



Mayor Zainul (centre) and his merry band of givers.

It's About Giving

**2 December, Launch of Giving Tree
@ Northeast, Tampines Central**

Jointly organised by North East CDC, National Volunteer & Philanthropy Centre, Heartware Network and ITE Central, Giving Tree @ Northeast hosted a month-long volunteer fair in the Tampines heartlands, giving about 100,000 individuals and families an insight into the different volunteer opportunities and services provided by about 50 volunteer hosting organisations from six different sectors. The event was launched by Mr Zainul Abidin Rasheed, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs and Mayor of North East CDC at a special Christmas tree light-up on 2 December 2005.

SPRING COLLECTION
AROUND THE NORTH-EAST

Out & About at the CCs



North East CDC Mayor Zainul Abidin Rasheed with ITE volunteers at Singapore's Largest Volunteers Fair held at the open field in front of Tampines Mall. The fair was held in December in conjunction with the NVPC's Giving Month.

Seng perjas peranan AP kepada pelajar

AP GRC
Ang Mo Kio
adakan
dialog
di Toa Payoh

oleh
Azahar Mohd

SEKITAR 70 pelajar sekolah menengah dan maktab rendah berpeluang berdialog dengan Anggota Parlimen GRC Ang Mo Kio, Encik Seng Han Thong, semalam.

Dialog itu diadakan sempena Siri *Belia Inspirasi McDonald's* yang diadakan setiap bulan untuk menjadi wadah bagi belia setempat berinteraksi dengan pemimpin masyarakat dan berkongsi pandangan mengenai isu belia.

Menurut Encik Seng, sewaktu membentangkan kertas kerja mengenai topik *Memenangi Pilihan Raya* — ia mengenai rakyat, seorang AP yang baik harus memahami keprihatinan penduduk dan

mampu menyelesaikan masalah mereka.

AP juga harus meraih keyakinan penduduk dan mampu memberi pilihan dalam membantu menyelesaikan masalah, katanya.

Antara sekolah yang menyertai sesi dialog di Toa Payoh Entertainment Centre itu ialah Sekolah Menengah Mayflower, Institut Hwa Chong, Sekolah Menengah Orchid Park, Maktab Rendah Anderson dan Maktab Rendah Victoria.

Dalam sesi dialog itu, Encik Seng, mantan wartawan, ditanya tindakannya sekiranya beliau tewas dalam pilihan raya akan datang kepada calon Parti Perpaduan Nasional (NSP), Encik Yip Yew Meng, juga mantan wartawan, di kawasan undi persorangan Yio Chu Kang.

Terdapat andaian bahawa Encik Seng bakal bertanding di situ.

"Adakah anda akan terus berhenti daripada arena politik atau terus aktif dalam kegiatan akar umbi seperti yang dilakukan Encik Eric Low, calon Parti Tindakan Rakyat

(PAP) di Hougang?" tanya pelajar Institut Hwa Chong tersebut.

Menurut Encik Seng, sekiranya beliau kalah, beliau akan terus aktif dalam kegiatan akar umbi dan "ingin tahu mengapa saya tewas?"

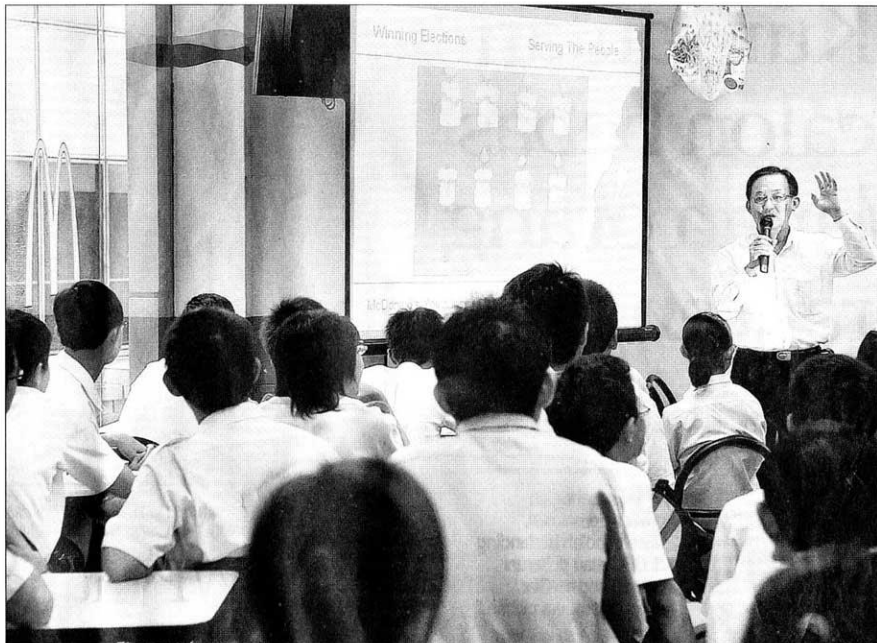
"Saya akan meneliti proses maklum balas untuk memastikan sama ada ia ada kelemahan dan sekiranya ada, saya akan membaikinya," ujarnya.

Soalan-soalan lain yang dikemukakan termasuk mengenai suara alternatif dalam parlimen, persediaan Encik Seng dalam pilihan raya kali ini dan sama ada PAP perlu memenangi semua kerusi.

Dalam hal kerusi parlimen, Encik Seng berkata PAP mahu memenangi semua kerusi kerana mahu mandat yang kuat.

"Namun, kami amat realistik kerana sedar tidak semua atau 100 peratus penduduk akan memberi sokongan kepada PAP."

"Ada juga yang mahu pemerintah PAP, tetapi pada masa yang sama mahu suara pembangkang dalam Parlimen," ujarnya.



APA PERANAN AP?: Encik Seng Han Thong semalam membentangkan usaha yang perlu dilakukan untuk menjadi Anggota Parlimen yang baik sewaktu sesi dialog dengan 70 pelajar di McDonald's, Toa Payoh Entertainment Centre. foto M.O.Salleh

PAP MAHU MANDAT YANG KUAT

"PAP mahu memenangi semua kerusi kerana mahu mandat yang kuat. Namun, kami amat realistik kerana sedar tidak semua atau 100 peratus penduduk akan memberi sokongan kepada PAP. Ada juga yang mahu pemerintah PAP, tetapi pada masa yang sama mahu suara pembangkang dalam Parlimen."

— Encik Seng Han Thong, Anggota Parlimen GRC Ang Mo Kio.

成汉通教学生如何“竞选”

陈诗书 ● 报道

“如果一户居民要砍掉窗前的树，隔壁的那户却坚持要留这棵树，你会怎么处理？”

“如果来届大选你失败了，你怎么办？”

“你当了10年议员，一直帮居民解决各种各样问题，你不会觉得厌倦吗？”

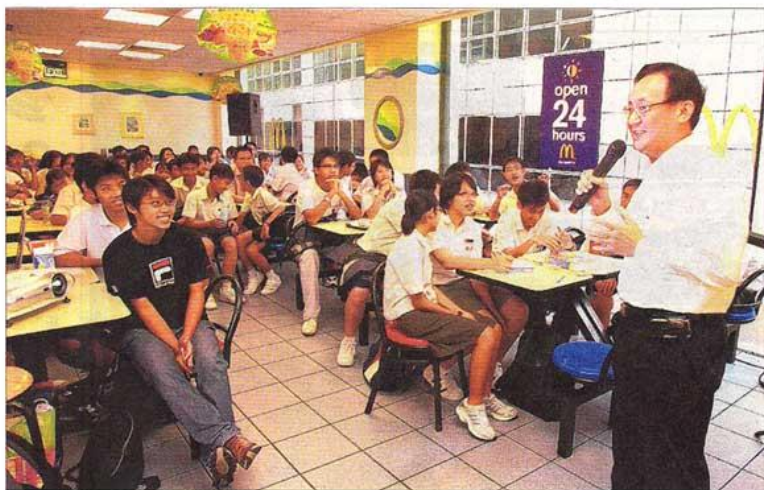
昨天在大巴窑麦当劳快餐店里举行的“成汉通和学生对话会”上，学生们争先恐后地向宏茂桥集选区议员成汉通提出了以上这些他们心里疑惑的问题。

针对第一个问题，成汉通回答说：“我会先找出那户居民不喜欢窗前的树的原因。是因为树上栖息的鸟太吵闹吗？是因为鸟粪污染环境吗？如果是那样，我们可以采用折衷方法，修剪树枝赶走鸟群，或捕杀一些鸟，这样就无需砍树。”

提出这个问题的华侨中学三学生李萧焱追问道，如果某些问题无法有一个折衷的解决办法又该如何？

成汉通说：“一个领袖不可能得到群众100%的支持，我们只能满足大部分人的愿望。举例说，一个翻新组屋设施的计划只要有75%的居民支持，我们就会付诸实施。”

对于大选，成汉通表示，就算他输掉了来届大选，他还是会留下来继续为居民服务。他说：“我会找出在努力工作、服务居民后，他们仍不把票投给我的原因，然后在下一届大选



成汉通以风趣幽默的形式把政治经验传授给学生。

里寻求东山再起。”

成汉通也说，帮助居民解决问题从未让他感觉厌倦，因为不同的人总有不同的问题。他对能够帮助居民，给他们多一些解决问题的方法感到欣慰。

成汉通在对话会上以故事和趣味问题的形式，告诉学生赢得竞选的关键是赢得民心。而作为领袖，重要的是要对人公平。

他问学生们如何让3个人平分5个苹果，而他认为把5个苹果榨成果汁来分是最好的方法。

成汉通把他的竞选经验总结为“理解群众的困难，知道群众的愿望，赢得群众的信心，得到群众的支持”。他希望这个经验可以帮助学生更好地参加

竞选。

学生们说，对话会让他们受益匪浅。李萧焱说：“我是学生理事会成员。会议员讲述的争取群众支持的方法，让我知道了如何在开展学生会工作时更好地得到同学支持。”

国专长老会中学中四生吴恺骏说：“竞选的知识不光对我们参加学校里的竞选有帮助，对我们以后在工作和社会上参加竞选也有用。说不定以后我还会运用这些知识来从政呢！”

来自12所学校的80名学生参加了由“心件工程”组织（Heartware Network）举办的对话会。“心件工程”自2004年9月每个月和麦当劳快餐店合办青年对话会。

Cara baru bagi relawan bantu keluarga miskin

oleh
Hisham Hambari

TAHUN lalu Encik Muhammad Syahrulnizam Abdul Razak, 19 tahun, mengumpul wang untuk membeli alat pemanas air bilik mandi untuk seorang nenek.

Beliau dan sukarelawan lain daripada Kelab Masyarakat Hougang turut membantu beberapa keluarga miskin lain mendapatkan keperluan seperti peralatan dapur.

Tidak lama lagi, sukarelawan seperti Encik Syahrulnizam akan mempunyai satu cara baru untuk membantu golongan memerlukan.

Ini kerana sebuah portal pangkalan data yang membolehkan mereka mengumpul jumlah masa

kerja kemasyarakatan yang telah mereka lakukan dan menukarnya kepada peralatan rumah yang diperlukan keluarga miskin telah dibangunkan dan dijangka mula beroperasi hujung tahun ini.

Portal itu dibangunkan sebuah badan kemasyarakatan setempat, Heartware Network, dan syarikat Microsoft Singapore, dengan bantuan pelajar Politeknik Nanyang dan Institut Pendidikan Teknikal (ITE).

Ia dilancarkan Menteri Ehwah Lue, Encik George Yeo, semalam.

Pengerusi Heartware Network, Encik Raymond Huang, berkata: "Kami tidak suka pendekatan menggunakan hadiah seperti wang, ke-

reta, kondo dan sebagainya untuk menarik sukarelawan.

"Kami percaya membenarkan sukarelawan menolong golongan susah secara tukar ganti masa kemasyarakatan yang telah mereka lakukan dengan barangan keperluan adalah cara yang lebih memuaskan."

Menurutnya, program itu dapat dimulakan hujung tahun ini dengan bantuan para penaja.

Portal Bank Belia di alamat www.bank4u.org itu juga bertujuan memudahkan sukarelawan dengan badan kemasyarakatan. Ia bermatlamat mendaftar 1,000 sukarelawan dan 15 badan kebajikan menjelang tahun depan.

Banking on youth volunteers

New portal to matchmake young helpers with community work

By YAP SU-YIN

MEETING online may not mean a match made in heaven. But for young volunteers-to-be and non-profit groups seeking volunteers, a new youth portal able to match their interests, profile and time available for community work

promises to be a boon.

The brainchild of non-profit group Heartware Network, the Youth Bank portal www.bank4u.org aspires to be a one-stop networking platform for youth to get information about community activities, and apply their time and talents to benefit the needy, sick or disabled.

Volunteers can post their experience — good or bad — online. They can also keep track of their voluntary work by "clocking in" their volunteer hours.

Later, they can even use the hours they accumulate in the Youth Bank to exchange for a cor-

porate donation to the charity of their choice.

Said Heartware Network chairman Raymond Huang: "With such a system in place, we network the hearts of volunteers. There's no more excuse for our youth to say they don't know how or where to volunteer their time."

Over the past six months, institutions like the Institute of Technical Education and Nanyang Polytechnic have helped develop the portal.

Heartware Network also teamed up with corporate giant Microsoft Singapore to provide the software and tap Microsoft's

extensive virtual communities for a wider reach.

The two signed a memorandum of understanding for this project at the National Volunteer and Philanthropy Centre yesterday.

Foreign Minister George Yeo, who was guest of honour at the launch of Youth Bank yesterday, said Singapore will become a stronger society "if we are able to harness more fully the spirit of volunteerism that is present in Singaporeans".

Praising the new initiative, he said: "By making it easier for individuals to volunteer, we encourage more to do so."

So far, 21 non-profit groups have signed up, including the Salvation Army.

HCA Hospice Care volunteer coordinator Seah Pow Kong said her organisation, which offers home and day care services, came on board to involve more young people — at least 20 a day — in charity work.

This includes engaging patients in social activities.

Said Ms Seah: "Through interacting with patients, youth volunteers can learn to treasure life and to have empathy for others."

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No cash please, deposit in kind

The Youth Bank seeks to get young to pledge their time for community service online

JASMINE YIN
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WHAT the latest online banking initiative to hit Singapore wants is something that money cannot buy: Time.

Non-profit youth organisation Heartware Network, in conjunction with software giant Microsoft, yesterday launched an online portal called the Youth Bank (www.bank4u.org) to promote volunteerism among the young in Singapore.

This portal, which seeks to match-make potential youth volunteers with organisations in need of help, enables the young to "deposit" their time and sign up for community service activities — ranging from the elderly, the arts and the disabled.

All that an interested youth or organisation has to do is to sign up — for free — for an account, which would then enable them to access the Youth Bank portal.

To date, 21 organisations have signed up, including the Hospice Care Association, Teen Challenge, Odyssey Dance Theatre and Whampoa Eldercare Centre.

Youth such as Serangoon Junior College's Shannon Tan, 17, and undergraduate Elaine Lim, 21, hailed the online portal for being a one-stop information point on volunteerism. And it is this "tremendous potential" that Heartware chairman Raymond Huang wants to tap. He said that the Youth Bank portal is aiming to attract 1,000 volunteers island-wide to contribute 50,000 hours for community service in its first year.

The portal, powered by Microsoft Technology, was developed by students from the Institute of Technical Education College Central and Nanyang Polytechnic for free.

There are plans to build on this portal and develop physical branches similar to ATMs for youth to log in and deposit their time for community service, Mr Huang said.

But as such a development would likely incorporate technologies such as those used for the EZ-Link card, Heartware Network is planning to apply for funding from the National Volunteer and Philanthropy Centre.

Mr Barney Lau, managing director of Microsoft Singapore, said that the portal illustrates how "software can enable individuals, organisations and communities to come together and help each other realise their potential".

Foreign Minister George Yeo, who was the guest-of-honour at the event, stressed the importance of volunteerism for a united and cohesive Singapore.

"At the last General Election, thousands of volunteers stepped forward to help candidates from different political parties. They worked hard day and night, not for money or promotion, but out of a sense of comradeship and camaraderie, backing the causes they believed in," he said.

"It is magical how an effort like that gels people together, in a way money cannot buy."

竞选最后一天 7万5000封信 如何送到阿裕尼居民手上?

他们日夜兼劳，不为钱，不为升迁，而是出于一种同志之谊，为他们的信仰而献力。

——外交部长杨荣文谈到志愿服务的精神时，把平日少被提起的政党义工也包括在志愿服务当中。

志愿服务的精神是新加坡“心件工程”的重要组成部分，而在刚刚过去的大选中，数千义工协助不同政党候选人，即展露了这样的志愿服务精神。

外交部长杨荣文昨天在谈到志愿服务的精神时，把平日少被提起的政党义工也包括在志愿服务当中。他赞扬这种服务精神时说：“他们（义工）日夜兼劳，不为钱，不为升迁，而是出于一种同志之谊，为他们的信仰而献力。”

作为备受瞩目的阿裕尼竞选区人民行动党竞选团队的领军部长，杨荣文透露，在竞选的最后一天，他的团队就是在志愿服务的协助下，把7万5000封信送到居民手上，从而把他们从“戈麦斯事件”中拉回到其他他们关心的选区课题上。

而这个亲手送信的过程得到的效果非金钱所能买到，将参与者凝聚起来。

青年银行网站启用

青年慈善组织“心件工程网络”（Heartware Network）和微软（Microsoft）昨天成立了促进青年福利团体配对的网站，称为“青年银行”（Youth Bank），由杨荣文主持启

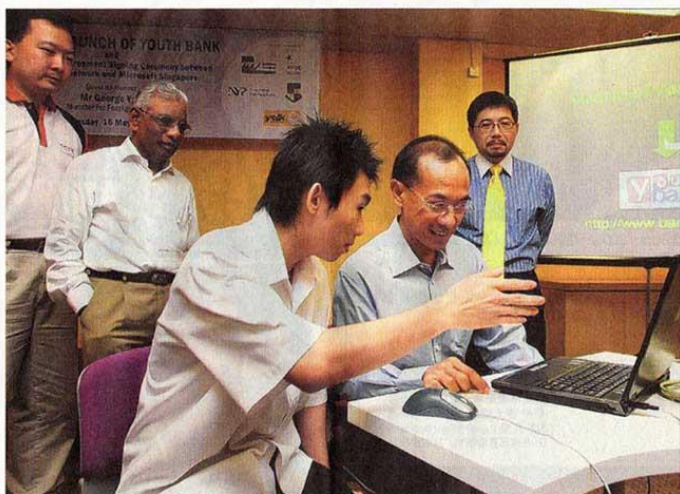
用仪式。

青年只须在网站建立个人户口，便能知道哪些福利团体需要什么工作性质的义工，并报名参加。此外，网站也扮演了“银行”的角色，把用户的个人资料及义工记录都储存起来，供他们查询。用户也能在网站张贴他们做义工的经验，同他人分享。

“青年银行”由工艺教育局及南洋理工学院的义工协助开发。它要在这一年内招募一千名义工，在社区服务领域贡献五万个小时。

外交部长杨荣文在这个他认为“不是很大，却是意义重大的活动”上说，人之所以为人的核心，就在于我们有志愿服务的精神。“没有了那个精神，无论我们如何能干和聪明，都只是机器和电脑。要把事情做好，我们当然就需要硬件和软件。要让人们往正确的方向迈进，我们也需要胡萝卜与大棒，但这是不够的。”

杨荣文以微软的比尔·盖茨（Bill Gates）在提高业务利润之余，也具理想主义和仁慈之心，救济了成千上万的非洲人为例，说明在新加坡，强硬和精明固然重要，但仅是强硬和精明并不够。



外交部长杨荣文为“青年银行”（Youth Bank）主持启用仪式，也上网到“银行”逛逛。

“一个领袖或一个机构如果没有软性的一面，它最终将失去成员与支持者的支持。这就像只有阳刚而没有阴柔调和一样。”

21家福利团体参与

目前，共有21家福利团体参与了“青年银行”计划，其中包括了救世军、残疾人协会及学生关怀服务等提供不同服务的团体。用户

一旦点击某个福利团体，就能看到它所刊登的活动告示和日期，了解其工作范围。

救世军义工协调员林顺良认为这个“青年银行”，让福利团体有另一个管道招募义工，同时也能向更多青少年介绍救世军提供的各种服务。

他表示：“对青年义工来说，这也是一个

有趣的概念，这个‘银行’能纪录他们所付出的志愿服务时间，也像他们的履历表一样。”

“心件工程”主席黄德宇则表示希望通过这个平台激发更多青年积极参与义工活动，同时为不知如何起头从事义工工作的青年提供另一途径。

他还说：“有了一

个义工资料库，一旦有任何紧急事故发生，我们也比较容易动员他们帮忙救灾。”

接下来，“青年银行”还会添加更多设施及服务，如建立类似银行自动提款机一样的服务亭，让用户拥有自己的“存折”，方便他们更新并保存义工记录。

“青年银行”的网址是：www.bank4u.org



Time is GMT + 8 hours
Posted: 16 May 2006 2009 hrs

Volunteers can pledge time with charities at online 'bank'

By Dominique Loh, Channel NewsAsia

SINGAPORE : Volunteerism has gone high tech in Singapore -- non-profit organisation Heartware Network has launched a website that it is banking will encourage more youths to volunteer their time.

At the website, www.bank4u.org/youth, youths can offer their time for volunteer work at charitable organisations.

It works like a commercial bank, but instead of money, you deposit hours into a volunteer time bank -- and it is open 24 hours a day.

Launching the Internet portal, Foreign Affairs Minister George Yeo said that with this infrastructure development, Singapore could be a hub for volunteer work in Southeast Asia.

Youth Bank, aimed at getting youths onboard, is setting its sights on getting 50,000 hours of volunteer time.

Said Raymond Huang, chairman, Heartware Network, "The youths have tremendous potential, opportunities that they can do; they have tremendous energy to offer. For us it is natural because we want our youths, who have very cushy lives compared to our father's and grandfather's time, to go down to the ground and get their fingernails dirty and do something. Hopefully, they will grow up to be more responsible citizens and own the community they call Singapore."

Yip Wan Li, a volunteer from Serangoon Junior College, "There is a sense of accomplishment whenever I complete something because we are helping people. (The website) transmits information faster, and we can get hold of information we need as to which organisation needs help."

Said Mr Yeo, "I remember once talking to a group of young people who spent time with Mother Theresa. She told them, 'I don't want your donations, I want you.' Helping another human being in a direct way touches the soul and makes us better human beings."

Twenty-one local organisations will benefit from the time volunteered and Heartware Network is aiming to get more charities involved as well. - CNA /ct

The youth deposit a helping of heart

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WITHIN days of its May 16 launch, the Youth Bank portal initiated by non-profit organisation Heartware Network has received an overwhelming response – and not just from the youth.

More than 600 youth volunteers, mostly in their mid-teens and early 20s, have signed up after the launch, bringing the total number of volunteers on the database – which helps the youth sign up for community services – to 1,495.

The others had volunteered at the network's annual event, the Giving Tree, held at Tampines last year.

About 27 voluntary hosting organisations (VHO), including the National Environment Agency and petroleum company BP, have also registered, with the portal seen as an efficient means to tap on volunteers. The National Library Board has also made enquiries.

The volunteers who signed up with the Youth Bank will be able to view and sign up for a list of activities provided by the VHOs, and match them with their fields of interest. The VHOs will then be informed of the volunteers' interest and assignments handed out accordingly.

According to the Youth Bank, most of the VHOs are currently reading through the volunteers' profiles to help in matching their interests to the organisations' needs.

The most popular VHO among the youth is the Cat Welfare Society, which has had responses from 484 volunteers.

More than 200 volunteers have signed up with the Care Corner Family Service Centre. The same number signed up to assist in health screenings and conversational English and Mandarin classes at the Jamiyah Home for the Aged.

The overwhelming response showed the interest and determination of the youth in community engagement, said Heartware Network chairman Raymond Huang.

"Since Youth Bank requires volunteers to register personally, it shows that the volunteers are sincere in pledging their time to help the VHOs. It ensures that the VHOs will get sincere and dedicated service," he said.

参加社区安全与治安挑战营

学生参与地铁恐怖袭击演习



遇到地铁列车受炸弹攻击，搭客应从紧急出口斜坡梯疏散，并遮眼捂鼻，减少烟雾危害。

沈晔 ● 报道

在一列开向碧山地铁站的列车上，学生们欢闹一片。

突然，列车前端传来“砰”的爆炸声，冒出浓烟。但学生们一点也不惊慌，他们快步走向列车两端，踢开紧急出口，并启动斜坡梯。

学生疏散后，紧急开到现场的民防部队立刻彻底搜查车厢内外，一些学生也为伤者包扎伤口。

但看似受控制的情况，其实危机四伏，因为置放炸弹的恐怖分子，穿上学生制服混在人群中。

别慌张，以上纯属模拟状况，它是一项由

大约15名华侨中学（高中部）和实龙岗初级学院的学生志愿者为近400名兰景中学学生组织的3天2夜“社区安全与治安挑战营”中的实况演习。

这群学生自5月29日参与挑战营，学习紧急应对措施、救护与医疗知识，以加强防备意识。

挑战营由学生组织与“心件工程”（Heartware Network）联办，是后者社区安全与治安计划（CSSP）活动之一，受到警方、民防部队和SMRT公司的支持。

为使演习逼真和试探学生的应对能力，主办单位除在车厢外引爆

雷光弹（Thunder flash），也不事先告诉学生会出现爆炸演习。

兰景中学学生王思丽（14岁）受访时说，她以为演习中只出现可疑物件拟况，当传来“爆炸”声时，她有点惊讶，但她认为有些同学还是不认真应对。

内政部兼律政部高级政务部长何炳基副教授也同学生一起经历整个演习。

他说，演习宗旨是培养学生准备就绪的意识，例如看到可疑物件的反应和举报知识。

他说：“参与演习的学生能把信息转达其他人，我们希望看到的就是这种乘数效应。”

Students deal with 'terror strike'

By SONIA TAN

SECONDARY 2 students from Orchid Park Secondary School got a first-hand experience of evacuating an MRT train after a "bomb attack" yesterday. They filed out of the train filled with smoke as Civil Defence firefighters and policemen arrived at Bishan MRT Depot to assist "casualties", even stretcher-ing out "unconscious" students.

"Singaporeans have not experienced this sort of thing first-hand, such

as the bombings in London. So the next best thing is to organise exercises, make them as realistic as possible, and help them to go through it," said Senior Minister of State for Law and Home Affairs Associate Professor Ho Peng Kee, who was the guest of honour at the event.

"Hopefully, Singaporeans will internalise the message and be prepared, so they won't panic and be paranoid when the time comes."

The exercise was part of the Community Safety and Security Programme Challenge IV camp, organ-

ised by students from various tertiary institutions. Its aim: to train youths to respond to emergencies.

Students not only learnt basic first aid such as cardiopulmonary resuscitation and skills such as firefighting, but they also coped with a terrorist "strike".

All this ties in with the Government's policy to develop a Community Engagement Programme to fend off a terrorist attack.

For Ku Nurizwanshah, 14, the three-day stay-in camp at the Old Police Academy at Thomson Road was quite inspiring.

The Secondary 2 student, who has facilitated other camps in his school, said: "Maybe joining as a facilitator would be nice. I'd be able to pass on my knowledge to students younger than me."



Time for 'real' lessons in anti-terrorism

THE 460 students — mostly from Orchid Park Secondary School — were packed in a train at Ang Mo Kio MRT station, looking out for any suspicious packages that they have been told were on the train.

When they found a black sports bag at a door near the front of the train, one of them whipped out his mobile phone and called the "police", before rushing down to the station control room to inform the staff.

This was just one of several tasks that the students — guided by camp leaders from Serangoon Junior College, Hwa Chong Institution and Anderson

Junior College — were faced with yesterday.

The exercise — similar to the large scale Exercise Northstar V carried out in January this year — is part of a three-day camp called the Community Safety and Security Programme Challenge, where students were taught skills that could help them in the event of a terror strike.

"The aim of the government is for every Singaporean to know what to do in an emergency," Associate Professor Ho Peng Kee, Senior Minister of State for Law and Home Affairs, told the students. "Every Singa-

porean can be the eyes and ears on the ground. Even if there was no strike, what you learnt this morning is an important lesson."

Yesterday, students also practised evacuating the train at the Bishan Depot after a simulated bomb strike.

Leong Chu Wei, 14, a Secondary 2 student at Orchid Park Secondary School, learnt first aid and fire fighting skills during the 3-day camp.

"It was a very fun exercise on the train. We also learnt a lot in camp and I think I know what to do in an emergency," said Chu Wei. — ANSLEY NG

BANKING ON YOUTH

Targeting 1,000 youth volunteers to contribute 50,000 hours of community service in its first year, Youth Bank portal, the brainchild of youth group Heartware Network, aspires to be a one-stop networking platform for youths to get information about community activities, and to apply their time and talent to benefit the community. Volunteers will also be able to post their volunteering experiences online and keep track of their voluntary work by “clocking in”

their volunteer hours, which can be exchanged for a corporate donation to the charity of their choice. Microsoft Singapore will be providing software and its extensive virtual communities for further outreach. Witnessed by Foreign Minister George Yeo, Microsoft and Heartware signed a memorandum of understanding at the launch of the portal which took place at NVPC on 16 May. For more information, visit www.bank4u.org.



Barney Lau (right), managing director, Microsoft Singapore, and Raymond Huang, chairman, Heartware Network, signing the MOU as S Dhanabalan, chief patron of Heartware Network, and Foreign Minister George Yeo look on.

Volunteerism is one of key pillars of National Education: Lui Tuck Yew

By Pearl Forss, Channel NewsAsia | Posted: 27 August 2006 0039 hrs

SINGAPORE : Student volunteerism is growing and the Education Ministry believes such activities are key to the new direction that National Education is going to take.

Volunteerism rate for youths is up from 17 percent in 2002 to 25 percent today.

But when it comes to thinking of new ideas to solve community problems, it seems a significant number still have a crutch mentality.

At the inaugural National Student Action Conference at NUS, many questions focused on how the government can solve problems, instead of how youths themselves can come up with creative solutions.

"The government provides some degree of support but rather than be too prescriptive about what each person ought to do, we let them decide what it is that they really enjoy doing. Community action is very much part and parcel of National Education, it is one of the key pillars if you want a rooted-ness in the country," says Minister of State, Education RAdm Lui Tuck Yew.

"I think it is important for our young people to understand what is happening in society around them, what the areas of needs are and more importantly, how they can respond and be responsible in meeting some of these areas of need," he adds.

And while some youths rely on direction from the authorities in carrying out local charity projects, it's a slightly different picture when it comes to overseas volunteerism.

In the past, students relied on organisations like the Singapore International Foundation to facilitate overseas expedition projects.

But increasingly, youths are going overseas themselves to conduct community surveys and implement new projects in remote villages across the world.

"The local organisations need help but not that great of a help as compared to those overseas. When we go overseas and accomplish a project, we see that the people there really gain from what we bring them, and the stuff we teach them there," says student volunteer Amelia Tan.

Other issues that are raised at the conference include the know-how of securing funding, and how to ensure youths are not being taken advantage by wayward charities.

Responding to questions, Raymond Huang from Heartware Network, a local voluntary welfare organisation, says youths need to learn to be more street smart when working with the various charity organisations.

Minister Lui says going forward, the next stage in the development of the youth volunteer scene will require a volunteer leader to not just look at addressing issues in one's immediate environment, but to also frame it in the national context.

He adds that many of today's youth volunteer activities are conducted either in isolation or on an one-off basis, with individual groups focusing on their own cause.

He hopes there can be more exchange of information between would-be volunteers and the community services.



Photos

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Lui Tuck Yew