



MONDAY, AUGUST 21, 2023

THE STRAITS TIMES

PRESIDENTIAL RACE

All you need to know about the upcoming election. **p6&7**

FEELING THE HEAT

World Scout Jamboree organisers under fire. **p10&11**



Selling away their future

Young 'money mules' regret giving up financial data for quick cash. **p8&9**

MCI (P) 076/10/2022



Le Le exploring his gifts from the panda care team on Aug 14. The team had decorated the enclosure that he shares with his mother and left boxes of hay for him to open.

CMG FILE PHOTO

Locally born panda turns two

Children skipped school and adults took leave from work on Aug 14 to celebrate the "two-rrific" birthday of Le Le, Singapore's first locally born giant panda.

The cub was born to mum Jia Jia and dad Kai Kai in 2021, after many attempts by his parents to conceive.

Fans sporting panda paraphernalia, such as T-shirts, headbands and other accessories, gathered on the walkway overlooking the panda exhibit at River Wonders.

They fawned over Le Le as the young panda enjoyed his spread of birthday treats, which included a bamboo cake, and a healthy mix of sugarcane, sweet potato, grapes and bamboo shoots.

The panda care team had put up decorations in the enclosure, which he shares with his mother, and planted gift boxes of hay for him to open. Kai Kai has a separate enclosure in the Giant Panda Forest.

As Le Le, accompanied by his mother, ate his way through his treats, there was a chorus of oohs and ahs.

"It's so cute! How they eat, how they go around and play, everything," said 11-year-old Sadaa-nandh Prem, who took a day off from school to see Le Le with his parents and younger sister.

As giant pandas are extremely solitary animals,

cubs in the wild naturally separate from their mother when they are between 18 and 24 months old.

As Le Le has come of age, he is expected to grow more independent of Jia Jia in the coming months.

During this transition, interaction between mother and cub shifts, with the mother slowly rejecting her offspring and the cub beginning to eat, sleep and rest alone.

Noticing Le Le's growing autonomy, the animal care team is helping him get used to his own private den.

Once the separation phase is complete, mother and son will split their time in the exhibit, with Le Le present from 10am to 2pm, and Jia Jia from 2pm to 6pm. Kai Kai is let out into his exhibit area throughout River Wonders' opening time, from 10am to 7pm.

Visitors told The Straits Times that Le Le's birth was one bright spark during the gloomy days of the Covid-19 pandemic.

"I think it brought a lot of brightness, a lot of hope, in the midst of Covid-19," said civil servant Joanne Ng, 44, a regular visitor to the panda exhibit at River Wonders.

Tourists joined local enthusiasts to celebrate the little panda's milestone.

Ms Rei Taniguchi from Japan praised River Wonders' open exhibition areas, as pandas in zoos that she has visited back home keep them enclosed.

With Jia Jia's 15th birthday and Kai Kai's 16th approaching in September, some fans already have plans to return to the zoo.

Mr Tei Boon Ping, 55, a director of operations for cyber security, has booked leave from work to attend both celebrations.

When asked why he takes so much interest in the giant pandas, he said: "Pandas have very cheerful faces that seem to encourage everyone, especially after a hard week of work."

Jia Jia and Kai Kai have been on loan to Singapore from China since 2012. In 2022, Mandai Wildlife Group, which operates River Wonders, signed a deal with the Chinese authorities to extend the 10-year loan of the pandas for five more years, until 2027.

Adapted from "Baby panda turns two, with scores of fans marking the occasion" by Sophia-Ines Klein, The Straits Times, Aug 15, 2023



Discuss the purpose of a zoo. Divide your class into a group that is for zoos and a group that is against them. Use the Singapore Zoo as an example for your views.

ST SCHOOLS EDITOR Serene Luo JOURNALISTS Ang Yiyang, Nishalini Saralatan, Nur Syahiidah Zainal TEACHING SPECIALIST Debra Ann Francisco SUB-EDITOR James Jr Quek ART & DESIGN Marlone Rubio BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT MANAGER David Tan CIRCULATION INQUIRIES Sherry Loh (call 6319-1039 or e-mail cirschool@sph.com.sg)

TYPES OF ACTIVITIES

Mathematical-Logical
Think abstractly and conceptually, and identify logical patterns.



Interpersonal
Respond appropriately to others in a group context.



Intrapersonal
Improve self-awareness by developing inner feelings, values, beliefs and thinking processes.



Visual-Kinesthetic
Learn through the use of manipulatives, craft or visual aids, or hands-on tasks or movement.



Verbal-Linguistic
Discuss and develop opinions.

STSchools @STSchools

EDUCATION

Art trips open up Naval Base Sec students to new possibilities

Naval Base Secondary is a giant art gallery, with a range of individual works and even large-scale installations displayed, several of which were inspired by school trips.

For example, a 58m ceramic wall installation along the school's exterior wall was inspired by Dutch artist Vincent van Gogh and Spanish architect Antonio Gaudi.

The school's art programme has gained recognition – the number of applications via the Direct School Admission scheme for visual arts almost doubled from 2021 to 2023.

The school's art club is its largest co-curricular activity, with more than 140 members.

Principal Linda Yeo, who took the helm in 2022, said the school has come a long way and has shed its rough image from 20 years ago, with "disciplinary issues now being the exception more than the norm".

The school offers a comprehensive art curriculum to all students, focusing on how art can be applied in the real world – for instance, how art can be turned into mural designs for the community.

"We believe that art transforms how the students think and see themselves. The intent is to nurture well-rounded individuals who value creative expression through the process of artmaking," she said.

Long-time art teacher Madam Anis Amat has seen her share of students who turned around because of art.

A group of boys with challenging behaviour designed and built a Casa Gaudi-inspired mosaic footpath in the school garden, with her guidance. "These boys' attendance and discipline improved because of their commitment to the project," she said.

Sec 4 student Chan Xiang Ran, 16, said taking art in the last few years has helped her. "I have difficulty expressing myself verbally. If I feel overwhelming emotions, I sketch and I feel better after that."

Madam Anis said some of her students found their calling in art and went on to become artists, while others continue to be advocates of the arts.

"I have former students who are successful in the fields of science, but speak of how art has taught them to be creative thinkers," she said.

Even as she guides students to prepare their portfolios for the O levels, Madam Anis aims to impart values that will stay with them for life.



In June 2003, Naval Base Secondary School's art teachers Anis Amat (extreme right) and Koh Nah Nah (second from right), and its operation manager Lim King Loong (behind Mrs Koh), took 16 students – including Mr Sylvester Goh (background left, in yellow shirt) – on their first trip to Paris. PHOTO COURTESY OF ANIS AMAT



The sea change came from within because they felt they could work hard towards something. It was a child seeing possibilities, a world beyond his imagination."

Mrs Rebecca Chew, former principal of Naval Base Secondary School

"Students learn to empathise with the struggles of others and express this empathy through their artwork. They also draw motivation from the artwork.

"That is how versatile art can be. It encourages you to have a heart for others and motivates you to keep going," she said.

DECADES-LONG EFFORT

Since 2003, the school has been taking students for overseas art trips.

In June that year, Madam Anis, fellow art teacher Koh Nah Nah and the school's operation manager Lim King Loong took 16 students on their first trip to Paris.

During the eight-day tour, they visited landmarks and art museums like The Louvre and Centre Pompidou.

Students each had art journals, in which they conscientiously drew observations of the surroundings and food they ate.

"The trip brought out the best in

them. The week of hotheadedness in art nourished them and left them motivated to get a distinction for art," recalled Madam Anis, who has been with the school for 27 years.

She remembers a student telling her after the trip: "I've gone to Paris. I'd jolly well do well in art."

These trips were part of a plan of then principal Rebecca Chew to keep the children in school and ensure they get an education rather than get into trouble on the streets.

Madam Anis had mooted the idea of a school trip to Bali to motivate her students, who were taking art as an O- or N-level subject, but were not turning in their coursework nor turning up for class.

Mrs Chew counter-proposed: "What if the children went to see Mona Lisa and Monet in Paris instead?"

She figured that taking students "to where the artists go" would be a great source of motivation for them – many of them had not travelled out of the country.

"Their world view was getting into trouble in Khatib and creating problems in the void deck in Chong Boon. Paris would be a different world view," said Mrs Chew, who later became the founding principal of School of the Arts Singapore and is now principal of Holy Innocents' High.

To be considered for the trip, students had to first stay out of trouble.

The change in the teenagers started – they began attending school

daily, finishing their coursework and raising funds by selling their art.

"The sea change came from within because they felt they could work hard towards something. It was a child seeing possibilities, a world beyond his imagination," said Mrs Chew.

LIFE-CHANGING TRIPS

The annual trips continued until the Covid-19 pandemic.

In the past two decades, some 400 students visited at least 12 cities, including Barcelona and Beijing.

Apart from the overseas trips, the school also had art exhibitions, learning journeys to local museums, arts enrichment programmes and community art projects.

Many students have gone on to study at the Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts and Lasalle College of the Arts.

Mr Sylvester Goh, 35, a Naval Base Secondary student from 2001 to 2005, went on the first trip to Paris in 2003 and to Helsinki in 2005.

The youngest of three children of a taxi driver and a housewife, he nearly did not get to go on the trips because his family was struggling financially.

His art teachers persuaded his father to let him go for the trip, explaining that art could be a possible career for him. Eventually, his father and his father's nine siblings each contributed \$300 to make his trip possible.

"I am still very grateful to all my relatives," said Mr Goh, who added that he became determined to do well after he saw how hard his teachers helped him.

"The teachers were not related to me, but did so much for me – I couldn't disappoint them," said Mr Goh, who scored a distinction in O-level art.

He might have dropped out of school if not for art, he said.

"I often felt like a loser because I barely passed other subjects. Because of art, I saw some hope for my future," added Mr Goh, who now manages the social media platforms for a technology company and does freelance graphic design on the side.

"Art has taught me that not everyone interprets a message the same way, so it is important to use various methods to reach a diverse audience."

Adapted from "Changing lives through art" by Jane Ng, *The Straits Times*, Aug 14, 2023

CAREERS

‘We should look at every student differently, because every student grows differently’

Art teacher tells CHEONG CHEE FOONG how going back to school expands his horizons and reminds himself what it is like to be a student

After spending five years as an art teacher in Marsiling Secondary School, Mr Muhamad Lokman Mohamad, 35, found himself back as a student in 2020 at Lasalle College of the Arts.

“I wanted to explore out of my comfort zone, and remind myself what it’s like being on the other side of the classroom,” the father of two said, speaking to IN before his commencement ceremony.

He had been pursuing a bachelor’s degree in fine arts for the past three years, and graduated on Aug 4.

Mr Lokman said: “Also, Lasalle is an institute where teachers and staff themselves are practising artists.

“I’m also actually networking with teachers and key players (in the industry), like gallery owners, and can even go to other artists’ studios and exhibitions.”

He added: “By coming here, I’m actually increasing (my own) capabilities and growing holistically. I hope to expose my students to works from local practising artists.”

Returning as a student was not without its challenges. As he was learning alongside classmates who were 10 years younger than himself, there was some distance between Mr Lokman and his peers in the beginning, especially as lessons were often hybrid ones – sometimes online, and some in person.

But things got better as they warmed up to one another over time.

“As long as you are genuine in what you want to pursue, your peers will understand even if there’s an age difference, we are all just (fellow) students who want to learn and improve,” he said.

It was not easy for him to juggle his responsibilities as a student and father. Over the course of his studies at Lasalle, he had to take some time off from his studies to take care of his daughter.

He thanked his lecturers for being understanding of his situation, as well as his wife.

“The two of us share the role of being a parent and juggle our re-



Mr Lokman earned a bachelor’s degree in fine arts and graduated with first-class honours, and his students at Bukit Panjang Government High School are now reaping the benefits of his drive to improve himself. ST PHOTO MARK CHEONG

“

As long as you are genuine in what you want to pursue, your peers will understand even if there’s an age difference, we are all just (fellow) students who want to learn and improve.”

Mr Muhamad Lokman Mohamad on how he related to his Lasalle classmates despite their age gap

sponsibilities together. Some situations when she is unavailable, I’ll take over, and vice versa.”

He has earned a bachelor’s degree in fine arts and graduated with first-class honours. He was also the winner of the Lasalle Award for Academic Excellence.

Now, he is back to teaching, this time at Bukit Panjang Government High School, and his students are reaping the benefits of the lessons he learnt at Lasalle.

He said: “Lasalle has taught me that if you want to reach the (high) level you want, start with something easier first, and give information in bite-sizes.

“For example, beginning with simple materials (for artwork) like paper. Because it is easier to understand in terms of the material and

structure, what you can do with it, and what forms it can take.

“Afterwards, you can advance to more complex materials like plastic.”

Apart from scaling the lessons in terms of difficulty, he was also reminded about the importance of differentiated learning.

“We should look at every student differently, because every student grows differently. And what we (should) do as a teacher is to ensure that even though these differences exist, everyone should learn something at the end of the day,” he added.



Learning is not confined to academics. Think of three ways you can pursue learning outside the classroom.

COMMUNITY

ON THE LOOKOUT AT ALL HOURS

Rise in demand for CCTV cameras due to theft and harassment concerns

More “eyes” could be watching you when you are walking to your Housing Board flat. And, depending on who you ask, it could be good for security or an invasion of privacy.

Sellers of cameras told The Sunday Times that the demand for closed-circuit television (CCTV) cameras and other surveillance devices, like doorbell cams, outside HDB flats was rising. Such devices include doorbells with video recording functions.

In response to ST’s queries, the Housing Board noted that “with advancement in technology, there is now a proliferation of CCTV-like devices such as smart-door devices and miniature cameras”. It added that these “are less intrusive than CCTV cameras and ... flat owners can easily install (them) within their flat or on their front door”.

HDB said that since May, flat owners were no longer required to seek its approval to install corridor-facing CCTV cameras within their homes. However, such cameras should not face the door or windows of another flat to safeguard the privacy of neighbours.

HDB dwellers are still required to ask for approval if they want to install CCTV cameras outside their flats, but that has not deterred homeowners.

Ms G (not her real name) found that items had been stolen from her new HDB flat in April. They were taken during renovations so, when she moved in two months later, she installed a doorbell with a camera.

In July, her doorbell cam recorded a deliveryman allegedly stealing a parcel containing two laptop mats. She uploaded the

video on TikTok, and it chalked up more than 594,000 views.

Ms G, who is in her 20s and in the marketing industry, made a police report and investigations are ongoing. Her camera has also recorded strangers poking at the mesh on her gate and touching the shoe cabinet beside her main door.

Sellers said customers usually install CCTV cameras outside their homes owing to theft, disputes with neighbours or harassment. HomeSafe Security’s project manager Moses Lew said victims of loanshark harassment are one of its main groups of clients, who pass on the footage to police as evidence.

The installation of a CCTV camera overlooking the corridor outside her home helped Ms Lee, 50, find out who stole her flower pots, pot hangers and pandan leaves in 2020 and 2021.

After she installed a camera near the window of her living room inside her flat in 2021, she learnt that a neighbour had taken her flower pots and pot hangers, and gave her a warning.

The mystery of her missing mulberries was also unravelled by the camera which recorded hornbills picking at her plants and eating them.

Ms Lee, who is self-employed, said she has not received any complaints about the CCTV camera. Her immediate neighbour was actually agreeable to it, and Ms Lee added: “The intention is to protect our family and not to spy on neighbours.”

CONCERNS ABOUT CAMERAS

Experts cautioned that while

there are upsides to installing CCTV cameras, there could be trouble if approval is not sought to install them.

Mr Tan from Rajah & Tann said some town councils, like those at Chua Chu Kang and Marsiling-Yew Tee, have by-laws that state that if the owner fails to comply with the notice to remove any fixture, structure or object – which includes CCTV cameras – that is on common property or open space without permission, town councils have the right to remove it and repair the area before recovering the costs from its owner.

Neighbours unhappy with the presence of such recording devices can also complain through the Community Disputes Resolution Act, which prohibits individuals from causing “unreasonable interference” with their neighbour’s use and enjoyment of their place of residence including conducting surveillance on the neighbour’s property, said Mr Tan, adding that this may apply even if the CCTV camera is inside the home.

Privacy experts also warned

HDB said that since May, flat owners were no longer required to seek its approval to install corridor-facing CCTV cameras within their homes. However, they are still required to ask for approval if they want to install CCTV cameras outside their flats.

ST FILE PHOTO

that third parties can hack CCTV devices or steal CCTV data, thus putting persons who collect the data, and their neighbours, at risk.

Mr Kevin Shepherdson, chief executive of Singapore-based data privacy specialist Straits Interactive, said: “If hacked, the CCTV camera can be used to track the occupants of the home and perhaps lead to a break-in when nobody is at the residence.”

CCTV data can also be stolen by appropriating soft copies stored in any storage devices, or over wireless connection by hackers, he added.

Given the generative artificial intelligence easily available these days, the stolen footage can then be easily used to create deep fake videos for mischief in a short period of time, he said.

Adapted from “They are keeping an eye out” by Chin Hui Shan, The Sunday Times, Aug 6, 2023



List three pros and three cons of the use of private CCTV cameras in HDB estates.

Figuring out the ins and outs of the presidential election

Six people had announced their intention to become the next head of state, but only three qualified. NISHALINI SARALATAN outlines what was needed to qualify and looks at those still in the running.

Teachers' Day this year has been bumped to make room for another important event. As President Halimah Yacob's time in office is set to end on Sept 13, Singapore is scheduled to elect its next president on Sept 1.

As the head of state, the president is a unifying force in Singapore's culturally diverse landscape and the protector of the country's financial reserves and public service integrity.

For example, it was with President Halimah's authorisation that the Government could utilise the national reserves to fund the Covid-19 policies and assistance schemes that helped to steady the country's economy during that uncertain time.

NOT ALL QUALIFY

Before any votes are cast, there are a few announcements to look out for.

One will take place on Nomination Day, which is Aug 22. Singaporeans will find out if they get to vote based on the candidates who have filed their nomination papers at the People's Association headquarters and placed a deposit of \$40,500.

A presidential election candidate must fulfil a set of criteria. For example, he or she has to be at least 45 years old and has resided in Singapore for at least the past 10 years.

Under the private-sector requirement for presidential hopefuls, the candidate must have served as chief executive of a company for at least three years, during which time the company must, on average, have at least \$500 million in shareholders' equity and made a profit after tax throughout.

For those seeking to qualify from the public sector, the requirement includes having held office as a minister, chief justice, Speaker of Parliament, attorney-general, chairman of

the Public Service Commission, auditor-general, accountant-general or permanent secretary for at least three years.

The Presidential Elections Committee, now headed by Public Service Commission chairman Lee Tzu Yang and includes two Supreme Court judges, must also be satisfied that the candidate has the experience and ability to effectively carry out the functions and duties of the office of the president.

Only candidates with successful nominations will proceed to the polls. If there is only one eligible candidate, that person will be declared the president on Nomination Day.

Candidates who qualify can start campaigning right after the nomination process is finished.

Just like in a general election, all campaigning has to stop before Cooling-off Day, which is the day before Polling Day. This gives voters a chance to think about the issues brought up during the various campaigns before they vote.

In a Facebook post, Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong wrote that a few individuals have already stepped forward and made known their intention to run for the presidency.

"The media have widely reported on them, and I'm sure we will hear more from the candidates themselves during the campaign period," he said.

"The President represents all Singaporeans, and stands as a symbol of our unity and aspirations. Listen to what each candidate has to say, and assess them and their views carefully. I hope everyone will vote wisely for the best candidate for this important role."

Elections Department Singapore, The Straits Times, Prestige

THREE CONFIRMED CANDIDATES

Former GIC investment chief Ng Kok Song, 75, former senior minister Tharman Shanmugaratnam, 66, and former NTUC Income chief Tan Kin Lian, 75, were issued their certificates of eligibility by the Presidential Elections Committee (PEC) on Aug 18.

Mr Tharman's team said he had received it at around 10.30am, while Mr Tan's team confirmed it in a call with The Straits Times at around 11.17am. Mr Ng's team confirmed at about 11.45am.

Entrepreneur George Goh, 63, did not qualify to contest the election.

The Elections Department (ELD) issued a statement naming the successful applicants.

It said that based on the information available to the PEC, it was satisfied that all three men were of integrity, good character and reputation.

The PEC announced its decision on Friday, four days before Nomination Day, which is on Aug 22.

In its statement, ELD also said that it had notified all individuals on the outcome of their applications, and also told the rejected applicants why they did not get certificates of eligibility.

It added that it would not publish the names of the unsuccessful applicants or the reasons given to them, in light of the concern that potential applicants may be dissuaded from stepping forward to contest the elections for fear of embarrassment.

This concern was expressed in the Report of the Constitutional Commission released in 2016.

However, they are free to publish the reasons given to them, said the ELD.

With this announcement, Singapore looks set to head to the polls on Sept 1, provided the three candidates proceed with their nominations successfully on Nomination Day.

Adapted from "Presidential election: Ng Kok Song, Tharman and Tan Kin Lian get eligibility certificates to contest" by Goh Yan Han, The Straits Times Online, Aug 18, 2023



Mr Ng Kok Song, accompanied by his fiancée Sybil Lau (third from right), posing with patrons at Seah Im food centre on Aug 13, 2023. ST FILE PHOTO

Mr Tharman Shanmugaratnam is a well-known name in Singaporean politics and economics.

As a former deputy prime minister and Minister of Finance, the 66-year-old has demonstrated his knack for steering Singapore's economic strategies.

His campaign centres around the theme "Respect for All".

During a press conference on July 26, Mr Tharman explained that his focus goes beyond just policies to create a more inclusive society.

He believes in cultivating a deeper culture of respect in Singapore, extending to the poor working to improve their lives, those pursuing non-traditional paths in the arts, and even people with differing viewpoints.

Reportedly shortlisted in 2019 to be the next head of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), Mr Tharman was the first Asian to head the International Monetary and Financial Committee, the policy advisory committee of the IMF in 2011.

He has also been part of global organisations such as the Global Commission on the Economics of Water, which aims to redefine the way the world governs water for the common good.



Mr Tharman Shanmugaratnam posing for a group photo with attendees of the Exemplary Interfaith Award presentation ceremony on July 29. ST FILE PHOTO

Mr Ng Kok Song, 75, was previously the group chief investment officer at Singapore's sovereign wealth fund, Government of Singapore Investment Corporation, from 2007 to 2013.

In all, he spent 42 years at the organisation which invests Singapore's foreign reserves.

He has also held posts at the Monetary Authority of Singapore and the Ministry of Finance.

During a dialogue on Aug 13, Mr Ng mentioned being independent of the ruling party, how he understands how the country's savings work, and his personal experience of working as a private tutor to help support his family during his time at university when they were struggling financially.

Mr Ng's goal is to connect with Singaporeans by understanding their feelings.

He also wants to help young people learn about money and starting their own businesses, stressing the importance of saving, investing, and gaining confidence for future opportunities.



Mr Tan Kin Lian posing for pictures with people at Kopitiam Square in Sengkang on Aug 14. ST PHOTO GIN TAY

Mr Tan Kin Lian, a former chief executive of NTUC Income from 1977 to 2007, is running for president for the second time.

The 75-year-old's first try was in the 2011 presidential election, when he got 4.91 per cent of the votes. Mr Tan was also part of the People's Action Party for three decades and served as a branch secretary in the 1970s.

His 2023 campaign is themed "Bring Back Trust, Give us Hope".

During a press conference on Aug 11, he said that

he intends to collaborate with the Government to ensure responsible use of reserves for present and future generations.

He also aims to ensure qualified individuals hold leadership positions in public service.

Beyond his constitutional duties, Mr Tan said that as president, he would focus on three fundamental areas crucial to the well-being of citizens: bringing down the cost of living, ensuring affordable housing for all and securing jobs.



OUT OF THE RUNNING

Mr George Goh Ching Wah's businesses include Ossia International, a Singapore Exchange-listed retailer of consumer goods; Harvey Norman Ossia, which brought the consumer electronics and furniture brand to Asia; and ITG International, which is currently developing a \$1 billion mixed-development project in Jiangxi province, China.

The 63-year-old was also Singapore's envoy to Morocco from 2017 to 2023.

He had expressed a desire to empower people through their votes, advocating for their voices to be heard in shaping the nation's future.

He had also talked about the importance of a fair and just society, citing his concerns about income inequality and the well-being of vulnerable groups.

Zack (not his real name) was a 17-year-old student in 2021 receiving \$10 a day from his mother when he came across an advertisement in a Telegram group chat that promised payment for opening bank accounts.

He contacted the person who posted the ad. Communicating via text messages on Telegram, the man, who identified himself only as J, said the bank accounts would be used for investments.

Zack did not ask too many questions. He was promised \$800 for each bank account he opened.

The teenager set up two accounts – one with UOB and another with OCBC Bank – and deposited money given by J into each account.

Zack met J some time later to pass him the bank cards and details. After he met J, Zack persuaded his friends and strangers to open bank accounts for the man.

"I asked around, and it spread from there," said Zack, who added that he made money off these people.

"For every bank card, I got \$800. I gave them \$400, and I kept \$400.

"Or I might give them \$300, and earn \$500 for myself. To me, it was win-win," said Zack.

In two months, he earned a total of \$2,800 but, in September 2021, three plainclothes police officers arrested him at his home in Bukit Merah.

Zack then learnt from the police that the accounts he sold were used to launder money from scam victims.

He was told he was a "money mule" – someone who allows criminals to control their accounts or help them perform transactions.

"I didn't think I was harming anyone. I didn't know that (criminals) were using it to scam people," said Zack. (see box on the impact of scams on mental health)

Although he claimed he was clueless, he admitted he was suspicious that he could earn a large sum in a short time, and that J never gave his full name.

Zack, now 19, said: "You don't think you will get caught, but the law always catches up."

The police investigated more than 19,000 money mules between 2020 and 2022, but fewer than 250 were prosecuted. It was difficult to prove that they had intended to facilitate criminal activities by selling their bank accounts and Singpass credentials.

But in May, tougher laws aimed at clamping down on money mules and those who sell their bank accounts or Singpass credentials were passed.

The changes to the laws introduced the new offences of rash and negligent money laundering, and disclosing or dealing in Singpass credentials for criminal activities.

Rash money laundering is when the money mule knows or has some idea that what he is doing involves a criminal element.

Negligent money laundering is when a person continues with a transaction despite the presence of red flags that an ordinary, reasonable person would notice.

The changes come amid findings which showed more young people were being recruited as money mules.

A sample study by the police of scam cases reported between 2020 and 2022 showed that 45 per cent of 113 money mules investigated were 25 years old and under.

A 15-year-old was among the suspects assisting in investigations for being a suspected scammer or money mule in the first half of 2023.

Mr Azri Imran Tan of IRB Law said that in the past year, at least 10 young people have approached him for legal advice on such offences. He said about three young people a year approached him for advice on similar matters in 2020 and 2021.

Invictus Law founder Josephus Tan said his firm saw up to 15 individuals under 30 involved in money mule offences in the past year.

"It is a worrying trend. We see more of such scam-related cases as compared to 10 years ago, when they largely involved drugs and rioting cases," added Mr Tan.

LURED BY EASY MONEY

Irfan (not his real name) had just dropped out of the Institute of Technical Education in 2021 when he heard that he could

Handing control over to criminals for quick cash

More young people are being recruited as 'money mules' who give up their bank accounts, and even Singpass details, that are then used for illegal activities



Zack (not his real name) sold his bank accounts to a man he met on Telegram, and convinced friends and strangers to do the same. He earned \$2,800 in two months, but was arrested by the police soon after.

earn money by opening bank accounts for others to use for online gambling.

Unlike Zack, who was recruited by someone he met online, Irfan, now 18, said he was reeled in by his secondary school friends who were in the "business".

They said he could either get a one-time payment of \$400 by selling an account, or a monthly payout of \$150 by leasing it.

A friend gave him \$1,000 to open two bank accounts, and a SIM card with a new number to register the accounts.

"It was a very simple process. All I had to do was to meet him at a shopping mall, and he prepped me on what to say to the bank staff," said Irfan.

He sold one UOB account, and leased an OCBC account to his friend. He made \$850 in three months.

Then, he started receiving bank statements in the mail, including one which was 60 pages long. It showed transactions from strangers, including transfers of up to \$80,000.

"I thought (criminals) were scamming people from overseas. And I was afraid it would all lead back to me," said Irfan.

Two months later, his bank accounts were frozen. He was investigated by the police the following year.

Banks actively detect money laundering by using monitoring systems that alert them to transactions above a certain amount, said Ms Caryn Leong, regional anti-money launder-

“

I am just a pawn. J is just like a horse or a rook. But there is always a queen and a king. They are never going to get caught because they are going to have people before them that will get caught.”

Zack, on how young people like himself are the most likely to get caught because they are more vulnerable.

ing director in Asia-Pacific for the Association of Certified Anti-Money Laundering Specialists.

Once a bank or Singpass account has been flagged, the Commercial Affairs Department's Anti-Scam Centre will immediately disrupt the account to prevent further abuse and carry out investigations, said the Singapore Police Force in

response to queries from The Sunday Times.

WILLING TO TAKE THE RISK

Kezrin (not his real name), 23, searched Telegram for jobs after his release in 2022 from a 15-month jail sentence for being a loan shark runner.

He was earning \$70 a day working for a moving company but wanted more. After contacting someone on Telegram, he sold his Singpass details for \$700.

"I knew I would have a police case, but I just did it for the money," he said. He figured the sentence would be short. Someone he met in prison claimed he was sentenced to three weeks' jail for selling his Singpass.

Kezrin said: "Compared to 15 months, three weeks is kang (easy)."

He was caught two months later and charged in court with the unauthorised disclosure of access code for an unlawful purpose.

Unlike Irfan, who received a stern warning from the police, Kezrin will be spending time behind bars.

On Aug 3, he was sentenced to a total of 10 weeks in jail – six weeks for selling his Singpass details while out on a remission order, and four weeks for an unrelated offence of voluntarily causing hurt.

It could have been worse.

With changes to the law, those convicted of rash money laundering can be jailed for up to five years and fined up to \$250,000, while those convicted of negligent money laundering can be jailed for up to three years and fined up to \$150,000.

Those convicted of assisting another to retain benefits from criminal conduct can be jailed for up to three years and fined up to \$50,000.

Zack had described himself as a "victim" who was tricked into selling his bank accounts without knowing what they were truly used for. But Mr Azri of IRB Law said ignorance is no plea.

"It would no longer be a defence, whether honestly or otherwise, to say, 'I didn't know that the bank accounts or Singpass details I provided would be used for criminal activity'," he said of the new law.

He added that the youth he represented thought they would not get caught or that they would be punished lightly.

Mr Tan of Invictus Law said the law is right to prosecute offenders who had suspicions but proceeded anyway.

"They started off as victims and became perpetrators. The very fact that you enabled a crime – that makes you an accomplice," he added.

Money mules also tend to dismiss their actions as a minor crime because nobody is physically hurt, said Mr Tan.

"It could damage the entire financial system, cause people to lose their jobs, or be used to fund criminal or terrorist organisations," he added.

Currently, youth offenders who commit minor offences may not be hauled to court but made to undergo a rehabilitation programme, the Ministry of Social and Family Development said in response to ST's queries.

Those who are charged may be placed on probation or committed to a juvenile rehabilitation centre.

With tougher laws, Mr Mark Yeo of Kalco Law said more people will be prosecuted for money mule offences.

He added that as more cases are taken to court, punishments meted out may become harsher over time as the le-

gal system would consider how the full spectrum of sentences should be used.

His colleague Justin Ng said the authorities had similarly clamped down on loan shark runner offences in the past.

After a number of teenagers were recruited and arrested for harassing debtors, the penalties surrounding loan shark activities were enhanced to deter would-be criminals.

For example, first-time offenders found guilty of loan shark harassment face a fine of between \$5,000 and \$50,000, jail of up to five years, and up to six strokes of the cane.

"There is a good impression out there that you don't touch loan shark activities because everyone knows that the sentences are very harsh... I think deterrence is quite effective," added Mr Ng.

HARD LESSON LEARNT

Irfan is now back in school. He is currently serving an internship in the tourism industry, and also has a part-time job as an administrative assistant at a boxing club.

He earns around \$500 a month.

Kezrin is motivated by his girlfriend to keep on the straight and narrow, saying: "She told me if I need money, I can ask her, but don't go back to doing such things again."

Zack still reports to the Police Cantonment Complex once a month as part of his bail conditions.

One day, he saw J there. The man was also nabbed, but was unrepentant.

He texted Zack to ask if he would want to sell his bank accounts again. The teenager rejected the offer.

"I am just a pawn. J is just like a horse or a rook. But there is always a queen and a king. They are never going to get caught because they are going to have people before them that will get caught," he said.

HELPLINES

- TOUCHline (Counselling): 1800-377-2252
- Care Corner: carey.carecorner.org.sg (for those aged 13 to 25)
- Limitless: limitless.sg/talk (for those aged 12 to 25)
- Chat, Centre of Excellence for Youth Mental Health: 6493-6500/1
- For scam-related advice: scamalert.sg or 1800-722-6688

Adapted from "Rise in money mules" by Christine Tan, The Sunday Times, Aug 13, 2023

SCAM VICTIMS' MENTAL ANGUISH

Young people are seeking help for mental health issues after falling for scams, amid a spike in ruses that have seen victims lose \$660.7 million in 2022, up from \$632 million in 2021.

Singapore Counselling Centre (SCC) said it has counselled more young scam victims in recent years, to help them through the pain of losing money in various ruses.

"Having their money and pride taken away from them against their will, victims may begin to believe they have no control over their life and future," said SCC chief well-being officer John Shepherd Lim.

A police spokesman said young people, who are more confident in their abilities to navigate the digital space, may not think they could fall for scams. "Many of them are more open to risk-taking and may underestimate the possibility of becoming a scam victim," added the spokesman.

Figures police released earlier in 2023 showed that most victims of scams in 2022 were in their 20s and 30s.

Mr Lim said young victims feel shame, which leads to low self-esteem and isolating behaviours, and helplessness. They also fear being blamed for being gullible, which worsens their feelings of guilt or shame.

Adapted from "More young people seeking counselling after falling for scams" by Christine Siow and and BNB Diviyadhaarshini, The Straits Times, Aug 7, 2023

SOUTH KOREA



The World Scout Jamboree campsite in Saemangeun, North Jeolla province, on Aug 8. The bare conditions of the area, which was reclaimed land with almost no trees or shelter, offered little respite from the effects of an ongoing heatwave. PHOTO EPA-EFE

Global scouting event hit by wave of controversies

Over the past few weeks, one event has consistently made headlines.

The World Scout Jamboree in South Korea, which took place from Aug 1 to 12, was the first global gathering of scouts since the Covid-19 pandemic.

Around 40,000 scouts, aged from 14 to 18, from 156 countries descended on a campsite in Saemangeun, near the city of Buan, ready for days filled with fun and camaraderie.

But while all scouts know that they always have to "be prepared" – the Scout motto – they were definitely caught off-guard by the many problems that plagued the jamboree.

These included heatwaves, overflowing trash bins, dirty toilets, inadequate food and bug-infested fields.

Even as red-faced organisers scrambled to fix the issues, some countries' contingents began to leave the area. All the participants were eventually forced to evacuate the campsite due to the dangers posed by Typhoon Khanun.

OVERHEATED CAMPSITE

During the event, there was a heatwave warning in North Jeolla province, where the campsite was, with temperatures hovering as high as 35 deg C daily.

The bare conditions of the area, which was reclaimed land with almost no trees or shelter, offered little respite from the heat.

By the third day of the jamboree, more than 200 scouts had fallen ill due to heat exhaustion.

Another 800 scouts suffered sunburn, bug bites and other ailments.

Local broadcasters reported that some scouts were "stuck" at the remote campsite despite the heat, citing anonymous staff members.



A participant receiving medical treatment at the Jamboree Hospital in the city of Buan, which is near the campsite, on Aug 4. PHOTO REUTERS

"It's hard to even arrange bus rides on your own," one worker said.

Britain, which had the largest delegation with 4,400 members, was the first to announce that it was moving its participants to hotels in Seoul for the rest of their stay to alleviate pressure on the site.

The United States followed suit, relocating its 1,500 participants to the US Army base Camp Humphreys that was near the jamboree site.

THE SINGAPORE EXPERIENCE

Singapore was the third country to leave the site.

Medical concerns were behind the move by the 67-strong contingent, according to its leader Ang Wee Jin.

Mr Ang told The Straits Times that "the trigger point for us was really the medical facilities", and noted that some of the scouts suffered fatigue from the "stifling and dry" heat and needed rest.

He said: "They were quite packed and it looked



like (the staff) were going to be overwhelmed... I was quite afraid that if we needed medical access and we could not get it, it would be quite nightmarish."

There was no pressure from the parents to relocate the student scouts, he added.

Mr Ang said parents and the scouts themselves were keen to stay on for the full experience. But, for the safety of the whole contingent, they subsequently supported the decision to move.

It relocated to a South Korean government facility in Daejeon on Aug 5.

However, the scouts continued to participate in daily activities at the campsite, commuting 1½ hours by buses provided by the organisers.

River Valley High School student Neo Zheng Kang said that roughing it out in South Korea was "just like (camping on) Pulau Ubin".

The 17-year-old scout told ST that his first overseas camping experience was "not overly bad", adding that "as scouts, we are conditioned to adapt to our surroundings".

The contingent flew home on Aug 12.

GOVERNMENT INTERVENES

The South Korean government worked to salvage the situation by deploying military doctors and nurses to the site, a fleet of air-conditioned buses for the scouts to use as refuge from the heat, and refrigerator trucks to provide cold water.

Companies also pitched in. Samsung dispatched an 11-member medical team, while LG donated some 50,000 drinks and 10,000 neck coolers.

But the threat of Typhoon Khanun caused the government to issue orders to evacuate the remaining participants still staying on the campsite.

They were moved to 130 locations in Seoul and other regions on Aug 8.

All the participants eventually reunited at a closing ceremony at the World Cup Stadium in Seoul on Aug 11. It included a glitzy two-hour K-pop concert featuring acts like NewJeans and NCT Dream.

The Straits Times, Reuters, BBC, The Guardian, The Korea Herald, The Korea Times, Korea JoongAng Daily

A participant drinking at a water supply zone of the camping site on Aug 4. On Aug 6, it was reported that more than 600 participants had to be treated for heat-related ailments. PHOTO REUTERS



Scouts cooling themselves under a spray of water mist during preparations to leave the jamboree site on Aug 8. Temperatures at the site had hovered above 33 deg C. PHOTO AFP



The jamboree ended with a K-pop concert at the Seoul World Cup Stadium in western Seoul on Aug 11. The Yonhap news agency reported that around 1,000 employees at public institutions – such as the Korea Development Bank and the Korea Electric Power Corporation – were "mobilised" to help out with the concert. The choice of venue was controversial to some, as the stadium's wildly expensive "hybrid grass", ideal for sporting events, could be damaged by the concert stage. PHOTO EPA-EFE

SOCIAL STUDIES: THE PRESIDENCY

ARTICLE 1: Understanding the role of Singapore's president

As Singapore prepares for the upcoming presidential election, the spotlight is once again on the unique institution of the elected president. Do we really need such a high bar for this office and what qualities should a president possess to perform the role well?

INTENT OF THE ELECTED PRESIDENCY

The elected presidency was introduced with an intent to serve as a "second key" to safeguard Singapore's reserves and exercise certain other custodial powers as a check on the government of the day.

Rather than create an entirely new institution, the idea was to expand the powers of the president, who had previously performed a purely ceremonial role as head of state, via an electoral mandate.

PRESIDENCY OFTEN MISUNDERSTOOD

Given the unique nature of this institution, it is perhaps little wonder that the role of the president is still often misunderstood. In most other countries, the president is either at the apex of the executive branch of government, or a ceremonial head of state akin to a constitutional monarch.

Some assume that because Singapore's president is elected, he or she must have a political agenda or champion a set of policies. Indeed, there have been prospective candidates in previous elections who seemed to intimate a larger role for the president than is consistent with the constitutional mandate.

At the other end of the spectrum is the misunderstanding that the president's role is still mostly ceremonial and does not involve complex decision-making. After all, it may appear to be a no-brainer to assent to a drawdown of the reserves during times of crisis such as the 2008 global financial crisis or the Covid-19 pandemic.

However, besides exercising judgment on whether a drawdown of past reserves is justified, the president also has to weigh the details of the Government's request – including what the sums are to be used for.

The president is also required to consult the Council of Presidential Advisers (CPA), a body of highly experienced public and private sector leaders. In other instances, the president may consult the CPA but is not bound by law to do so.

BALANCE NEEDED IN EXERCISE OF PRESIDENT'S POWERS

In instituting the protection of reserves framework and the elected presidency, the Government in 1991 was in effect tying its hands and subjecting itself to an external check, seeing this as a necessary safeguard against the risk of a future wasteful government squandering the reserves that had been accumulated over the years.

The elected government in any parliamentary democracy must have sufficient flexibility to pursue its agenda per its electoral mandate, despite the need for checks and balances. The fine bal-



Before President Halimah Yacob, the heads of states were (top row from left) Mr Yusof Ishak, Mr Benjamin Henry Sheares, Mr Devan Nair, Mr Wee Kim Wee, (bottom row from left) Mr Ong Teng Cheong, Mr S R Nathan and Dr Tony Tan. Mr Ong was Singapore's first elected president when he took office in 1993.

ance needed in Singapore's unique system is that the president should not set out to frustrate the Government's agenda, even while serving as a check on the Government.

The system functions best when the president is independent without being unnecessarily antagonistic – that is, prepared to rein in an irresponsible government, without frustrating a responsible one.

ON QUALITIES AND QUALIFICATIONS

What qualities and qualifications, then, should be required of the elected president?

To potentially override the elected government on financial and other matters, the president must be highly experienced and command respect, besides having legitimacy conferred upon him or her by the electorate.

Eligibility via the public sector service requirement is restricted to some 50 senior public sector positions, including those of Cabinet ministers and permanent secretaries.

The private sector service requirement has been tightened to now require candidates to have served for at least three years as the most senior executive of a profitable company with an average of \$500 million in shareholders' equity.

The high bar is understandable, considering that the elected president's decisions potentially concern billions of dollars, even if it limits the number of potential candidates from the private sector to a select group.

In any case, the Presidential Elections Committee may exercise discretion to certify a candidate who has the experience and ability comparable to someone who has served as the chief executive of a company with a shareholders' equity of at least \$500 million.

A president must also be a unifying figure for all Singaporeans and represent Singapore on the international stage.

Without a political agenda to push ahead, the contest becomes not one among competing manifestos but a judgment of which candidate can best fulfil the demands of office in terms of financial experience, independence of mind, community standing and public profile.

The criteria for candidacy are such that only heavyweights from the public, private or non-profit sectors can contest.

INCUMBENT PRESIDENT CAN SHAPE THE ROLE

Even within the bounds of the Constitution, a president can shape his or her role while remaining apolitical and without usurping the role of the Government.

Each elected president brings something distinctive to the role, helping to build up this unique and important national institution.

Adapted from "Elected presidency: Selecting the right person for a unique office" by Terence Ho, The Straits Times, June 10, 2023



Draw a mind map to illustrate the broad role of the government, and the role of citizens, in working for the good of society.



The head of state of Singapore is the president who is directly elected by the people. Using information from the article, discuss with your group:

- what the roles and responsibilities of the president are; and
- why it is important that every eligible Singaporean votes responsibly in the upcoming presidential election.



Military policeman Muhammad Hairil Mardini and fellow personnel from the Military Police Enforcement Unit taking a selfie with President Halimah Yacob at the National Day Observance Ceremony at the Istana on Aug 8. CMG FILE PHOTO

ARTICLE 2: The legacy of the nation's first female head of state

President Halimah Yacob announced in May that she will not stand for re-election in the upcoming presidential election. In her six years in office, she has championed social causes and spoken up for vulnerable groups such as those with disabilities or older workers. Here are five points to note about her presidency:

1. A president of 'firsts'

As the nation's eighth and first female president, Madam Halimah has been vocal about gender equality. For example, when she spoke out in support of the White Paper on Singapore Women's Development released by the Government in 2022. She has also spoken at various forums such as the Women's Forum Global Meeting.

Madam Halimah is also the first Malay president since Mr Yusof Ishak, who held the post from 1965 to 1970, and the first head of state to live in public housing while in office.

After being declared president on Sept 13, 2017, she continued to live in her Yishun flat, and had earlier told reporters she intended to live there during her term.

However, due to security challenges, she had to move out, though not to the Istana.

2. Outspoken on social issues

Madam Halimah has spoken her mind on a range of social issues, such as the need to protect older workers.

In October 2022, she said any changes to the law on retirement and re-employment should not remove protections for older workers from being dismissed on account of their age.

Get top news of the day, and highlights from Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong's National Day

Rally speech on Aug 20.

She also spoke up for victims when she called for a review of the law that allows men over 50 years of age to avoid the cane, in December the same year.

In a Facebook post then, she said: "Rapists should not be spared the cane just because they are 50 years old."

"It is ironic that they could escape from the pain caused by caning despite the lifetime of severe trauma and irreparable damage that they cruelly inflicted on their victims which will last a lifetime."

3. Promoting interfaith harmony

Madam Halimah has long been a strong proponent of building interfaith relationships and encouraging multicultural dialogue.

In 2019, she mooted the International Conference on Cohesive Societies, organised by the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies. Over the years, it has brought people together to discuss topics such as faith, identity and cohesion.

In June 2021, following a spate of incidents of racism, Madam Halimah penned a long Facebook post asking if the "agonising" incidents of hatred and chauvinism were one-off or reflective of a larger problem.

"Such displays are so hurtful because we thought that we had done so much to protect our cohesion until we are shaken from our belief. Our greatest fear is how such prejudice will affect our young and influence their minds," she said then.

4. Shining a light on the social sector

Under her watch, the President's Challenge has focused on empowering people with disabilities, building a digitally inclusive society and supporting caregivers, among other causes.

Her weekly schedule is packed with visits to

various social service agencies, non-profit organisations as well as companies that promote the causes she supports.

In 2018, Madam Halimah launched the Empowering for Life Fund under the President's Challenge to help disadvantaged groups change their circumstances and bring about more sustained changes to their lives.

5. Making the Istana more accessible

In 2017, before her swearing-in ceremony, Madam Halimah said making the Istana more accessible was one of the items at the top of her agenda. A few months later, a new Picnic@Istana series, meant to be held four times a year, was kick-started as part of her efforts to do so.

She also mooted the idea of an Inclusive Garden, opened in 2021, to cater to a wide range of visitors, including the elderly in wheelchairs and people with disabilities. It has wheelchair-friendly footpaths and sensory stimulating plant varieties, among other features.

In May 2022, an animation of a children's book about the Istana was also released to get more children interested in the history of the place.

Adapted from "A president of 'firsts', a champion of social causes: Here's a look at Madam Halimah Yacob's term" by Goh Yan Han, The Straits Times, May 30, 2023



What would you consider to be the one thing Madam Halimah will be remembered for during her term as president?



In groups of up to four students, discuss the personal qualities that Singapore's president should possess, bearing in mind the country's multicultural and multi-religious population.

Lesson activities by Debra Ann Francisco

CCE

Raising awareness for those living with chronic illnesses

Read this news article and attempt the activities on the next page.

Ms Ashley Tan has spent the past four years of her life battling several debilitating chronic conditions and is almost always in pain.

Yet, even as she spares no details about her gruelling battle against her chronic illnesses, she wears the same infectious smile in all her posts on TikTok and Instagram, under the handle @ashleyschronicle.

The 19-year-old suffers from eight health complications, which all started when she contracted hand, foot and mouth disease at 15.

This resulted in her developing various neurological disorders that affect her internal organs, an unstable heart rate and blood pressure, a heightened sensitivity to pain, and migraines. In 2023, she was also diagnosed with hearing loss.

Despite being bedridden, she still finds time to help out at non-profit organisations.

She volunteers with social enterprise Lumie Lesson, which provides free lessons to disadvantaged students, and mental health initiative In-One.

Additionally, she also conducted virtual English lessons for students in Myanmar as part of the Safe Water for Every Child initiative.

Speaking to The Sunday Times from the National University Hospital, where she has been warded since March 2022 due to frequent fainting episodes, Ms Tan said that when she was first admitted, relatives and friends who visited her were curious about her conditions.

She realised there was very little awareness about her chronic conditions, which is why she decided to share about them online.

She started an Instagram account in 2021 after her friends and family encouraged her to do so. There, she met users from the United States with similar medical conditions. Over several months, they persuaded her to use TikTok to share with a wider audience.

"And so, I decided to just 'whack' and see what happens," she said, grinning.

She was surprised by how quickly her TikTok posts garnered attention.

With a wider reach, she was able to weave a greater support network that she was missing for years.

She can now exchange encouraging messages and valuable information with her more than 2,000 followers, and help people in a similar plight who approach her online.

However, going online also means dealing with toxic comments. She was accused by negative users of being attention-seeking and exaggerating her symptoms.

"If I see toxic comments on my Instagram, I take a screenshot and post it to my Instagram stories. I want to show people that this is the reality I have to deal with. Thankfully, I have supporters who defend me."

But even some of her supporters, despite their good intentions, may say the wrong thing.



Ms Ashley Tan, 19, suffers from multiple chronic disorders and is almost always in pain. Despite being bedridden, she provides free lessons to disadvantaged students and posts on TikTok and Instagram to raise more awareness about her conditions. PHOTO: INSTAGRAM/ASHLEYSCHRONICLE

One particular phrase Ms Tan dislikes hearing is, "Things will get better soon".

"I'm very direct, and when people tell me that things are going to get better, I will think, 'No, I don't think so.' This phrase is very cliched and to some people, it's very depressing to be told that."

She said that from her personal experience, such phrases tend to create false hope, and can sometimes even lead to individuals blaming themselves when things are obviously not getting better.

"People don't understand that while you can google the symptoms, people's response to the disease may vary. So always try to understand them first and put yourself in their shoes. Not enough people do that when trying to help," she said.

She believes that these problems stem from a lack of public awareness – and that social media can help to address these issues.

Ms Tan also faced discrimination in the past, as hers are "invisible illnesses". For example, she has small fibre neuropathy, a nerve disorder that results in pain attacks but has no outwardly visible signs.

To address this, Ms Tan and nine others who are around her age started a support group, Aster, with the dual goals of creating a supportive community for young people with chronic illnesses and raising awareness on medical conditions that are lesser known to the public.

They hope to make headway on this with online and physical projects, starting from June.

Asked what she had to say to others struggling with chronic illnesses, Ms Tan said: "Live. Live by doing things that mean a lot to you. Life is short. So live, meaningfully."

Adapted from: "19-year-old in constant pain, but is all smiles as she shares about her 8 chronic conditions on TikTok", by Lee Li Ying and Jefferson Lin Zi Xuan, The Sunday Times, April 9, 2023

ACTIVITIES

1. Despite Ms Tan's many conditions, she still manages to smile and even help out at non-profit organisations. What does this say about her character? If you were in her shoes, would you be able to carry yourself in the same way?

2a. Ms Tan used TikTok and Instagram to spread awareness about her chronic conditions. Think about your experiences using social media, whether it be posting about an event that you were organising or attending, or just to spread the message about something you believe in. Describe those experiences and what you gained from them. Was social media a suitable platform for you?

2b. There are always pros and cons to everything that we do, including Ms Tan's use of social media. List two pros and two cons related to her experiences, including those that are not mentioned in the article, but that you think may be relevant.

Pros: _____

Cons: _____

2c. In your opinion, considering the benefits and drawbacks, should Ms Tan continue to use social media to further her cause? Why or why not?

3. Some of the toxic comments directed at Ms Tan include accusations of seeking attention and exaggerating her symptoms. Assuming that none of these commenters know her personally, much less understand her chronic conditions, why do you think they bear such ill will towards her?

4. Have you ever posted negative comments on social media? Describe what made you do that, and how you felt after you had some time to think about it.

5. Even seemingly positive comments may have unintended effects. For example, Ms Tan dislikes the phrase "things will get better soon", and she feels that upon hearing it, some people may feel worse. Do you agree with her reasons for feeling this way? Why?

6. Ms Tan's words for those struggling with chronic illnesses are: "Live. Live by doing things that mean a lot to you. Life is short. So live, meaningfully."

Living a meaningful existence should apply to everyone and not just to those with illnesses. It is good to use our time meaningfully and with a sense of urgency. List the things that you would do, or change, right here, right now. To make yourself commit, state a deadline, too.

Changes I'd make

GOLDEN GATHERING

In July, 488 dogs assembled in front of the ruins of Guisachan House in the village of Tomich, Scotland, to take a group photo as part of the 2023 Guisachan Gathering, a kind of golden retriever convention that commemorates the anniversary of the founding of the breed.

For the photo, dog owners were instructed to leash their dog to a stake in the ground and then scurry away for about 15 seconds so that the photographer could capture the wagging horde.

Since the first group photo was taken in 2001, lovers of golden retrievers have come together ev-

ery five years to pay homage to Sir Dudley Marjoribanks, who once lived in Guisachan House. He is credited with developing the breed in 1868, when he bred a wavy-coated retriever with a tweed water spaniel.

He wanted a rugged hunting companion with a beautiful head, a loving disposition and soft, melting eyes that lived to fetch game. An obsession with tennis balls and rolling in filth apparently also came with the package.

A record number of dog owners from around the world were at this event, which was the biggest yet.

NYTIMES

