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SINGAPORE
ROUND-UPNEW CENTRE FOR CHINA
VISAS AT RAFFLES PLACE

FROM the middle of next month, Singaporeans and foreign nationals who need a visa to enter China will be directed to a new visa centre at Raffles Place, The Straits Times reported.

The Chinese embassy yesterday announced that the centre, located at the Royal Brothers Building in Malacca Street, will meet the rising demand for such services and will cut applicants' queueing time.

The centre will have extended hours at its 11 counters: 9am to 3pm for visa applications and 9am to 4pm for collection.

WOMEN'S GROUPS ORGANISE
INTEGRATION EVENT ON SUN

THE People's Association Women's Integration Network Council and the Indian Women's Association are jointly organising a carnival called Harmony and Integration at Queenstown Community Centre (365, Commonwealth Avenue) on Sunday, from 1pm to 6pm.

About 1,000 participants are expected at the event.

URA TO PUT UP JURONG
LAKE SITE FOR TENDER

THE Urban Redevelopment Authority has accepted an application from a developer to put up the first sale site in Jurong Lake District for sale via public tender.

The 1.9ha land parcel located in Jurong Gateway Road next to the Jurong East MRT station was made available for sale through the Reserve List system in 2008.

New spa alliance to tackle closures

BY SIA LING XIN

MORE spas have stepped forward to offer bailout packages to victims of the now-defunct salon Wax in the City, bringing the number up from just three last week to 13.

Representatives from 22 beauty-and-wellness firms turned up at a closed-door meeting organised by Atos Wellness Group in a spa shop at The Cathay yesterday.

Atos Wellness, Subtle Senses and Rustic Nirvana were the first three spas to commit to helping out Wax's customers.

The customers were left **high and dry**, with packages costing up to a few thousand dollars and which were not fully claimed, when Wax shut down.

Representatives from 10 other spas pledged to help the customers, who are believed to number more than 3,000.

Ms Rachael Lim, administrative coordinator of Beauty Lane, said it stepped in to "help preserve the name of the beauty-and-wellness industry".

"We want to help the customers, as it is not their fault that the spas they signed packages with closed down," she said.

A website listing the firms taking part in this bailout campaign will be up by the end of the month.

Said Mr Ananda Rajah, 53, CEO of Atos Wellness: "We will need time to finalise the terms and conditions, and to contact the Consumers Association of Singapore to get a list of affected customers."

He believes that more centres will come forward to offer help.

There will be a **cap** on the number of Wax customers each participating centre takes in, and some may also decide to put a cap on the value left in the cus-



PROACTIVE: Atos Wellness' Ananda Rajah, Subtle Senses' Gerald Lim and Rustic Nirvana's Yvette Chiang held a meeting with other spas at The Cathay yesterday. (PHOTO: THE STRAITS TIMES)

tomers' packages which can be redeemed, he said.

Once the website is up, customers can choose which outlet they wish to sign up with.

The first three spas to step forward have also set up an **alliance**, the Spa, Beauty and Wellness Alliance, to address the fallout of a spa's closure, said Mr Ananda.

He added that the alliance is currently in touch with Spa Association and Spa and Wellness Association on drafting up regulation guidelines.

Civil servant Janice Sim, 29, who has a Wax package, said she hopes to redeem **manicure** services, as she had signed the Wax package for those services.

"I am glad that people are looking at long-term solutions," she said.

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HELPDESK 我的字典

High and dry: 孤立无援的
gū lì wú yuán de

Cap: 限额 xiàn é

Alliance: 联盟 lián méng

Manicure: 修指甲 xiū zhǐ jiǎ

Another spa's fate unsure

HAS another spa shut its doors?

Villa RainTree Resort & Spa, located in Labrador Nature Reserve in Pasir Panjang, has been closed for at least the past week. Concerned customers who have not been able to make appointments have been calling nearby restaurant Olive Ristorante, an employee there told *my paper*.

"I was told by the 'spa owner' to direct any enquiries to this person," she said, before giving us a mobile number.

When *my paper* called the number, a woman who wished to be known only as M. C. said that the spa has been closed for renovations for the last week.

M. C. said that she joined another spa a couple of months ago, but returns to Villa RainTree to help out as she handles many of the customers there.

She said: "The spa is closed only for renovation and air-conditioning and electrical works. They should be completed in two weeks' time."

Customers who wish to get their spa treatments done while renovation works are going on can call her. She will arrange for appointments at alternative venues, she said.

One of the spas is Spa Republic in Festive Hotel at Resorts World Sentosa, she said.

An employee at Spa Republic confirmed that customers from Villa RainTree have been redirected to them for the past few days. However, she is unsure about the reason behind this arrangement between the two spas and when it will end.

The owner of Spa Republic is Mr Francis Phun, chairman of tourism and leisure company Singapore Explorer, which owns Villa RainTree Resort & Spa. He could not be contacted.

Three months ago, there was a High Court action to wind up Singapore Explorer for non-payment of accounts. Singapore Explorer was registered in January 1992 and runs a range of services, from spas to restaurants.

Get sneak preview of
art-appreciation centre

BY RACHEL CHAN

VISITORS to the future National Art Gallery, Singapore can expect not just to view art, but can also watch films or create their own versions of exhibits.

Come 2013, when the visual-arts institution housed at City Hall and the former Supreme Court is ready, a 1,800-sq m area will be dedicated to helping children and families appreciate art through creative play.

The Centre of Art Education, which will occupy the first floor of City Hall, will have facilities for learning, workshops, art galleries and interactive stations.

It will be the first such space of this scale within a Singapore museum, said Ms Suenne Megan Tan, deputy director of programmes, education and outreach at the National Art Gallery, Singapore.

To ensure that it takes off, her team is seeking public feedback before finalising details of the permanent features. In doing so, it is testing some of the interactive concepts at a research exhibition at the Singapore Art Museum.

The show, Realism In Asian Art, runs from today till July 4. It features 78 paintings from eight Asian nations, including

Singapore. A screening of six South-east Asian short films provides a sampler of a film programme the gallery might offer.

There is also an activity corner, where visitors can explore portraiture. Three trained gallery sitters will answer questions about the exhibition.

"Shows like (this) provide a foretaste of the many exciting possibilities in the future of the Gallery. Through such experimentation, we will test cutting-edge ideas in curation, programming and education," said Rear-Admiral (NS) Lui Tuck Yew, Acting Minister for Information, Communications and the Arts, at the opening of the show last night.

This is the second in a series of research exhibitions, which aim to boost the Gallery's research in South-east Asian art and provide a platform for exper-

imenting with ideas for future programmes and content.

The first research exhibition was an Anthony Poon retrospective, held last October. The third, which begins next month, features works by Singapore artist Yeh Chi Wei.

It will feature online learning via an interactive microsite, a first for the Gallery, said Ms Tan. She said: "We want to provide different access points to exhibitions, be they film or new media."

Mrs Seenu Samuel, a mother of two in her early 40s, agreed that the interactive features might draw the young.

"There is something to do for everyone and children won't think they're being dragged along to a place only old fuddy-duddies visit," said the volunteer guide with Friends of the Museums Singapore.

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