

mypaper

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SINGAPORE
ROUND-UPMAN CHARGED WITH
ROBBING, HURTING CABBY

A MAN, 36, was arrested on Monday, within two hours of allegedly robbing a taxi driver.

At 8.30pm, the cabby, 56, had been resting in his taxi, parked in an open-air carpark in Telok Blangah Rise, when he was assaulted and robbed of \$60, a CashCard and a car key.

At 10.10pm, two members of the public called the police about a man who was looking into parked cars at a carpark in Telok Blangah Crescent.

Police officers detained the man and found three ez-link cards, three CashCards, about \$150 in cash and a bunch of keys. Some items were later found to belong to the cabby.

The suspect was charged yesterday with robbery with hurt, which carries a jail term of up to 20 years and at least 12 strokes of the cane.

ROADS IN CITY HALL AREA
CLOSED ON 2 SATURDAYS

SOME roads in the City Hall area will be partly or fully closed between 2am and 11pm on this and next Saturday, for the National Day Parade's National Education Shows.

Connaught Drive and St Andrew's Road will be closed from 2am to 11pm. Raffles Avenue will be partially closed from 11am to 11pm.

Others – such as Nicoll Highway, Beach Road and Stamford Road – will be closed from 1pm to 11pm.

Getai gets glitzier with fresh faces

BY LOW WEI XIANG

SHOWBIZ veteran Wang Lei is unfazed by the stiff competition from **newbies** on the getai scene.

In fact, the 49-year-old welcomes it. "Competition, if anything, is good for raising the industry's standard," Wang told *my paper* ahead of the annual Stomp Getai Awards at Kreta Ayer Square yesterday.

The awards, started in 2006 and organised by Singapore Press Holdings citizen-journalism website Stomp, recognises the talents of Singapore's getai community.

Getai, or literally "song stage" in Chinese, refers to **alfresco** performances held during the Hungry Ghost Festival, which falls on the seventh month of the Chinese calendar. The festival starts on Aug 10 this year.

The getai industry has, in the past two years, been **plagued** by recession as well as inflation, which has made the staging of shows 20 per cent more expensive, said industry players.

With the economy picking up this year, both organisers and performers are reporting better business than last year.

Mr Aaron Tan, 34, founder of Lex(s) Entertainment and Productions, which organises getai performances, has seen a 20 per cent rise in the number of bookings.

As for Wang, his advance earnings from January to now have grown by 30 per cent, compared to what he got in the same period last year.

Even six-year-old Cody Lee, the youngest winner of this year's Stomp awards, is now being paid at least 25 per cent more for each appearance.

The wave of newcomers in

the highly competitive industry has generated more interest and buzz in the glitzy tradition, said Wang.

The number of getai performers under 21 has more than doubled, from fewer than eight three years ago to about 15 now, he estimated.

"The girls can sing, speak and dance well," he added.

As a result, the veterans are compelled to broaden their **repertoire** to include dance and comedic segments – a far cry from three years ago, when performers only had to sing, he said.

Despite the popularity of the newbies, Wang said the "oldies" can hold their own.

"We are better at friendly banter and interaction with the audience," he said.

The results of this year's awards seem to bear that out.

The top three winners of the Top 10 People's Choice Awards were all getai performers with at least 10 years of experience.

Wang took the top spot in the popularity ranking, with 243,000 votes.

Second-placed Ming Zhu Sisters, both 42, garnered 186,000 votes, while third-placed Zhong Jing Ling, 41, got 66,500 votes.

A total of nearly one million votes were cast by the public over a four-month period that ended in January.

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HELPDESK 我的字典

Newbies: 新手 xīn shǒu

Alfresco: 露天的 lù tiān de

Plagued: 烦扰 fán rǎo

Repertoire: 全部技能
quán bù jì néng



WINNERS BOTH: Getai veteran Wang Lei, 49, welcomes new blood like six-year-old Cody Lee, because competition helps to raise standards in the industry, he says. (PHOTO: ONG WEE JIN)

STOMP ACCOLADES

- ◆ **Best Getai Band:** Qi Shi
- ◆ **Best Costume:** Bao Bei Jie Mei (Babes in the City)
- ◆ **Best Newcomer:** Sherraine Law
- ◆ **Best Foreign Singer:** Wu Pei Zhi
- ◆ **Best Female Host:** Lin Ru Ping
- ◆ **Best Male Host:** Qi Xian
- ◆ **Best Getai Performing Group:** Ming Zhu Sisters
- ◆ **Most Watched Online Video:** Ming Zhu Sisters

- ◆ **Best Female Artiste:** Lee Peifen
- ◆ **Best Male Artiste:** Wang Lei

Judges for the awards were: Mr Zhong Yeow Nan, president, Singapore Artiste Association; Mr Chew V Ming, Stomp editor; Mr Glenn Low, life/entertainment news editor of my paper's Chinese section; Mr Aaron Tan, director of Lex(s) Entertainment and Productions.

Ethnic communities sensitive to others' feelings

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vigilant for disparaging remarks, or divisive and radicalised ideas by religious leaders.

Speaking at the opening of the inaugural Muis International Conference on Muslims in Multicultural Societies, Mr Goh said Singapore is conscious that racial and religious fault lines could be exploited, given the country's multicultural society.

He told the 250 local and international academics and government officials present that the Government and its various ethnic communities here have played vital roles to ensure racial harmony.

He explained how Muslims here have shown sensitivity to the feelings of non-Muslims by modifying the Muslim daily call

to prayer, which had initially been amplified through loudspeakers at mosques in the early morning and evening.

The loudspeakers were tilted to face inwards, and their volume reduced. Over time, the call was broadcast over radio and the mosques did away with loudspeakers.

Mr Goh said that it had been necessary to make the modifications. Since Singaporeans live in high-rise housing in close proximity, if nothing had been done, the non-Muslims, who make up the majority of the population here, would have been less willing to accept the building of new mosques in their vicinity.

Similarly, other religions have made compromises too, Mr Goh noted. For instance, when Taoists burned giant joss

sticks during their festival celebrations in temples and open places, the smoke irritated many people. In the light of this, the Taoists agreed to limit the number and size of joss sticks used, and to confine their use mostly in temples.

And non-Muslim employers give Muslim staff time off from work to attend weekly Friday prayers, Mr Goh noted.

Singapore would not enjoy the social cohesiveness it has today if the majority had used its dominance to override the interests of minorities, he said.

The Government has also played a role by setting up common secular spaces like workplaces and community clubs where Singaporeans can feel comfortable, regardless of their beliefs. Policies are also in place

so that no one is denied of services due to their beliefs.

To promote inter-faith understanding, the Government has also created platforms for leaders, followers and community members of different religions to have open dialogues.

Mr Goh said such inter-faith communication has helped set the tone on the ground.

In 2008 when the anti-Islam video, Fitna, was released online by a Dutch politician, Muslims here had reacted calmly despite being deeply offended. Non-Muslims also publicly rejected the views in the video.

Mr Goh said: "The measured response and mutual respect are indeed exemplary steps towards overcoming the challenge of religious diversity."

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