

SINGAPORE SNIPPETS

PEDRA BRANCA DISPUTE TO BE HEARD BY INTERNATIONAL COURT OF JUSTICE

The dispute between Singapore and Malaysia over the sovereignty of Pedra Branca, Middle Rocks and South Ledge will be go before the International Court of Justice (ICJ) from Nov 6 to 23 in The Hague.

The ICJ hearings come after three rounds of written pleadings were exchanged between the two neighbours between March 2004 and November 2005.

The Singapore delegation will comprise Deputy Prime Minister, Coordinating Minister for National Security and Minister for Law Professor S Jayakumar, Chief Justice Chan Sek Keong, Attorney-General Chao Hick Tin and Ambassador-at-Large Professor Tommy Koh.

It will also include other senior Government officials and an experienced team of international legal counsel.

SERVICE INDUSTRY RECRUITING

More than 800 jobs in the service industry will be on offer today during the North West Community Development Council's (CDC) job fair at Fuchun Community Club from 9.30am to 4.30pm.

The fair offers employment opportunities in sectors including food and beverage, security, healthcare, hospitality, retail, recreation, travel and meetings, incentives, conventions and exhibitions.

The CDC has in place a scheme to train job seekers in industry-specific skills to increase their chances of finding the right

match. It has also been promoting part-time and flexi-work employment to Singaporeans. Last year, it helped more than 4,000 people secure jobs.

ARE YOU GAME TO SPEAK MANDARIN?

Are you game? If you are, you'll love this year's Speak Mandarin Campaign, which kicks off on Nov 5.

Sports, culture and the arts, design and lifestyle will be some of the activities used to show Chinese Singaporeans how they can embrace Mandarin in their daily lives.

The year-long event will take in theatre, music, travel blogs on where to go and what to eat and doing business in China.

It will also see some of Singapore's "edgy" designers pulling together to promote the campaign.

Dubbed "Speak Mandarin - Are You Game?" the drive aims to make learning the language fun and engaging, said the organisers. Log on to www.mandarin.org.sg for details.

DEEPAVALI ROAD CLOSURE

If you're headed for the curry houses along Race Course Road (between Hampshire Road and Race Course Lane), take note that the road will be closed to all vehicles between 3pm and 10pm on Saturday for the Deepavali celebrations organised by the Hindu Endowment Board.

Auxiliary police officers and marshals will be on hand to assist and regulate traffic. Vehicles parked indiscriminately will be towed away.

The generosity trap

'Single-minded' giving does nothing to help the needy

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IT SEEMS natural: When someone is in need, you give him or her money. But can the act of giving cause even more problems, trapping the poor in their poverty?

Tackling this question yesterday at the second National Volunteerism and Philanthropy and Corporate Social Responsibility Conference, keynote speaker Charles Hampden-Turner asked: "If giving is presumably the road to paradise, then is taking the stairway to hell?"

The Cambridge University senior research associate and veteran of America's "war on poverty" has spent 40 years studying such dilemmas. He has found one of the main problems for charitable organisations is "single-minded" giving, which breeds passivity and single-minded taking.

"Are we not rewarding, after a fashion, their very failure, when most of us get rewarded for our successes?" he asked.

One example is the welfare system where one must prove total incapacity and be a "100-per-cent certified slob" in order to qualify for handouts, he said. Instead of penalising welfare-takers for finding jobs, allow them to pool their welfare money to start a small business or give something back to the community.

And one dilemma is that the race for aid engenders an "upside down world" where people "race to the bottom" to "prove more wretchedness than anyone else" to garner sympathy. There is also the issue of organisations overlooking basic and less glamorous projects like sanitation.

The act of giving should be coupled with the expectation of reciprocity — a principle that will reconcile these dilemmas, and return dignity to the people at the receiving end, said Professor Hampden-Turner.

"Whatever is given to the poor should enable them to give back in some way or give to others," he said.

Micro-financing, for example, through the highly successful Grameen Bank, empowers village women in Bangladesh by offering them small loans to start businesses.

"(It) even makes those struck by earthquake, wind and fire repay. The bank will ease and extend the terms of loan, but not to repay means that the money cannot be lent to others," he said.

This fosters a sense of resilience and community.

The bank requires that clients borrow in groups of five as a form of mild social pressure to repay. This has resulted in an amazing 97-per-cent repayment rate, said Prof Hampden-Turner.

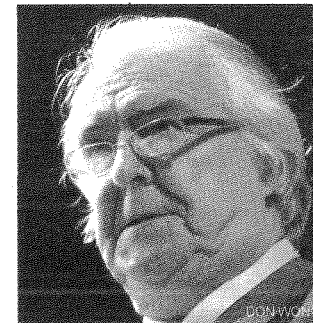
Speaking to TODAY he said: "This relationship of reciprocity and mutuality is much more effective than any other type of relationship."

Non-government organi-

sations (NGOs) too, should take the same collective approach, he said. They can go into areas banks cannot, so they should cooperate.

"Why don't they look for reliable people in poor towns or villages and introduce them to banks? And why shouldn't the bank give the NGO money for every satisfactory client they locate?" he asked.

"We should be trying many more experiments. Seventy-five per cent of all new start-ups fail, but people still go on. The same should apply to social entrepreneurship and innovation. If three out of 10 work, we're still better off."



If giving is presumably the road to paradise, then is taking the stairway to hell?

— Cambridge University's Prof Charles Hampden-Turner

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Now, a matchmaker for charities

TO HELP Voluntary Welfare Organisations (VWOs) overcome problems in recruiting board members, the National Volunteer and Philanthropy Centre (NVPC) has set up a scheme to match organisations and interested volunteers

Persons with Special Needs. Said the acting president for the 21-year-old charity, Dr Francis C Chen: "We have tried unsuccessfully to recruit board members, and three of the members of the original board (the oldest of whom is 81 years old) are still clinging on in