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Thaipusam in Penang: A Multidimensional Educational Experience

Thaipusam, a vibrant Hindu festival celebrated in Penang, offers multifaceted learning opportunities for learners in schools and higher education. This festival, primarily observed by the Tamil community, showcases cultural richness and religious devotion. For students and faculty at DISTED, Thaipusam serves as an ideal platform to understand and appreciate cultural diversity. It emphasises respecting cultural and religious practices, which are crucial in today's globalised world.

The festival's elaborate processions and rituals provide practical insights into event management. Students in fields like business, hospitality, and event management can study the complexities of organising such large-scale events. They learn about logistics, crowd control, safety measures, and the overall dynamics of festival management. This real-world exposure complements their academic learning and equips them with practical skills.

Moreover, Thaipusam's community-driven nature encourages social responsibility and volunteerism. DISTED College can leverage this aspect to engage students in community service, enhancing their sense of civic duty and community bonding. Such participation enriches their educational experience and fosters a deeper connection with the local community.

The festival also presents a valuable context for tourism and marketing studies. Students can explore the impact of cultural festivals on tourism, understand the economic benefits for the local community, and analyse effective promotional strategies for such events.

In summary, Thaipusam provides institutions of higher learning with a unique educational platform. It enriches the curriculum by offering interdisciplinary learning, promoting cultural sensitivity and inclusivity, and fostering community engagement. These experiences prepare students to be adaptable, culturally aware, and socially responsible individuals, fitting for the demands of a globalised environment.



Prof. Dr. Vikneswaran Nair
President 院长

槟城大宝森节：多维教育体验

大宝森节是槟城一个充满活力的印度教节日，它为学校和高等教育机构的学习者提供了多方面的学习机会。这个节日主要由泰米尔社区庆祝，展示了丰富的文化和宗教信仰。对于 DISTED 的师生来说，大宝森节是了解和欣赏文化多样性的理想平台。它强调尊重文化和宗教习俗，这在当今全球化的世界中至关重要。

节日中精心策划的游行和仪式为活动管理提供了实际启示。商业、酒店和活动管理等领域的学生可以研究组织这类大型活动的复杂性。他们了解物流、人群控制、安全措施以及节日管理的整体动态。这种真实世界的接触对他们的学术学习是一种补充，使他们掌握了实用技能。

此外，大宝森节的社区驱动性质鼓励社会责任和志愿服务。立达学院可以利用这一特点让学生参与社区服务，增强他们的公民责任感和社

区凝聚力。这种参与可以丰富他们的教育经验，并促进他们与当地社区更深层次的联系。

文化节还为旅游和市场研究提供了宝贵的环境。学生可以探讨文化节对旅游业的影响，了解文化节为当地社区带来的经济效益，并分析此类活动的有效宣传策略。

总而言之，大宝森节为高等教育机构提供了独特的教育平台。它通过提供跨学科学习、促进文化敏感性和包容性、以及促进社区参与来丰富课程。这些经历培养了学生的适应能力、文化意识和社会责任感，使他们能够适应全球化环境的要求。

(Mandarin Translator, Ms. Tan Pei Shi, Lecturer, School of Business and Hospitality)



Coastal Expedition : A Journey of SCientific DIScovery and Camaraderie

• **Note:** Janave and Yu Ji, our two SACEi students wrote the articles after a field trip to Gurney Beach with their lecturer, Dr Kam Yew Chee, on 19th Jan 2024.

The rhythmic sound of the waves provided an ambient soundtrack as we carefully examined the diverse marine life. Enthusiastically searching around, we marvelled at the intricate details of the bivalves. Our excitement deepened as we uncovered various bivalve species. This hands-on encounter with marine life enhanced our understanding of different species. As we returned to our classrooms, our sample containers brimming with newfound treasures, the beach exploration lingered as a vivid tapestry of scientific curiosity and shared camaraderie.

Janave A/p Sachidanandan (front row, first from the left)
Student of SACEi

Embarking on a coastal expedition with classmates, we ventured to the beach armed with curiosity and sample containers. Accompanied by A-level students, our objective was to collect bivalves for an experiment. As waves gently lapped the shore, we combed the sandy expanses, discovering diverse shells. Teamwork and excitement fueled our endeavour, making the expedition a collaborative learning experience. The coastal adventure provided hands-on learning and fostered a sense of exploration and shared knowledge among us. This journey to the beach became a memorable chapter, weaving together scientific inquiry, teamwork, and the joy of discovery in a rich tapestry of coastal exploration.

Lim Chuah Yu Ji (front row, third from the left)
Student of SACEi

The Curse and Gift of Green Thumbs



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If you have ever said, "I don't have green thumbs; even cacti die in my hands," or heard someone say, "Plants often wither under my care," do not despair – you are not cursed! What began as a small experiment 25 years ago with just two pots of *Pilea depressa* (the depressed clearweed, also sold as kiereweed, a plant native to the Caribbean) on my apartment balcony has grown into a collection of about 150 pots in my humble garden.

Many give up on gardening due to failed attempts, but gardening is like self-care. Just as we need food, water, shelter, and a sense of belonging, plants require the same. It is not about having green thumbs; it is about understanding their basic needs.

Start small with low-maintenance plants and expand as you gain confidence. When you bring a new plant home, mimic its existing environment to reduce transplant shock. Research online for specific plant care instructions, but remember: good soil, proper watering, suitable placement, and monthly fertilisation are key.

For pest and disease control, do not be afraid to trim your plants. They will bounce back healthier. For a sense of belonging, try naming your plants and talking to them during watering.

So, if you think you are cursed when it comes to gardening, dispel that notion. If others can do it, so can you. Happy Gardening!

Elaine Chan Wai Kuen
Senior Lecturer, School of Business & Hospitality

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Navigating Success: My Journey from DISTED College to QUT

“ In late 2022, I completed a 12-month Cambridge A-Level programme at DISTED College, majoring in Arts subjects including Law, Mathematics, Economics, and Accounting. I'm ready to continue my academic journey at the Queensland University of Technology (QUT) in Australia. I am pursuing an undergraduate degree in Law, inspired by my cousin, who also graduated from DISTED with a degree in accounting.

During my time at DISTED College, I enjoyed a safe and conducive learning environment. The quality of education was outstanding, with professional and accessible lecturers always ready to assist. When I needed clarification or tutorials, they were readily available. The college provided well-structured lecture notes and organised stress-relieving events for students.

DISTED College offered excellent facilities, including textbooks provided by the institution

and easy access to a library for additional resources. As a non-resident of Penang, affordable and secure accommodation and a convenient shuttle service added to the overall convenience of my college experience.

After completing my coursework, the college arranged for an education agent to guide me through the university application, ultimately securing my placement at QUT. The agent's professionalism and knowledge were invaluable.

I am grateful to DISTED College for their unwavering support. I believe it's an excellent choice for aspiring college students, and I'm confident it will continue to thrive.”

Cheah Anne Zheng
Alumni of Cambridge A-Level 2022

Contaminated Water Remediation: A Vital Environmental Concern

The recent water supply disruption in Penang state, lasting from January 10 to 14, has had severe consequences. Numerous manufacturers had to halt their operations, schools closed, and some hospitals postponed minor surgeries. While more than 100 water tanks were deployed to alleviate the situation, some residents remain discontented. Many fail to comprehend the environmental impact of excessive water usage or the scarcity of clean water resources. Historically, we have enjoyed ample water at a low cost, leading to a lack of interest in conservation efforts.

In 2022-2023, Malaysia possessed around 5,000 billion cm^3 of underground water, with the capacity to process approximately 64 billion cm^3 annually. This substantial groundwater resource should be harnessed as an alternative water source. Malaysia currently uses less groundwater than Denmark (100%), Thailand (around 80%), China (78%), and the United States (about 50%).

The conventional method for remediating contaminated groundwater involves pump-and-treat procedures. Water is extracted from the water table, treated to

remove contaminants, and reintroduced underground. This method requires extensive water flushing over several years or decades and might not eliminate contamination. Alternative remedies exist for purifying groundwater in soil or porous rock formations like chalk, commonly used in the UK for filtering water supplies.

For instance, arsenic contamination in groundwater is a pressing issue. Long-term exposure to arsenic can lead to skin cancer, nervous system damage, and miscarriages. Scientists have discovered that powdered dried water hyacinth roots effectively remove arsenic from water, reducing levels below the WHO guideline of 0.01 mg/dm^3 .

These traditional and innovative groundwater remediation techniques are taught to students at DISTED College in their Foundation in Science and Cambridge A-Level Pre-University Studies programme.

Dr Loo Ai Yin
Senior Lecturer, School of Pre-University Studies



President's Honour Award Celebrates Outstanding Achievements at DISTED College

The President's Honour Award, held on January 19, 2024, at DISTED College, was a celebration and recognition for academic excellence. The event showcased the achievements of students who earned a coveted spot on the prestigious President's Honours List.

The School of Computing and Engineering students achieved great honours at the event. Lim Siau Chong from the Diploma in Computer Science, was one of the recipients. He expressed his gratitude, saying, "I'm genuinely honored and deeply thankful for this recognition. It's a fantastic motivator to continue pushing myself. It has been an eventful six months at DISTED College for me with fulfilling experiences in camps and workshops aside from my academic life, which has been greatly enriching and insightful, and I look forward to many more meaningful outcomes with DISTED in the future."

Chow Wey Shern from the Diploma in Business Information Technology was another standout student, credited the comfortable college environment for making his revision enjoyable, leading to his achievement on the President's Honours List. Such an environment fosters a positive learning atmosphere, encouraging students to excel in their academic pursuits.

Gan Hoong Lee from the Diploma in Computer Science, echoing the sentiments of his peers, stated, "Earning the President's Honour List has ignited my confidence and ambition. It's a testament to the hard work I've poured in, and a catalyst for pursuing even greater goals, both academically and beyond." This award not only recognizes academic accomplishments but also serves as a powerful inspiration for



students to set and achieve ambitious goals in various aspects of their lives.

The President's Honour Award not only celebrated individual accomplishments but also highlighted DISTED College's commitment to fostering an environment that nurtures excellence and ambition. As these exceptional students continue on their academic journey, their achievements serve as a beacon for others to strive for greatness, creating a culture of success at DISTED College.

Seethai Subramaniam
Head, School of Computing & Engineering

Penang's Thaipusam: A Tapestry of Tradition, Culture, and Spirituality

Thaipusam is a globally celebrated Hindu festival dedicated to Lord Murugan. In Malaysia, three temples take centre stage during Thaipusam: Batu Malai (Batu Caves), Thaneer Malai (Waterfall Temple) in Penang, and Kallu Malai (Cave Temple) in Ipoh. However, Penang's Thaneer Malai Waterfall Temple stands out for its unique traditions and captivating beauty.

One distinctive Penang Thaipusam tradition is the 'Thirukaappu.' On Thaipusam day, at precisely 12 am, the temple's chief priest opens the main prayer altar's door, accompanied by a resonant conch blow, symbolising the festival's start. Penang's Thaipusam often coincides with Chinese festivals, fostering cultural diversity and sometimes featuring Chinese Lion Dance performances for the Thaipusam chariots.

Penang uniquely hosts two chariot processions for Thaipusam - the Golden Chariot carrying the revered 'Sakthivel' spear, given to Lord Murugan by his mother, and the Silver Chariot. This sacred spear annually resides in the Queen Street Mahamariamman Temple and is transferred to the Waterfall Temple on Thaipusam eve.

Penang's Thaipusam is renowned for its 'Thaneer Panthals' (Water Stations) lining the roads to the temple. Various organisations, hospitals, and families set up these stations, providing free food and drinks to the public due to the lengthy journey. The Waterfall Temple's 513 steps offer a physical challenge to those ascending.

Penang's Thaipusam embodies cultural diversity and long-standing traditions dating back to 1856 and upheld by younger generations. In Penang, three enduring elements have persisted through the year - food, heritage, and Thaipusam. Join us next year at Penang's Thaneer Malai Waterfall Temple for an unforgettable Thaipusam experience!

Linkeshwar A/L Muthukumaran
Alumni of SACEI 2023