

# Foreign cheerleaders at Chingay

MDIS students from 11 countries will dance to the Rasa Sayang folk tune at the Chinese New Year parade tonight and tomorrow evening

Gurveen Kaur

After months of practising a jaunty dance routine to the Malay folk tune Rasa Sayang, the catchy ditty is now stuck in Kazakhstani student Azamat Ainakulov's head.

"This is a song I learnt in Singapore that will stay with me all my life," says the 18-year-old with a laugh.

Mr Ainakulov, who is pursuing a diploma in engineering, is among 59 international students from the Management Development Institute of Singapore (MDIS) who have signed up for the Chingay parade this year.

Hailing from 11 countries, including Russia, Myanmar, China and South Korea, they will be wearing red-and-white cheerleader outfits and will end their Rasa Sayang performance with a bang in an upbeat cheerleading dance.

The annual Chinese New Year parade will take place tonight and tomorrow evening at the F1 Pit Building.

This is the third year MDIS is participating in Chingay, says Ms Jesline Wong, the institution's director of corporate and student development, as it is one way for international students to "integrate into the local community and to encourage their participation in events and activities within and

outside of MDIS".

Indonesian student Evelyn Frances, 19, heard about the opportunity from her seniors and decided to seize the "once-in-a-lifetime experience".

"This is my first time joining such a big event and it is a rare opportunity for me to be part of something in Singapore," says the diploma in business management student.

Her coursemate, Russian student Anastasiia Butova, 18, says joining the parade is a good chance for her to make friends and learn about the local culture.

Mr Ainakulov concurs and adds that despite the language barrier at times, he is able to bond with his peers through the "language of dance".

"And I get to be on TV in Singapore. That's cool too," he quips.

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#### BOOKIT/ CHINGAY

WHERE: F1 Pit Building,

1 Republic Boulevard

WHEN: Tonight and tomorrow,

8pm

ADMISSION: \$28.50 to \$60 from Sistic (call 6348-5555 or go to [www.sistic.com.sg](http://www.sistic.com.sg))



(From top) Indonesian Evelyn Frances, Kazakhstani Azamat Ainakulov and Russian Anastasiia Butova from the Management Development Institute of Singapore will be performing at the Chingay parade. PHOTO: DON WONG FOR THE STRAITS TIMES

## Trek to little-known parts of Singapore

Gurveen Kaur

On a Saturday morning last November, programme manager Dilpreet Kaur swapped her fashionable heels for sturdy trekking boots.

With 30 other people, the 29-year-old trudged through the dense forest along Old Upper Thomson Road to visit the remnants of an old Hainanese village that has been abandoned since the 1970s.

They came across a large water receptacle shrouded by green tendrils, weathered brick structures and random items such as a radio and baby doll peeking out from the forest floor.

"It is a place I would never have discovered or visited by myself," Ms Kaur says.

The city slicker had signed up for a free urban exploring trek with Temasek Rural Exploring Enthusiasts, or T.R.E.E.

She is part of a growing number of Singaporeans who have developed an interest in urban exploration, where they traverse the island in search of hidden or little-known places where ruins still stand.

There are a handful of urban explorer groups in Singapore, including Urban Explorers of Singapore, but T.R.E.E. is perhaps the only one that regularly organises free guided treks for the public.

Started in 2014, the group has 11 members in their late 20s to 50s who are in societies that focus on photography, nature and heritage.

In 2015, the group began to open its exploration trails to friends, before extending these to the public in the second half of last year.

Mr Muhammad Herizzad Ruslan, its team leader, says: "We hope to



show unseen sides of Singapore that might disappear one day as the country continues to develop."

Treks are organised at least twice a month and participant numbers have risen from 30 when it started to about 50, says assistant team leader Faye Joseph S. Ramos, 36.

They have visited the ruins of Syonan Jinja at MacRitchie Reservoir, a Shinto shrine built by the Japanese army during the Occupation, and crossed the Causeway to Johor Baru to visit a forgotten artillery battery set up as part of Singapore's defences during World War II.

The group had discovered these places during random wanders, by word of mouth or when they were younger. Its next trek on Sunday morning will check out the former Bukit Timah Railway Station – a place Mr Muhammad Herizzad, 34, remembers from his childhood.

"I remember the station was where the rail tracks were switched. It was one of the smaller stations," he recalls.

Participants will get to peek into its control office and walk along the rail corridor towards Bukit Timah Nature Reserve to check out the caves there.

Safety is important when it

comes to organising these treks for the public. Before each trek, the team would recon the site at least thrice to ensure it is safe to explore.

The information on each location is mostly sourced from old texts, photos and trusted sources who had lived or worked in the area, says Mr Muhammad Herizzad.

A key concern is whether public access is allowed.

Mr Ramos says: "For places that have a 'no trespassing' sign, we will request permission from the relevant authority to enter. If not, we will not go there."

To cope with more participants, they divide the group and do regular headcounts. Events are posted on the group's Facebook page and a disclaimer is included on how arduous each trek might be.

A regular participant is 46-year-old housewife Louise Raggett. Besides learning about Singapore and its history, she particularly likes the anecdotes that the team shares. "The stories are not what you read on the Web," she says.

• For more information, go to [www.facebook.com/temasekexplorers](http://www.facebook.com/temasekexplorers) or [www.temasekexplorers.com](http://www.temasekexplorers.com)

Temasek Rural Exploring Enthusiasts' Mr Faye Joseph S. Ramos (far left) and Mr Muhammad Herizzad Ruslan lead urban exploring treks in search of hidden places in Singapore. ST PHOTO: CAROLINE CHIA

## Trade items, learn to upcycle at EarthFest

Lea Wee

Swap your second-hand clothes, books and DVDs; learn about upcycling at workshops; feast on plant-based food and watch a documentary on how to save the earth.

Above all, strive to live a more eco-conscious life – this is what the organiser of EarthFest hopes its visitors will do.

The event is organised by Canadian Michael Broadhead, who teaches chemistry at an international school here. He hopes the wide variety of activities will inspire visitors to lead a more eco-conscious lifestyle.

"And hopefully, they can in turn inspire and motivate others to do the same and, in the process, we can all transform our future for the better."

The festival, which is in its second edition, features 70 stalls at Marina Barrage on Sunday, about 10 more than in its inaugural year in 2015. Mr Broadhead expects to draw a crowd of about 6,000. The previous festival at the same venue drew about 4,000 visitors.

As with the first festival, this year's will feature a farmers' market, where visitors can buy fresh fruit and vegetables from local farms as well as other earth-friendly products, and a food festival, where vendors such as VeganBurg will be selling local, international and fusion food which are plant-based.

At the Maker Faire area, visitors can sign up for workshops to learn how to upcycle an umbrella into a bag or make jewellery out of soda cans and magazines.

Take part in interactive games, which are part of an outreach effort by non-governmental organisations, at the Earth Carnival area.

There will also be screenings of documentaries such as A Plastic Ocean, a 2016 work tracing the journey of two explorers as they travel to some of the most remote parts of the world to highlight plastic pollution and its impact on the environment and human health.

In particular, Singapore residents may want to watch a short film by Sandra Marichal about the journey she made to Antarctica last March to find out how global warming has affected the southernmost continent. Her goal is to encourage people here to turn up their air-conditioning by 2 deg C to help fight global warming.

This year's festival will launch PitchFest, a contest to find the best elevator pitches of sustainable ideas, such as turning bottle caps into fashion accessories. The pitch that receives the most votes by the public and the trustees of the non-profit Awesome Foundation will win \$1,000.

#### VIEWIT/ EARTHFEST

WHERE: Marina Barrage,

8 Marina Gardens Drive

WHEN: Sunday, 11am to 3.30pm

ADMISSION: Free with

registration. To register, go to [earthfestsingapore.com](http://earthfestsingapore.com)