Dragon Boat Extravaganza

112! 112! The commands echoed over the Kallang River for all to hear in the mid day of 3 December 2005. The constant rhythm of shouting synchronized all the rowers so that they could all proceed together at maximum speed. The cool breeze coupled with the gentle waves provided a peaceful and serene environment for NTU students who participated in this event to relax and to escape from the hustle and bustle of the busy city around them.

Although it was a Saturday afternoon, many students and some professors took time off and made their way to participate in this dragon boat activity. This was a breakthrough event, organized by postgraduate students for themselves with the objective to foster relationships between professors and postgraduate students. Indeed some very enthusiastic undergraduate students and alumni also joined in and had great fun. For the first time, Iranian students participated to try out a new sport that is unavailable in their home countries. For many local students, this was also their first experience of dragon boat rowing. It proved to be an unforgettable experience. Some participants may have come to get themselves a tan, some may have come to take a dip in the river but all were there to learn enthusiastically about this growing water sport.

With the sun beaming down, the participants each took a life jacket, an oar and a pair of gloves and boarded the dragon boats. Three boats were filled with the excited students, postgraduates, alumni and professors who took their commands from the volunteer instructors from the Network Technology Research Centre (NTRC). Everyone introduced themselves before setting off. They began practicing the technique and coordination that was needed in the rowing of a dragon boat.

While some fishermen lined the shore awaiting their catch, the participants adhered to the instructor’s commands and indulged themselves in the fresh air and freedom of traveling across the entire Kallang river. Back and forth, the boats were rowed across the river, giving all the participants a chance to improve and accustom themselves to the rhythm and technique of rowing a dragon boat. As time went by, the participants grew familiar with the motion of rowing and the boats raced against one another in a friendly competition. Occasionally, the boats moved beside each other it was without fail accompanied by “friendly” mutual splashing of water onto the participants in the different boats.

Before the participants knew it, three hours flew past and it was time to leave. They disembarked from the boats and dried themselves before proceeding for a group photo. As the sun began to set, the participants thanked the people who organized the event and looked forward to coming back and rowing dragon boats again in the near future. Yes, let us row!