

THE RAFFLES WAVE



RAFFLES
GIRLS' SCHOOL

*Nurturing Daughters
of a Better Age*



Different Stories, One Heartbeat: The school theme for the year explices that while the RGS girl comes from diverse backgrounds, they are bonded by the Rafflesian sisterhood. What chapters will you contribute to your RGS story this year?

LUNAR NEW YEAR CELEBRATIONS

Rafflesians ushered in the Year of the Monkey with lively and energetic performances by the Chinese Orchestra, Angklung Ensemble, Dance International, Handbell Ensemble and Chinese Drama. The ever-popular God of Fortune also swung by the concert celebrations for a spritz of fortune and luck to all for the New Year!



(Left) A familiar figure at Lunar New Year celebrations every year, the God of Fortune brings with him showers of luck and good fortune in the form of sweet treats for all! (Top Right) A skit by Chinese Drama to remind us about the less fortunate this Lunar New Year; (Bottom Right) the Handbell Ensemble aka Raffles Ringers in their first-ever Lunar New Year performance. Click [here](#) to enjoy a short snippet of their performance!



(Photos by Chung Yen Yee, Celine and Lim Si Qiao Florence from the RGS Photographic Society)

I'M A RAFFLESIAN!



With their parents bearing witness in the audience, the Year 1s have their badges pinned on their uniforms by their seniors, marking them as true-blue Rafflesians.

As we embarked on a brand new academic year, we also welcomed our newest members of the Rafflesian family with a slew of activities packed into the Year 1 Orientation Programme. They included talks to familiarise the Year 1s with all things Raffles, such as the history of the school and school programmes. The week-long orientation culminated in the traditional Badge Initiation Ceremony, where the new Rafflesians receive their school badge for the very first time and have it pinned on their pinafores by their Year 4 sisters.

(Photo by Joie Liew Lub Yi from the RGS Photographic Society)

BECAUSE WE KARE



As an acknowledgement of RGS's contribution, the school's name was unveiled on the donor wall at KK Women's and Children's Hospital on 24 November 2015.

After years of championing by House committee members in leading the school to raise funds for the KKH Health Endowment Fund to aid needy patients in their recovery, RGS has raised a total of \$11,948! As House's longest-running fundraising service-learning project, students get involved through planning out programmes and activities for the year, such as the sale of t-shirts or the Kaleidoscope Run during Sports Festival, to help raise funds.

SWINGING SUCCESS

Our girls from the 'B' division tennis team clinched their first national championship title since 2010! Though the team was up against fierce rivals - five-year reigning champion Methodist Girls' School, the doubles team of Year 3 student Jeovanne Canace Poernomo and Year 4 student Shirina Mulani managed to secure the deciding match for RGS' victory in the competition. Congratulations to the team!

SQUASHING THE COMPETITION

Together with her teammates from Team Singapore, Year 3 student Sneha Sivakumar brought home the Champion title at the 2016 SEA Cup Squash Championship. The competition, which was also Sneha's first senior tournament, saw the team undergoing two months of intense preparation, which culminated in a victorious stand on the podium at the end of the competition, making it the first time in 21 years that Singapore beat Malaysia in a squash team event!

"Participating in the SEA Cup has given me the moral boost to improve my game and reach for the skies. Playing with professionals from all over Southeast Asia highlighted me to some of my blind spots and has motivated me to reach out as far as I can."

I started playing squash at the age of 8, after being introduced to the sport by my father who was then, a social player. Now, I train almost everyday, balancing both trainings and studies. At the age of 14, I have gotten used to having to juggle both, and one of my key goals everyday in school would be to pay my fullest attention and as much as I can, get my homework done to ensure a lighter workload.

My teachers and friends have been an immense support for me and they always help me out in every way that they can when I am away for competitions. The customisation programme for PE also gives me additional study time. Furthermore, with the use of technology by the



Sneha (centre) with her teammates. "Despite being the only junior in the team, I was able to bond with my seniors throughout this tournament. I also forged new friendships with those from various countries and I'm sure these would blossom into great bonds in years to come."

the school in both teaching and learning, it makes it easy for me to follow up on lessons as well as contribute to project work even when I'm travelling. Exams and assessments are also spread throughout the year, so this gives me a way to prioritise and balance my study load.

I hope to go as far as I can in the sport, and maybe turn professional in the long run. I also hope to be able to do something in the field of medicine."

PORTRAIT OF A RAFFLESIAN THE ULTRAMARATHONER IN RESEARCH

At 49, Professor Jackie Yi-Ru Ying has the stamina of a teenager. That is what you'd think to yourself as you hear stories of her long, and at times arduous, journey in research, which began when she was just a young girl studying at RGS. Her love for Science, sparked by the interesting Chemistry labs at her alma mater and the effervescent nature of experiments, was further fuelled when she moved to the United States and was inspired by the teachers in her high school and university there. With that, she continued on to become a full professor at America's Massachusetts Institute of Technology at 35, and was elected to Leopoldina (the German National Academy of Sciences) at just 39. When she returned to Singapore in 2003, she took on the uphill task of setting up the world's first bioengineering and nanotechnology research institute, the Institute of Bioengineering and Nanotechnology (IBN), which has today grown to become a leading institute in multidisciplinary research across science, engineering and medicine for breakthroughs to improve healthcare and quality of life, and in nurturing future generations of research talents.

Dressed in her usual work attire of suit and pants, along with a pair of track shoes, Prof Ying is all set for another run of research projects, showing no signs of slowing down her pace even after having just won the prestigious Mustafa Prize "Top Scientific Achievement" Award for her work on the development of a material that delivers insulin automatically upon detection of high blood glucose levels (which is currently in phase 1 clinical trial). After all, Prof Ying's work in research is never done, even after chalking up numerous accolades and awards in her career-span. She's all set, together with her team, to discover the next breakthrough in scientific research, and to pass on the baton by nurturing young scientists, one running step at a time. The rest of us wait on with bated breath.

The Rafflesian Spirit

"It's about everybody coming together, trying their best, cheering one another on, and also helping one another."

Receiving the Inaugural Mustafa Prize "Top Scientific Achievement" Award

"It's very gratifying to receive this award, because it recognises many years of hard work and effort my group members and I put into the research. Receiving an award on this scale also motivates us to push forward, especially the very high-risk and really challenging projects. It is also heartening to note that for an institute that started from scratch 13 years ago, IBN is now recognised internationally. The award is also a reaffirmation of the government's faith in us, bearing in mind that when we talk about biomedical research, it takes a long time to bear fruit because of all the preclinical and clinical trials required."



Prof Ying and her daughter Hsi-Min at the Mustafa Prize award ceremony in Iran.



Photo credit - Institute of Bioengineering and Nanotechnology

Fondest Memories of Studying at RGS

"The fondest memories I have are those of the times spent with my classmates, especially those from my secondary two class! We had a lot of fun doing projects and performing together. Even when we moved on to secondary three, we still kept on referring to ourselves as the class 2/2 of 1980."

Building Something from Nothing

*"The person who hired me (Mr Philip Yeo, former A*STAR Chairman) really took a great leap of faith. My vision was to build an institute that would bring in the best people, both locally and overseas, people from different disciplines, to tackle complex problems together. IBN is quite different from most academic and research institutes because we are very multi-disciplinary. Therefore, it takes a lot of recruiting efforts to find the right people who are very energetic and dynamic, and at the same time, good team players who truly want to work with experts from different fields. I wanted to create a nurturing environment that will foster this kind of cross-collaboration."*

About the Mustafa Prize

The Mustafa Prize is a top science and technology award granted to the top researchers and scientists of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) member states biennially. It seeks to encourage education and research and plays a pioneering role in developing regional relations between science and technology institutions working in the OIC member countries.

PORTRAIT OF A RAFFLESIAN THE ULTRAMARATHONER IN RESEARCH

Qualities of a Good Researcher

"I feel that our young people have become very grades-oriented and results-driven. When we do research, we are driven by a passion to make a difference. It's not just about accomplishing results, but also trying to figure out what is the best way, the most effective way and the least expensive way. So we have to come up with many creative solutions, and at the same time, make them practical so that people can afford and use them. Some people may just want to have their work published in a top journal, but their work may not be very practical or useful. What we have undertaken is perhaps, a much more difficult path of wanting to make a societal impact, and that means a lot of hard work that people don't see because it doesn't culminate in publications. A good researcher should also have the right values and possess a deeper purpose in what they do, which in turn gives them meaning in their lives. Not everyone can attain this, and sometimes, if they cannot rise up to it, then it becomes a fight for credit, of who did what, and whose name should be put first in a publication. If you are in research for tangible, quick rewards, then you will give up very easily, because in this field, we don't see the rewards for many, many years, in the sense of having something that can be commercialised and make a difference in people's lives. Research is a long journey that requires a lot of endurance and perseverance."

Succeeding Against the Odds

"When I was in the States, I was a minority because I'm a woman and I'm Asian, and when I started my career, I was still quite young. So I have to work a lot harder to break whatever glass ceiling. Certainly you have to work smart and be creative, but the hard work in research is like a prerequisite, much like musicians or athletes, who undergo years of training to become good at what they do."

Ways to Tackle Challenges

"I always remind myself why I am doing this work and the meaning of life. Sometimes one may get upset at how things turn out, or at people who make things difficult. But at the end of the day, we need to understand that we do certain things because they are meaningful to us, and not because of what we can get out of them. If it's about the rewards, then you'll often be unhappy and unfulfilled."

Vision for the Future of Science

"Through programmes like the YRP, we really hope to inspire the young people, to help them discover that though science is hard work and full of challenges, it is also a lot of fun. It is also about working together with different people from different backgrounds. A really good scientist will move in different fields, and in the process, learn a lot of things from different people. So that's the part that can be really exciting. We also need to have better-equipped science labs in schools here. We are so obsessed with content that we are not teaching students how to understand concepts better, at the very fundamental level, which is through doing experiments and scientific discoveries. Hence, students learn lots of well-established facts and mug for exams, but when they have to take risks, venture into the unknown and figure out what to do, they are not so well-prepared. We need researchers who can think out of the box, be creative and not be afraid of taking risks to make a great impact. Also, we notice that many young people who are good in science only want to do medicine. We hope to offer an alternative path, which is research. Nothing wrong with being doctors, but doctors don't come up with innovative technologies, researchers are the ones who do that, right? (Smiles)"

Proudest Moment in Life

"When my daughter was born in 2001. I was very proud when she was born; she is really someone who is very, very special, and I'm really glad that she gets to go to my alma mater as well."



Nurturing Future Research Talents

"I'm very fortunate to have an old friend, Ms Noreena AbuBakar, Director, IBN (she was also my classmate from RGS Sec 2/2) helping me out in this area. She started the Youth Research Program (YRP) in 2003, which has reached out to close to 95,000 students. We got many of them interested about research through open houses, seminars and workshops, and more than 2,300 students have done research attachments at IBN for at least one month full-time. It is a lot of hard work, organising the various activities and mentoring the students, but we really want our researchers to be involved in this because it is important to get the young people excited about doing research. We have been successful in this as a lot of our students have gone on to pursue further studies and careers in science, engineering and medicine. It's also about giving back. Because we are very fortunate to have the opportunity to do research, and we see the exciting options that are available in research for young people, we want to offer them more choices for their career paths."

Getting Inspired for New Research Topics

"I get my inspiration by reading broadly, attending conferences and also talking to people. For example, when I'm doing my biomedical research, I try to understand what the medical doctors face as issues, and try to create better technologies that can help them in the early and accurate diagnosis of diseases, and to come up with better treatment."