

Become a numbers whiz with Vedic maths

By CHERYL LIM

OVER the past 10 years, 420 people here have mastered an alternative way to solve mathematics sums at Vedic Method Education Centre.

This method, called Vedic maths – an Indian system compiled between 1911 and 1918 by Indian mathematician Sri Bharati Krsna Tirthaji – allows you to calculate answers to maths problems in a few seconds.

While students of the system will not be able to use it in school examinations, they can use it to double-check their answers, said the centre's managing director, Mr John Sasayiah, 38.

About 40 per cent of his students are in Primary 6, he said. The rest include adults and junior-college students. The youngest is a kindergarten pupil.

He set up the centre in 2000 and hired a maths professor from India to train its teachers, after discovering Vedic maths while on a work stint in Mumbai. An Indian national who "did not have more than high-school education" solved sums which Mr Sasayiah had been labouring over within seconds – using Vedic maths.

Madam Hannah Theodore, 35, a counsellor who took up Vedic maths, said: "I was intrigued by the techniques... I intend to sign my six-year-old son up for the course and took it so that I could help him with it in future."

Vedic Method Education Centre is an exhibitor at Kidz Academy, an exhibition for parents and kids run by Singapore Press Holdings' Sphere Exhibits. It runs from today to Sunday at Suntec Singapore's Hall 603. Admission is free.

Learn to survive in open waters

By PAMELA CHOW

JUST because you have learnt how to swim does not guarantee your survival in open waters.

You may not know how to stay afloat long enough for help to arrive, or you may get overcome by panic.

Such considerations will be better addressed when the National Water Safety Council (NWSC) rolls out the new-and-improved SwimSafer programme come July 5, to equip people with water-survival skills.

It will replace the National Survival Swimming Award (Nassa) and Learn-To-Swim programme.

Unlike Learn-To-Swim, which annually trains 30,000 primary-school pupils in basic swimming proficiency, SwimSafer places more emphasis on water safety. It will teach people how to survive in open waters:

Participants will learn how to orientate themselves underwater, and to remain calm and stay afloat.

Swimming techniques like the dolphin kick and the butterfly stroke, which are more useful for competitive swimmers, will no longer be taught, given their "limited use in survival situations", said Mr Richard Tan, a member of the NWSC.

Class sizes will also shrink from 20 children to a maximum of 10, "to ensure much more individual time is spent on each child", said Mrs Cory Gambardella, deputy director of the Safe Swimming Division at the Singapore Sports Council, which is a partner in both SwimSafer and Learn-To-Swim.

"The lessons are customised for each child," she added.

This is key as each child learns at a different pace and the class is a mix of students from different stages and age groups.

The NWSC was formed in 2007 after a chain of drowning fatalities. Drownings at sea rose from 10 in 2004 to 24 in 2007.

The council flew to Western Australia in 2007 to observe advances in water-safety efforts there. The Royal Life Saving Society of Australia's Swim-and-Survive programme has reduced child-drowning deaths by 75 per cent.

In July 2008, the NWSC began to review the local water-safety system, consulting stakeholders, schools, parents and swimming instructors.

Unlike the 10-hour Learn-To-Swim course, SwimSafer will cover six stages over a total of 12 hours of lessons, which include underwater-orientation and diving skills.

Pupils midway through Learn-To-Swim will have to take a proficiency test before being allocated to a stage under SwimSafer.

Those awarded bronze or silver under Nassa will be chan-

nelled to the silver or gold – the final two – stages of SwimSafer respectively.

As in Learn-To-Swim, enrolment fees for SwimSafer will be subsidised by the Government.

While the programme will be rolled out at schools, NWSC "encourages participants of all ages to sign up for...SwimSafer to (improve) water-safety knowledge and acquire water-survival skills," said Mr Derrick Chee, secretariat of NWSC.

The lessons will be conducted at the 24 public swimming complexes islandwide.

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HELPDESK 我的字典

Proficiency: 熟练 shú liàn

Orientate: 适应新环境 shì yìng xīn huán jìng

Customised: 定制的 dìng zhì de

Consulting: 就教的 jiù jiào de

5-storey wing to come for Parkway East Hospital

By RACHEL CHAN

THE newly-christened Parkway East Hospital plans to build a new five-storey annexe wing in the near future, to cater to rising demand for general medicine, general surgery, orthopaedic treatment and maternity care.

The new wing will have three 35-bed wards – for the categories of general medicine; general surgery and orthopaedics; and maternity – and medical suites for specialists.

It will add about 100 beds to the 118-bed hospital – formerly called East Shore Hospital – said Dr Michael Tan, Parkway East Hospital chief executive, at the hospital's official launch under its new name yesterday.

The hospital has seen its

number of inpatients grow by 20 per cent and that of outpatients by 25 per cent last year, after undergoing year-long rejuvenation works, he said.

The makeover – which included the building of a new VIP suite and new shops, and the upgrading of rooms – drew 10 more specialist clinics to set up shop there, bringing the total number of clinics to 35.

The specialists brought in more patients, Dr Tan said.

"There's been a strong demand from specialists who want to come and practise here, because there is a strong demand in the eastern part of Singapore," he added.

Singaporeans, who make up 90 per cent of Parkway East's patients, are becoming more afflu-

ent and demanding health care of a higher quality, he said.

"You'd be surprised that there is quite a strong local demand for VIP suites. We've had many parents who say they want to stay in with their child who is having fever," he said.

So, the hospital built its new VIP suite with a section for the patient, and another for visiting family members who want to sleep over.

It costs \$988 a night, resembles a five-star hotel room and is equipped with a Sony PlayStation.

Mrs Maggie Wa, 39, a homemaker with two sons aged five and 10, said: "If I have a third baby, I hope to deliver it in Parkway East."

Her home is a five-minute walk away from the hospital.

The hospital was acquired by parent company Parkway Holdings in 1995 and was renamed last month.

The listed company also

owns Gleneagles and Mount Elizabeth hospitals, which are located downtown, and 13 other hospitals in five Asian countries outside Singapore.

Last Thursday, Fortis Healthcare, one of the largest hospital-chain owners in India, announced that it had purchased a 23.9 per cent stake in Parkway Holdings.

At yesterday's event, attended by Health Minister Khaw Boon Wan, Parkway Holdings' current chairman – Mr Richard Seow – announced his intention to step down.

The Delhi-based Fortis Healthcare, run by one of India's richest families, had announced last week that it would nominate its chairman, Mr Malvinder Mohan Singh, as Parkway Holdings' new chairman.

Mr Malvinder and his brother, Mr Shivinder, who are two of the world's richest Indian men, were present at the event.

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