

MY HOME IN

6 SECONDS

PROPERTY MARKET COOLING

THE lethargy in the housing market continued last month, with only half of the new units launched snapped up, The Straits Times reported. A total of 343 new homes were launched last month, but only 185 were sold, down from the 328 sold in January.

SDP MEMBER CHARGED

THE first of 12 Singapore Democratic Party (SDP) members and supporters arrested on Saturday for illegally demonstrating outside Parliament, was charged yesterday. Yap Keng Ho, 46, claimed trial to two counts of participating in an assembly without a permit from 2.30pm till 2.40pm.

FOUR CHARGED WITH TUAS MURDER

FOUR Malaysians were charged yesterday with the murder of 23-year-old cleaner Sangga Anak Rungguh last week.

No plea was taken from Kuwee Ngu Lee Sing, 20, Achai Anak Barat, 24, Jusni Anak Othman, 27 and Bajing Anak Giri, 31, who were ordered to be remanded for a week for further investigations.

my paper 叻報

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SINGAPORE

NUS is first S'pore varsity to launch virtual campus

It's sited in Second Life, a virtual role-playing game platform boasting 12m players worldwide

DEBBIE YONG

THE National University of Singapore (NUS) is expanding.

For just over \$4,600, the university has acquired 64 additional acres, or one-sixth of NUS' current 370-acre Kent Ridge campus.

But here is the catch: The new school grounds are sited on Second Life, a virtual role-playing game platform, boasting 12 million players worldwide.

The virtual campus was launched to the NUS community over a three-day roadshow

last week. More than 1,000 students registered avatars, or on-line alter egos.

A replica of NUS' iconic University Hall landmarks the virtual NUS. Music studios, career centres and an internal shuttle bus is expected to be completed this June.

The idea for the project was born two years ago.

Mrs Chew-Goh Swee Wah, the assistant director of NUS' Computer Centre, which spearheaded the project, said: "We were trying to develop an area where students can mingle among themselves or interact with staff and faculty freely."

Eager to incorporate new me-

dia trends while building a robust student community, Mrs Chew-Goh and her team turned to Second Life early last year.

Last November, a team of nine NUS student volunteers jumped onboard to give feedback on how to make it more hip. At least three course modules have already been taught in the virtual campus' classrooms since late last year.

More than 300 students took part in this "trial" stage. Setting up an online profile is free, but users must pay to own property.

"The best thing about this is that everyone does not need to be in the same place at the same time (for exchange of ideas)," said Mr John Yap, a media producer at NUS' computer centre.

NUS counts Princeton University and the University of Edinburgh as immediate neigh-

bours on Second Life. In Singapore, lecturers at Innova Junior College, Nanyang Polytechnic and Singapore Management University have also been conducting virtual lectures, though NUS is the first university to launch a full virtual campus.

Undergraduates *my paper* spoke to have warmed up to the idea.

Mr Ou Di, 24, a fourth year engineering student at NUS, said: "It's a cool idea. I find myself logging on at least three times a week."

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HELPDESK 我的字典

Virtual: 虚拟 xū nǐ

Spearhead: 挂帅 guà shuài

Ong & Ong sues three designers for moonlighting

A WELL-KNOWN architectural firm has sued three interior designers for breaching their employment contracts by moonlighting.

The defendants insist they were not employees but, instead, had gone into a profit-sharing business venture with Ong & Ong Architects, The Straits Times reported. They are counter-claiming about \$230,000, which they say is their share of the profits under the arrangement.

The case opened in the High Court yesterday, with the company's chairman and director, Mr Ong Tze Boon, 39, as the first witness. Mr Ong is the second son of the late President Ong Teng Cheong, who founded the firm in 1972 with his wife Siew May.

The lawsuit is brought by Ong & Ong Architects and its interior design and landscaping arm, Ong & Ong.

The three-year relationship between the architectural firm and the defendants - Mr Leslie Seow and Ms Rachel Yee, who were then partners at a small interior design firm, Six Planes & Partners (SPP), and Mr Ridzuan Sarbini - started amicably, the court heard. The relationship soured in 2006.

The plaintiffs want the court to declare that the trio had breached their duties as employees and are seeking an order to stop them from using confidential information. They are also seeking an account of the profits the trio have earned from the alleged moonlighting.

But the trio deny being employees of Ong & Ong. Mr Seow and Ms Yee contend that under the business venture, they were not prohibited from doing work under SPP. In fact, they claim that the plaintiffs had breached an agreement to pay them half of the profits generated from interior design services.

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