

Unique way for students to study issues

SIXTY humanities scholars from Raffles Junior College (RJC) are taking part in a unique programme aimed at enhancing their knowledge of local and regional policy issues.

Aptly named Raffles Asia, the college has lined up a host of prominent speakers to share their insights on Asian perspectives and engage the first-year students through dialogue sessions.

Students will also make partial use of their General Paper lesson time to discuss issues about Asian history, globalisation, and the cultural and arts scene in the region.

When the programme wraps up in March next year, the students will, in groups, prepare and present their own policy papers based on specific themes to policymakers for debate.

The best ones could even be selected for commercial publication.

Said programme facilitator Philip McConnell, an English Literature teacher: "Essentially, we are taking great strides to prepare these students for life in university and beyond. It's a demanding programme that will nurture them



YEE QING XIANG, RIC PHOTOGRAPHIC SOCIETY
Professor Tommy Koh launched the programme and praised RJC for introducing the scheme.

into bi-cultural and multi-cultural players."

Professor Tommy Koh, Ambassador-at-large to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs launched the programme last Friday.

After a short lecture entitled, *Asia: Engaging and Transcending the Region*, he faced a barrage of questions from the students who wanted his take on issues ranging from human rights, free speech, religion and bilateral ties between countries.

He praised RJC for introducing such a programme, and expressed his hope that other institutions will follow suit.

"Singapore needs to be deeply engaged in South-east Asia, and Asia at large. Our students must start young and learn and appreciate the languages, culture and civilisations of these countries."

Five more guest speakers are set to visit RJC in the next few months.

Apart from several professors from the National University of Singapore, there will be a seminar-style forum in July hosted by Kishore Mahbubani, dean of the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy. — Lee U-Wen

Think inventively & systematically

Israeli facilitator swears by the powers of SIT

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YOU wouldn't apply words like "disciplined" and "structured" to being creative or innovative, but for Israeli facilitator Erez Tsalik, these words are the cornerstone of an innovative method known as Systematic Inventive Thinking (SIT).

Mr Tsalik, who was recently in Singapore to conduct a series of workshops and seminars on the method, describes it as "a very structured way to train our minds to explore more possibilities and to break fixedness".

Once an intensive method used in the former USSR as a way of resolving problems in engineering and technology, SIT has since been refined and developed in Israel and is now used in a variety of fields — from marketing, communications, problem solving, product development and advertising.

The method applies five creative patterns to problems, one of which is division where one takes a problem, breaks it up into components and attempts to solve it by looking at it from new angles.

Examples of innovation by this process include Epoxy glue and detachable fuel tanks for rockets.

Mr Tsalik is so convinced by the method that, when asked if he believes his method works, he said "no".

"I don't believe that the method works. I know it as fact that the method works. Everyone can do it," he asserted.

Singaporeans, especially.

"I think Singaporeans are very suitable

for the method because they are very disciplined and though they think they are not creative, we know that is wrong."

In fact, the practitioners of SIT are so convinced that Singapore is perfectly suited to the method that they have been sending Mr Tsalik here for the last two years at a financial loss.

He explained: "The reason we came to Singapore in the first place is that we feel that we should focus on education. Financially, the only way for us to be able to afford it is working with the business sector, but we are extremely passionate about working with schools and universities."

The SIT group is already working with some Singapore schools, but they hope to work with more schools and not only teach children to be innovative, but change the way schools teach to become more innovative.

"If it were for the money, we would stay in the United States and Europe. It's an ideological factor that drives us to come to Singapore. We strongly feel that we have a simple way to contribute," he said.

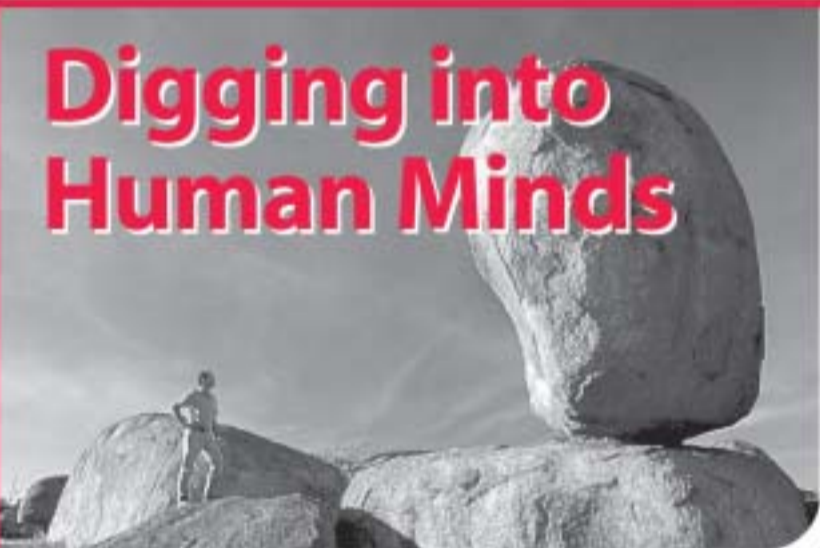
The aspiring cook and musician likens both his hobbies to SIT.

"Especially with rhythm, you have to keep the beat and play in a structured way, but when you improvise, you allow yourself to spin off that structured rhythm. It's very much like SIT."

Mr Tsalik will be conducting several more seminars in Singapore this year.

For more information on SIT, visit www.sitsite.com

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Information Session

Date : 3 May 2005 (Tuesday)

Time : 7.00 pm

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