

## MY HOME IN



## FAIRPRICE EXTENDS DISCOUNT

THE 5 per cent discount on 500 NTUC FairPrice items will be extended for two more months, it was announced yesterday. The scheme, which started on Dec 19, was due to end on Friday.

## PREMIUM BUS SERVICES START

THOSE living in Ang Mo Kio, Bukit Panjang, Choa Chu Kang, Punggol and Sengkang estates can now get to work faster with eight more premium bus services rolled out by ComfortDelgro yesterday, The Straits Times reported.

The air-conditioned service halves travel time for those working in the Robinson Road and Shenton Way area. A flat fare of \$3.60 will be charged for each trip.

## SIA PLANE REPORTS ENGINE TROUBLE

A SINGAPORE Airlines Boeing 777-200, flying from Singapore to Nagoya, Japan, shut down one of its two engines after mechanical trouble yesterday. But it landed safely in Nagoya.

In an e-mail to AP, SIA said it was investigating the cause of the incident.

## my paper 我報

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## SINGAPORE

## FLAP OVER CLUBS' HONGBAO DEDUCTIONS

Some NUSS members unhappy that they have been forced into a gesture of goodwill

DEBBIE YONG

**A**HONGBAO is often seen as a gift, but some National University of Singapore Society (NUSS) members are unhappy that they have been seemingly forced into this gesture of goodwill.

Last week, NUSS member and Stomp contributor Brad Tan posted a scanned version of his alumni club bill online. On top of his monthly \$45 membership fees, there was a \$15 charge titled 'Hongbao'.

Mr Tan assumed the money went to NUSS' staff but was upset that the club had neither informed him about the payment earlier nor given him a choice. He said: "This is blatant disregard for members' feelings."

Tutor Shane Pereira, 28, an NUSS member for three years, said he only found out about the charges this year. He had as-

sumed that the \$15 charge was for a few empty red packets which the club gave him in January.

He said: "I think that is a rather sneaky move. If they would like members to contribute voluntarily, they should approach us personally and not make it an automatic mass payment."

In response, NUSS President Mr Chandra Mohan K Nair wrote an e-mail to Stomp clarifying that NUSS had sent appeal letters to its 12,500 members in December, together with their November 2007 statements.

The letter outlined the purpose of the Hongbao Fund, a yearly collection since 1984, which members could opt out of by informing NUSS through mail, fax or e-mail or by handing in the response slip at any of the club's three clubhouses - at Adam Park, Suntec City and on the NUS campus - before Jan 15.

Members who opt out after being charged the \$15 will have the amount returned in their next bill, added Mr Chandra.

If every NUSS member had contributed, the total hongbao collection would come up to \$187,500. NUSS declined to reveal how many employees it has.

A check by *my paper* showed that the automatic collection of hongbao is a common practice among some country clubs here. Out of six clubs this reporter checked with, five said they run similar hongbao collections.

Serangoon Gardens Country Club members have been paying \$30 a year since 1985, while Sembawang Country Club (SCC) said only about 2 per cent of its 2,400 members choose to opt out of its annual \$10 Hongbao charge, which has been in place for more than 10 years.

NUSS and the clubs say that the final collection is distributed evenly among staff. The transactions are reflected in the clubs' accounts, which are subject to an annual external audit.

SCC declined to reveal how much hongbao money their staff received this year, but *my*

*paper* understands that this amount could be as much as \$700 each.

Seletar Country Club does not have this collection as a majority of members voted against it in a survey carried out four years ago, said its assistant manager of finance, Ms Angel Yeo.

In NUSS' case, not all members are upset though.

Teacher Mr Mervyn Sek, 29, felt that the automatic deduction made it more convenient for satisfied patrons.

He said: "If you had pleasant experiences and good service, you'd want to give them a hongbao. It is unfair for members to blame the club for mails that they should have been checking."

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## HELPDESK 我的字典

➔ Membership: 成员资格  
chéng yuán zī gé

➔ Disregard: 漠视 mò shì

➔ Audit: 审计 shěn jì



## Celebs support positive cause

CELEBRITIES, such as *Electrico's* Amanda Ling, *Radio 91.3's* Rod Monteiro and Denise Tan, and theatre veteran Hossan Leong came together yesterday to promote a positive body image among young girls. *Seventeen* magazine launched The

*Body Peace Treaty* here, which originated in America. The organisers hope to garner a million signatures by the end of the year. Supporters can sign the treaty at [www.seventeen.com/bodypeace](http://www.seventeen.com/bodypeace).

(PHOTO: NEO XIAOBIN)