gardens by the Bay
When: 29th Nov to 1st Jan 2015
Price: Free



CHRISTMAS WONDERLAND AT GARDENS BY THE BAY

"The First Noel" – Giving back to those in need

6.

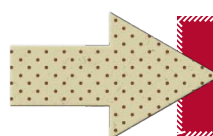


CELEBRATE CHRISTMAS IN SINGAPORE

Where: Orchard Road, Tong Building Plaza (24th Dec)
When: 18th to 23rd Dec, 24th Dec, 25th Dec

Christmas is also the season of giving and one way to do that is through an organisation known as CCIS – Celebrate Christmas in Singapore. Night performances will be held along the pedestrian walkways of Orchard Road. Join in their Mass Carolling and sing-along event on Christmas Eve at the Tong Building Plaza. To end it off, a Christmas concert will be held on the night of 25th December with interactive activities to encourage giving back to the community.

With all these wonderful activities in store, rest assured that you will have a **Merry Christmas** as you spend quality time with your loved ones this season! **R**



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Purr-fect spot for cat lovers

By CARLISSIA KEW

There are ice-cream cafes, hipster cafes, middle-eastern cafes and now, there are cat cafes – where people get to eat and play with feline friends on the loose.



HELLO KITTY: It is hard to keep your eyes off Elly The Tabby, one of the resident cats at the cat cafe located on the second level of Bugis Village. **PHOTO: SHIONA OOSHA**

It is quite a sight stepping into The Cat Café. You smell savoury pastries, lasagne and freshly brewed coffee and then you see the different breeds of furry felines lazing at every beanbag, cat house or ledge they can find.

The Cat Cafe is a perfect balance between food and cat-therapy, serving as a platform where cat enthusiasts who do not have the luxury of owning cats back home can come together and hang out with the cats.

“My parents are not fond of cats, so I can’t keep one at home. Such cat cafes provide a safe and comfortable environment for people like us to have a chance in interacting with cats,” said School of Hospitality (SOH) student Yeo Wei En, 17.

Admiring the cats also creates an opportunity for couples to bond too.

“We get to spend time together here and relax after a very busy day of school activities,” said Neo Wei Kian, 17, who brought his girlfriend to the cat café as a surprise because of her love for cats.

The cats may seem familiar as they are either from the community or abandoned by their owners. Playing a part in giving back to society, The Cat Cafe works hand in hand with charity organisations such as Touch Young Arrows and the Cat Welfare Society on educating the public as well

as contributing to their efforts financially.

The Cat Café is also the only one here that only charges a one-time entry fee, giving patrons’ unlimited time to focus on adoring the cats without worrying about having to pay subsequent hourly charges.

“We didn’t like the per hour model as it has too many restrictions for patrons to enjoy interacting with the cats. We felt that time should not be a concern when it comes to such interactions,” explained co-owner of The Cat Café, Jefferson Soh.

Of course, with freedom comes a full house cafe. Thus, patrons might have to be placed on waiting lists during peak periods before they can get their dosage of cat therapy. However, due to the large space, patrons usually have to wait for just half an hour before they can enter the cat café.

The Cat Café, which opened in June, follows another cat café - Neko No Niwa - which opened earlier this year. Three other cat cafes that have sprung up over the past few months include The Company Of Cats (6B Mosque Street), Meomi Cat Café (668 N Bridge Rd) and Cuddles Cat Café (Scape).

Singapore’s very first cat café Neko No Niwa - which means Cat Garden in Japanese - was built in memory of a beloved cat called Marbles which passed away. Owned by Tan Sue Lynn, 36 and Samuel Isaac Chua, in his 40s, the duo now parent three cats: Mitsu, Genji, and Rei.

Their experiences of cat cafes in Japan was all it took for them to take a liking to the respect Japanese cat cafes for their cats; something they wanted to bring back home.

“The atmospheres in Japanese Cat Cafés are very calm and peaceful. There is

something about them that is appreciated by cats and can be very well enjoyed by people,” said Samuel.

A major factor for a cat café is location. Located at 54A Boat Quay, the route to Neko No Niwa cat café is not exactly a straightforward one. When Samuel and Sue were scouring a location for the café, they wanted cat lovers to experience serendipity while seeking out the place.

“You don’t find the cat, the cat finds you,” said Samuel.

Centre for Enterprise and Communication student, Rachel Ng Ru Yi, 18, is one of many cat lovers who spends an hour and a half of her time at cat cafes with her friends since its opening.

“The tranquillity you experience when you’re in the café makes you feel relaxed instantly. When you see all the cats lazing around, you can’t help but want to do the same,” recalled Rachel.

However, beneath the platform of being just a cat café for passionate cat enthusiasts to relax around furry felines, there is a bigger message that Neko No Niwa wants to shed light on since opening its doors in December last year.

The café hopes to bring awareness on the growing issue of community cats that are abandoned and homeless; a problem that many are oblivious to.

“With the rising number of abandoned cats, I would think twice before adopting one. It is incredibly selfish to adopt a cat just because it is “cute”, because responsibilities are another thing you have to take into consideration,” said Rachel. **R**

Spotlight on sterilising stray cats

By Teo Vicki



CAT ME UP!: Students queue up at the face painting booth at Meowcon to get themselves look kittish. **PHOTO: PHOTO IG**

We’ve all seen endless cat videos and pictures of cute cats on social media. But beyond the fun, there are serious issues to do with the welfare of these feline creatures and one main message was the importance of sterilisation. To bring home this point to RP students, the Cat Welfare Society and Republic Polytechnic’s ‘Purrject Runaway’ team organised ‘Meow Con’.

“Meow Con’s primary objective is to raise

awareness for Cat Welfare Society and its mission to sterilise cats. We also wanted to advocate students on the importance on sterilisation,” said Afiq Naquiddin B Aris Fadillah, 18, Executive Committee member for the ‘Purrject Runaway’ team when asked about the purpose of the event.

Along with a kitty corner in which students could take photos and admire the cats, a henna, face painting and popcorn booth was also set up. All of these were naturally a big hit with students who came by.

Ms Nurul Ecah, 24, Project Manager of Cat Welfare Society added: “There are a lot of students who come by and genuinely ask what is the importance of sterilisation, they ask why the cats are here for adoption, what is the problem we face on a daily basis with cats.”

Nur Hasif bin Hasny, 18, a first year Mass Communication student learnt to appreciate these creatures better. “After school, I’m very tired but when I see a cat and I get very soft inside, I tend to

forget about the stress. They play an important role in our community so we need to care for them responsibly,” he said. **R**



SNAP AWAY: One of the popular booths at Meowcon where students were able to snap away photos with the wide range of props ready for them. **PHOTO: PHOTO IG**





Salad stall draws huge crowds

It is hardly the food of choice for teenagers who love their fried chicken. But the Crowded Bowl salad stall at the lawn canteen is proving an unlikely hit.

By KYLIE NG



DELECTABLE: Living up to its name, The Crowded Bowl, people dedicate their first or second breaks to queue as long as half an hour just for healthy eating. **PHOTO: NUR HUMAIRA WAHAB**

If you take a trip down to the LAWN food court during lunch hours, there is a good chance you will come across the sight of a snaking queue. Sometimes the lines reach the walkway; sometimes even beyond. As you reach closer to the front of the crowd, you see that these people are all waiting for salads.

Yes, salads. Who would have thought vegetarian salads would be so popular?

The Crowded Bowl first made its appearance at the lawn canteen in October, becoming the newest addition to the RP food scene. It quickly established itself as one of the most popular places to eat. Alicia Teo, a second year Diploma in Wellness, Lifestyle,

and Spa Management (DWLSM) student said she has waited as long as half an hour.

The Crowded Bowl was opened by 28-year-old Soh Yong Joo, a Nanyang Technological University (NTU) graduate. After completing his business degree, he wanted to be his own boss. His family was already in the vegetarian food business and so it was a natural that he would suggest a salad stall. When he saw an ad in the newspapers, he jumped at it.

"It's a very big risk, you know, to actually come up with this vegetarian salad concept. But I believe that a lot of people would actually want to eat healthily, you know, try to maybe not every day but once a week to cleanse themselves. I believe that there is a demand [for healthy eating]," said Mr Soh.

For \$3, students can go for the regular bowl with two extra toppings (on top of the greens). These range from tomatoes, corn, apple salad, to mock meat and bean curd skin. If you want a more filling meal, you can add a premium choice: potato salad, pasta, or olive rice. And you finish it off with one of three types of salad dressings.

Like many others, Alicia Teo is bowled over by the taste "It tastes good and it is affordable. It's actually quite cheap and quite yummy." **R**

Muse VII transcends dance to touch hearts

By NURANISHA BTE ABDUL RAHIM

The annual showcase of dance talents from Republic Polytechnic's CREATE Interest Groups is back yet again for its seventh time. With its theme "Artis Tree", the festival saw a fusion of different performances ranging from the Latin Dancesport to Malay Dance and to Hip Hop routines, all in efforts to bring an out-of-the-ordinary collaboration.

Energetic Latin dancers lit up the stage first with a flamboyant flavour to the hit song Stay On The Floor, combining steps of Cha Cha, Rumba and Paso Doble. Their hard work and dedication certainly paid off. "It was two months' worth of gruelling training week after week, it was really stressful and tiring but we made it in the end," said 19-year-old Cassandra Chan.

Social issues were involved in Malay Dance's dance ensemble on honouring and respecting the elderly. Choreographed by Mr Fathurrahman Said, the story moved the hearts of many, including 18-year-old Allson Neo, who termed it as his favourite performance.

"After watching the dance, I was reminded of how fleeting time can be especially for our elderly, and how time with them is limited," he shared.

Other highlights of the exhibit included performances from Hip Hop IG which stole the hearts of the audience with their fast paced moves to Nae Nae. The Indian Cultural IG presented a twist of a modern Bollywood folk known as Bharata Natyam.

For first time performers like Renuha D/O Pannirselvam, 17, there was pressure to do well and live up to expectations.

"It was mentally tiring and physically challenging for us because we are not all trained dancers. We had to step up our game and match



TAKING THE STAGE: Dancers from Modern Dance IG immersed themselves into their choreography by showcasing their dance with elegant movements and complimenting their dance with their facial expressions that impressed the audience for the night **PHOTO: IFFAH YASMIN**

up with other dancers," the Pharmaceutical Science student said.

While all good things must come to an end, there was no other way to conclude the string of dance performances than with a bang. Dancers from the participating IGs, which also involved

Wushu and Modern Dance, collaborated to highlight the celebration of different cultures and dance forms. With pop hits like "Bang Bang" playing during the grand finale, MUSE VII truly ended with a bang. **R**



Abacadabra, here's the Magic IG!

Everyone in RP knows about Replug, Dragon Boat, Soccer and Create. But there are small but interesting Interest Groups (IGs). NAADIAH BADIB stumbles upon some men who perform magic tricks.

While athletes are put through their paces for the POL-ITE games and dancers practise their routines in studios for the Reflections showcase, students from the Magic Interest Group master their tricks and moves with the help of their alumni in a small lecture room tucked in the corner of W3.

All their tricks, ranging from stage illusion and close-ups, were passed down from their alumni. The Magic IG has produced several members who have graduated to become part-time magicians. Every week, they would come down to their juniors' practice and share their experiences.

"Learning from them (the alumni) helps us to know how to react and handle the situation if someone were to spoil or expose the trick," said the Vice President of Magic IG, Desmond Ho Hou Chun, 20.

The group attends magic performances that allow them to meet other students of the same interest from other schools. Their bonds have allowed Singapore Polytechnic's Magic members to frequent their practices and hold mini exchange programmes to learn from one another.

"It is motivating to have friends who share common interests as they not only provide support but help me to do better in my performances," said Magic IG President, Ooi Zen Yen, 20.

With the help of DVDs, members constantly look out for ways to do better tricks. The facilitator-in-charge of Magic IG believes that the execution of a magic trick does not rely solely on props or their teacher, but the interaction between the performer and his audience.

"Magicians are similar to comedians. They perform simple tricks but because they are able to entertain their audience well, magic becomes secondary as the audience would be engaged in their energy and charisma on stage," said Senior Lecturer for Centre for Educational Development Dr Loke Han Ying, 44.

A magician himself, Dr Loke formed the Magic IG back in 2003. What initially started as a small club

has grown into a team of more than 30 members and they have performed for renowned companies like Toshiba and Kuriya.

Currently, the 11-year-old IG has several competition titles to its name. In June this year, they clinched both the first prize and the second-runner up positions in The Fantabulous Magic Challenge.

"Being the first polytechnic to set up Magic IG, we have exposure to more performances since the TRCC theatre provides us the venue for our solos," Dr Loke said.

"I hope that this club can allow others to appreciate magic as an art and spread the message that this interest is indeed for everyone," he added.

R



EVERYDAY I'M SHUFFLING: Magic IG's Vice-President, Desmond Ho Hou Chun, showing one of the many ways to shuffle a deck of cards. The deck of cards are the cheapest props for a magician whereas buying other props would cost them a sum of money which they would have to buy for each magician in their IG in order to learn the tricks.

PHOTO: NUR HUMAIRA WAHAB

Running a restaurant is no walk in the park

We chat with 39-year-old Associate Lecturer from the Diploma in Restaurant and Culinary Operations, Mr Reuben Anand Thyagarajan who brings years of experience from the food and beverage industry.

BY DEEPANRAJ GANESAN



SEASONED VETERAN: Mr Reuben Anand Thyagarajan, has been involved in the food and beverage industry for 14 years and is passionate about sharing his knowledge with students. PHOTO: RYAN LIM

Q: What are the kind of ingredients needed to become a successful businessman or is down to pure luck?

A: The most important ingredient will be the ability to communicate effectively with different people and the ability to understand the person you are talking to, their background and adjusting your character to connect with them. Once you connect with someone, you can accomplish a lot together. That ability to communicate and understand people is vital.

Q: You spent eight years in Melbourne, Australia where you taught as well. How are Australian students different from Singapore students?

A: The Australian students are more outspoken and not at all shy to express their views, even the sensitive ones. Singaporean students tend to stick more to the guidelines when they are in the classroom whereas Australian students bring in more of their experiences, their personal stories and other aspects of campus life during discussion. To me, Singaporean students are self-conscious.

Q: You have been a manager at a restaurant and bar in Australia before. Is managing a restaurant all about ensuring you serve great food or is there more to it?

A: Managing a restaurant or any other hospitality establishment is almost like being a circus juggler. You have to manage the staff, deal with the different guests. If you just satisfy them all at a superficial level and go by the book, you may be able to get by but if you really want your guest to feel like they have had a special experience then you need to understand what it takes and customize their experience according to their wants.

Q: You have a business catering food to foreign workers. Was there anything interesting that you learned from that experience?

A: Through some of the consulting projects I do, I met someone who happened to be the facilities manager of a shipyard. The shipyard has more than 100 foreign workers, coming from China, Myanmar, India and Bangladesh. So we actually took over the project to cater food for them. The interesting thing was seeing how foreigners consume almost 500 grams of rice each. I never knew one can actually eat that much at one go!

Q: The food and beverage industry is a huge one but can one really be a millionaire from this industry and if so what does it take?

A: Yes, a millionaire and more I would say. It doesn't mean you have to set up a big restaurant even. Even a kiosk with an item that everybody loves and you have long queues of people who just crave your food, it shows you have hit the formula. If you look at the guys who opened Mr Bean, or even a good hawker stall, it started from scratch with a bit of experimentation here and there and they are wealthy. R



Trick or Treat in Woodlands hits the spot

BY NUR AZIRA KHAIRIL ANUAR

Think of Woodlands and most Singaporeans would come up with two things: going to JB or “very far”. But this northern town has fast become THE place to watch the American Halloween tradition of going “trick or treating”.

Jennifer Samuels, 40, an Information Technician dressed up as Batman’s side-kick, Batgirl, says she wouldn’t miss it. “I grew up in the U.S, so trick or treating here with my children relives my childhood memories and this is the only place closest to home.”

As major Halloween events in Singapore like Sentosa Spooktacular and Halloween Horror Nights at Singapore Universal Studios go out of the way to scare people, Woodlands Woodgrove remains one of the popular hotspots come October 31st. Located near Woodlands Ave 1, it transforms into a creepy fairyland on this day.

The trail starts at Woodgrove Avenue, where you can make your way through the crowds along the street of the ‘creep-tastic’ neighbourhood from 6 p.m. and “till the candy runs out” according to locals. The roads in the neighbourhood were blocked by private security

to ensure it would be a safe pedestrian zone for crowds to haul for candies not only from door to door.

From gravestones, demons, ghouls at the front porches and to billowing ghosts hanging on the trees, these decorations sent shivers down the spine of many as they walked down the street. 19-year-old Era Marsita Ramle who was there with her friends, said: “It is just like how I’ve seen in the movies!”

The crowd and their array of costumes make this a must see too: toddlers dressed as Minions, old folks as vampires, expats and locals who were princesses and villains, all clearly put in a great deal of effort. Even pets got in on the action, little dogs were dressed as hot dog buns, carrots and ghosts.

Most people we spoke to said they like how it feels so welcoming. “I like how everybody is mixing around- you can just talk to anyone here. If we went to Sentosa’s haunted house, you just get from one jump scare to another and that’s about it,” said Joyce Chan, 17, a first-year student from Ngee Ann Polytechnic.

Another visitor was Mohd Fared



TRICK OR TREAT: Excited children were racing from one house to another as soon as the gates were open.

PHOTO: SABRINA MUHLESEDDIN

Makmon, 34, who came all the way from the West with his family, after he heard about it. “Here, you do not even need to pay to get yourself immersed in the Halloween spirit. Admission is free and in return, you get to experience a traditional Halloween at Woodgrove Drive,” he said. **R**

ICE CREAM CAFES SPRING UP IN THE NORTH

NADIA NATASHA ZAPERI checks out three new ice-cream cafes that have sprouted in the neighbourhood.

THE DAILY SCOOP



Among all three cafes, The Daily Scoop is the most well-known. They started off with a small cafe at Clementi Arcade off Sunset Way, Chips Bee Garden and now Sembawang Cottage. Inside their latest outlet, the focal point of the 30-seat ice-cream parlour are their walls filled with colourful cartoon characters.

The Daily Scoop offers the most reasonable price among all three cafes, offering \$6.20 for a set of waffle or brownie with a generous scoop of ice-cream. The cafe have a total of more than 40 hand-churned ice-cream flavours on rotation.

Flavours range from unique flavours such as chilli chocolate, local flavours such as Chendol and Mao Shan Wang, to their popular salted mister brown and strawberry shortcake. Patrons could choose to have it on cone, brownie or on warm waffles drizzled with chocolate sauce.

369 Sembawang Road #01-05
Sembawang Cottage, Singapore 758382
Opening Hours: Mon - Thu: 11am - 10pm
Fri and Sat: 11am - 10.30pm
Sun: 2pm - 10pm

HOLY COW CREAMERY



Opened in early September this year, Holy Cow Creamery is simply decorated: white washed walls, polished concrete floor, wooden tables. The 45-seater cafe, which includes both indoor and outdoor areas, gets about 250 customers a day on weekdays and 400 on weekends.

But the star of this heartland cafe is its crispy waffles paired with ice-cream (\$6.50 for classic, \$7.50 for premium). Customers could also opt for a scoop of classic ice-cream (\$2.50) on a cone or cup if they are just dropping by. Popular flavours include mao shan wang (durian), kookie monster, salted gula melaka and thai milk tea.

292 Yishun St 22 #01-291
Singapore 760292
Opening Hours: Tue - Sun: 11am - 10pm
(Closed on Monday)

MOOTIME



Just like Holy Cow Creamery, Mootime is also a concept cafe located opposite Sembawang Shopping Centre. Grass-like carpet, leaves decal on the walls and cow cushions on the sofa, Mootime is styled like a garden, capturing patrons' heart on first sight.

Opened in late August, Mootime consumers consists of mostly teenagers and families. Married couple Shen Nansheng, 31 and Emily Sim, 31 are the duo behind this family-oriented cafe. The cafe was a result of Mr Shen's passion to prepare ice-cream, never mind that he who makes the ice-cream himself - has a day job as an IT business development manager.

The joint churns out 14 flavours of ice-cream almost daily. Flavours include smooth and creamy Horlicks and popular choices like Hazelnut, Cookies and cream and salted gula Melaka. While you can order waffles with its ice-cream (\$7), Mootime offers assorted home-made cakes such as Oreo and durian cheesecake, strawberry shortcake and chocolate fudge cake as well. (\$5.50- \$6 per slice).

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Top 3 Games of the Year 2014

By TRISTAN LOH

Destiny

Platform: XBOX ONE/360, PLAYSTATION 3/4



PHOTO: GAMESPOT

FIFA 15

Platform: ALL PLATFORMS



PHOTO: EASPORTS

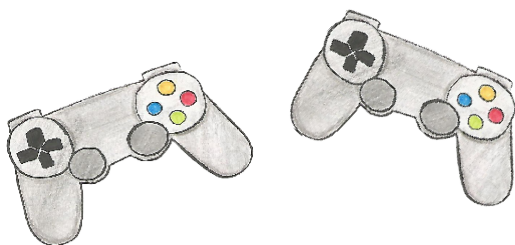
Assassin's Creed: UNITY

Platform: XBOX 1, PLAYSTATION 4 & PC



PHOTO: UBISOFT

As humanity is pushed to the brink of extinction, your journey begins as a guardian, alongside many others set to defend the planets against the tides of darkness. With an unprecedented variety of FPS (First Person Shooter) gameplay alongside an incredible storyline set within the boundaries of our solar system, it truly is hard to find another game as rich and addictive as this one. Whether it's story-based campaigns, cooperative play or the classic player versus player, the game delivers on all fronts, for all moods and all types of players. With a sequel already in the works, Destiny is one game not to be missed.



An evolutionary leap for the billion dollar franchise. The title's crown jewel is definitely its' stunning visuals that will keep you glued to your seat. Every bit of detail from the grass on the pitch to player expressions has been crafted to perfection. With over 600 new emotional reactions, players would fight after bad tackles or fall to the ground in disappointment after a missed shot. But what is most impressive is its incredible gameplay, an immense improvement from its predecessor, FIFA 14.

Refined dribbling, tackling, foot races for a free ball and shot taking, the entire package is organic, larger than life. Superstars like Cristiano Ronaldo are impossible to stop when he bombs down the wings. It would take an experienced defender to stop the likes of Lionel Messi as he dribbles past players. Fans have so much to look forward to in what is the benchmark of all FIFA games. A visual masterpiece, with one of the best gameplays the FIFA series has ever seen; EA has definitely scored on this one.

With the other big releases out of the way, Assassin's Creed: Unity is definitely on the top of the list for the most anticipated game of the year. The 5th edition of the AC series is set in Paris during the 1789 French Revolution; you take on the role as Arno, a master assassin on a path of redemption in an attempt to expose the true powers of behind the Revolution and seek revenge for his father's death. For all its previous editions, the fans have longed for a cooperative play and Ubisoft has finally answered with, the franchise's very first cooperative multiplayer that allows up to 4 players to engage in narrative-driven missions, from big profile assassinations to casual exploration of the open world. AC: Unity boasts a new reinvented fighting system, a full-scale open-world Paris and improved parkour mechanics for fans to enjoy. The game offers so many improvements for die-hard fans of the series. Set to hit stores on the 14th of November, AC: Unity is a must-have. **R**

Top 3 Singles of The Year 2014



2014 has been one of the best in recent years for the music industry has seen. From lively dance numbers to emotional ballads, we've all been exposed to a slice of music paradise over the last year. But which were the top three hits that we just can't get enough of?

By THUSHENA GANESH

All About That Bass Meghan Trainor

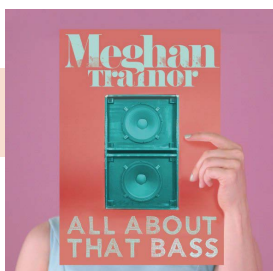


PHOTO: EPICRECORDS

Two years of ceaseless song-writing was how long it took before the young singer from Nantucket, United States burst onto the music scene with this infectious banger, which soared to the top of the billboard charts only a few weeks after it was released.

The song's recurring bass, coupled with an infectious hip-hop beat, makes you want to get up and "shake that booty", no matter where you are. However, the main reason for the song's success lies in its body positive message. 17 year old Dumitra Yoganantham from the Diploma of Bio-Medical Sciences says that the song helped her to move past her insecurities. "There aren't usually many songs that glorify a curvier body type, but the first time I actually listened to the lyrics, I finally felt okay with the size of my body, I finally felt that being curvy was good!"

Shake It Off Taylor Swift



PHOTO: STEREOGUM

The second must-have on your playlist is this quirky pop anthem, fresh off Taylor Swift's new album 1989. The blue-eyed bubbly blonde, who is well known for writing break-up anthems about her ex-lovers, has strayed completely from her country style-music in this particular number.

The song's success is owed to its bouncy beats coupled with a rather lively, eccentric rhythm that is perfect to groove out to on a Saturday night with your friends!

Stay With Me Sam Smith

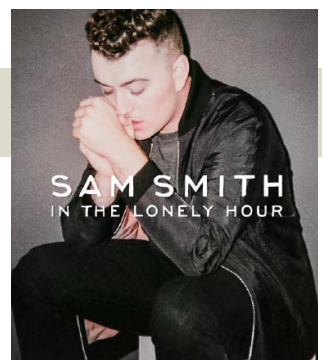


PHOTO: STEREOGUM

Completely unlike the two upbeat tracks previously mentioned, Sam Smith's emotional ballad has a more mellow feel to it. "Oh won't you stay with me, cause' you're all I need..." the 22-year-old British singer croons, so gently, that the verse sounds almost like a beautiful lullaby. Sam's soulful voice, paired with the gospel choir in the background, will grab you by your heartstrings and get you hooked instantly. Whether you're in love, or out of it, this soothing love song is assured to give you chills; from the sheer emotion oozing out of it. **R**



Bonding Republicans through sport

By YOGARAJ PANDITURAI

A record number of participants took part in this year's Battle Republic Annual Games (BRAG). Established for RP students to find a common bond through sports, this year's event saw 772 students competing across a variety of games. The number is about 25 per cent more, compared to the figure in 2013.

More staff and alumni also took part this year. Over 450 staff participated in this year's games, about 70 per cent more compared to the number in 2013. Twenty-four alumni came back for this year's games, compared to just four in 2013.

While it is known as an arena for RP students to showcase their sporting prowess, this year's games - held

between October 27 and November 20 - witnessed students playing a greater role in organising the event.

Student representatives who formed the organising committee could decide which of the shortlisted sports would be played. As a result, new events such as frisbee and handball were added to this year's line-up.

The Student Organising Committee, is part of an effort by the Office of Student and Graduate Affairs to get RP students to play a more active role in organising the annual games. Under the move, each school was assigned two sports directors and their roles included overseeing recruitment, selection, and training of the teams for all events and activities.

Florence Yap Jia Yi, a year 2



GIRL POWER: To be part of BRAG, each team had to consist of a few girls. Even though it was a game where boys were bound to pull each, they gave up their pretty dresses and tried their best to dribble the ball and pass it to their team mates, hopefully to assist a goal.

PHOTO: NUR HUMAIRA WAHAB

student who served as the deputy sports director for the School of Infocomm (SOI), felt that publicising the games was a challenge. "It was hard to get people to participate in BRAG and spread the message around, as it is not really known to the people in SOI," she said. Finding replacements for participants who backed out at the last moment was also a challenge. Nevertheless, Putri Elissa Elias, who headed the student organising committee, was encouraged by the overall experience. "I felt joyful, especially when participants who might not even know each other tell me how great the match was and how they wished that they could have more matches," said the 19-year-old from School of Applied Sciences. **R**

Humble beginnings to high honour

Sometimes, confidence can be elusive, victory fleeting and pain a constant companion.

By F NATHASHA LOPEZ

"I gained more respect from people after the Asian games," - Yan Ni

A decade ago, Tan Yan Ni was overweight and a target for bullies. The Republic Polytechnic student is now having the last laugh.

Yan Ni overcame a last-minute injury to clinch a bronze medal in wushu at September's Asian Games, making her one of the best in the continent in the Chinese martial art of changquan. The 17-year-old had clinched a silver medal at the South East Asian (SEA) Games in the same event last December.

Yan Ni was nine years old when she picked up the sport. She was having a meal at a food court with her siblings when a commotion nearby prompted her to find out more.

"It was a wushu class," Yan Ni recalled. "So my two older brothers and I decided to pick it up together on my birthday."

Yan Ni picked up wushu with the initial aim of losing weight and living a healthier lifestyle, but her progress impressed her coaches and eventually led to a national team call up when she was 12.

However, Yan Ni's initial national team experience was far from rosy. "I felt quite demoralised because I wasn't selected for any competitions when I first made the national team," said the Diploma in Sports and Exercise Sciences student. "I



FIESTY: One cannot be fooled by her petite build for she packs a whole lot of punch on stage. PHOTO: AZMI B ATHNI

only managed to go for my first competition after five years in the national team."

Her big break came at last December's SEA Games in Myanmar, where she claimed Singapore's first silver medal at the Games. Yan Ni almost didn't make the team - she had initially been rejected by Singapore National Olympic Council selectors because of a lack of results. An appeal was then lodged and Yan Ni eventually made the team.

Yan Ni's success in Myanmar did not go unnoticed and she was selected to represent Singapore at this year's Asian Games in Incheon, South Korea.

The Asian Games also provided its share of challenges for Yan Ni. In the days leading up to the event, she developed a painful bone spur on her toe. Instead of a shot of adrenaline, Yan Ni was plagued by constant thoughts of withdrawing from the competition.

"It was a horrible period because I wanted to withdraw one week before the event," she said. "But I spoke to one of my coaches who talked me out of quitting."

At Incheon, Yan Ni paid meticulous attention to perfecting the minor details of her routine. She also applied multiple layers of sponge to protect her toe from the injury. Up against seasoned competitors from across Asia, Yan Ni set her sights on a top eight finish. But she defied expectations when she won a surprise bronze - Singapore's only medal in wushu, and the Republic's first medal in the sport since the 2006 Asian Games.

Yan Ni's latest success has garnered her more fans, especially among members at Pioneer Wushu where she coaches part time. "I gained more respect from people after the Asian Games," She said. "It was sweet to receive a hero's welcome from the children and their parents when I returned."

Despite her sporting achievements, Yan Ni places an equal emphasis on her studies. "I feel that everyone has their own commitments outside. But we should still treat ourselves as students that have a responsibility to uphold when it comes to our studies," she said.

Yan Ni's hectic schedule has not stopped her from doing Team Republic proud. She represented RP in the National Wushu championships in 2013 and won a gold medal in the women's Changquan category.

Wushu has given her plenty to cheer about thus far, but Yan Ni's sights are firmly set on more success. Asked about her next goal, she has her sights on glory next year when the SEA Games will be held on home soil. "I am aiming for a gold medal," Yan Ni said. **R**