



From left: Manulife Financial Advisers CEO Tan Hong Tau; Vision Advisory Management executive director Bentley Cheng; Straits Times School Pocket Money Fund general manager Tan Bee Heong; and Vision Advisory Management CEO Tony Cheng at the cheque presentation yesterday. ST PHOTO: ONG WEE JIN

Young entrepreneur helps raise \$68,888 for ST School Pocket Money Fund

Mr Bentley Cheng was six years old when his father, who was working in an insurance company and had a car import business, was financially hit by the severe acute respiratory syndrome (Sars) outbreak.

His family had to sell their home and car and, though they went on to overcome those struggles, the memory has remained with him.

Now 25, Mr Cheng is executive director of Vision Advisory Management, a service platform provider that works with partners and merchants to offer financial lifestyle solutions for clients.

And he has spearheaded a drive within the company to raise \$68,888 for The Straits Times School Pocket Money Fund.

Yesterday, he presented a cheque to the fund's general manager Tan Bee Heong at Singapore Marriott Tang Plaza Hotel. A total of 30 employees, including Mr Cheng, contributed to the fund that helps children from low-income families with school expenses.

"This year is my 'quarter life' birthday and I wanted to do something special... I was not born in a well-to-do family (and), when the Sars crisis hit, my dad's business was affected," he told The Straits Times.

"Also, just two years ago during the Covid-19 pandemic, while doing a part-time university course, I noticed that many of my classmates could not pay their school fees.

"I also noticed that education costs have been rising over the years. So I wanted to share the love by giving back to society, and hope to share the idea of helping one another with more Singaporeans, especially the future generations."

After speaking to his father Tony Cheng, who is chief executive of Vision Advisory Management, he decided to get the company involved.

Between April and June this year, the younger Mr Cheng canvassed the staff for donations, with he himself giving \$10,000 to the fund.

His efforts drew praise from Ms Tan, who said: "It is heartening to see a young entrepreneur like Bentley stepping forward to help our students from low-income families. We hope this will inspire more young Singaporeans to play a part in making a difference to the lives of the less fortunate."

Since its inception in 2000, The Straits Times School Pocket Money Fund has given out nearly \$90 million to date and helped more than 200,000 beneficiaries.

Samuel Devaraj

DOING SOMETHING SPECIAL

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MR BENTLEY CHENG, on his fund-raising efforts.

Haagen-Dazs vanilla ice cream recalled over presence of pesticide

Two Haagen-Dazs vanilla ice cream products imported from France with best-before dates between July 4 this year and July 21 next year are being recalled by the Singapore Food Agency (SFA) as they may contain ethylene oxide, a pesticide.

The agency said yesterday that it has directed importer Frosts Food & Beverage to recall the pint and Classic Collection Mini Cups versions of the ice cream.

The ongoing recall comes after Food Standards Australia New Zealand – the statutory authority responsible for developing food standards for Australia and New Zealand – had recalled the products because of the presence of ethylene oxide.

The chemical is a pesticide that is not authorised for use in food, said SFA.

"Although there is no immediate risk to consumption of food contaminated with low levels of ethylene oxide, long-term exposure may lead to health issues," said the agency in a statement.

"Therefore, exposure to this substance should be minimised as much as possible."

SFA has advised those who have bought the affected ice cream products to not consume them, and to seek medical advice if they have concerns about their health.

From left: Associate Professor Ponnudurai Kuperan, emeritus consultant at the department of haematology, Tan Tock Seng Hospital (TTSH); Mr David Chen, product manager, Asus; and Dr Eugene Fan, consultant at TTSH's department of haematology. They were using the AI tool Blade on Wednesday for diagnosis of blood abnormalities. ST PHOTO: ONG WEE JIN



AI tool being tested for faster diagnosis of leukaemia, malaria

Developed by TTSH and Asus, AI-powered Blade software can halve the time for analysing blood

Zhaki Abdullah

Diagnosing leukaemia as well as diseases such as malaria may soon be faster and more accurate, thanks to the use of artificial intelligence (AI).

An AI-powered software named

Blade – developed by Tan Tock Seng Hospital (TTSH) and Taiwanese tech company Asus – can cut by half the time needed to analyse blood to detect these diseases, allowing for earlier clinical intervention for patients.

The current process requires a laboratory technologist to examine a patient's blood, which is

placed on a piece of film under a microscope, and perform a manual cell count.

Those blood films with abnormal features or an unclear diagnosis are sent to a reference lab or a haematologist for review.

This can leave the technologists fatigued, leading to a greater chance of error, said TTSH haematology department consultant Eugene Fan. He told reporters on Wednesday that the TTSH haematology lab – which operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week –

handles up to 400 such blood films a day.

Blade allows for the procedure to be automated, enabling a technologist to load several blood films into a scanner that converts them into digital images.

The AI analyses the films and flags critical ones, such as possible cases of leukaemia.

Lab technologists need to only review the scans and correct misclassified cases, said Dr Fan, who is part of the team studying Blade.

The software was developed using a data set of 337,700 digital images of peripheral blood cells from the National Healthcare Group, which oversees TTSH.

Differential blood counts to check white blood cell levels – indicating the presence of infection and disease – are currently 91.4 per cent accurate, Asus and TTSH said in a media statement. Before the partnership with Asus, funding for the project came from sources such as Enterprise Singapore and a National Medical Research Council award.

Blade is now being evaluated at TTSH and other sites, with plans for it to gain regulatory approval in the next few years.

Hougang Polyclinic – which has its own lab where blood films are examined – is expected to get Blade this month.

Asus and TTSH are also looking at developing similar solutions in fields such as pathology and microbiology. On Thursday, the two formalised their collaboration by signing a three-year agreement.

Other projects in the works include those targeting breast and colon cancer detection.

"We believe that computer science can help a lot to improve healthcare quality," said Asus chief technology officer and corporate vice-president Huang Tai-yi, noting that the company had deployed smart medical solutions at 20 hospitals in Taiwan.

Associate Professor Tan Cher Heng, assistant chairman of the medical board for clinical research and innovation at TTSH, said the adoption of technology such as AI will allow the hospital to reinvent its practice and improve care for the community.

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Train fault delays travel between Kranji and Jurong East stations

Aditi Bharade

A train fault caused delays of up to 25 minutes between Kranji and Jurong East MRT stations on the North-South Line yesterday.

In a tweet at 5.56pm, rail operator SMRT offered free regular bus services between Woodlands and Jurong East.

But some commuters had difficulty finding the buses. When The Straits Times arrived at Jurong East MRT station at 7pm, crowds had formed in the taxi areas outside the station, where commuters were waiting for private vehicles.

Mrs Geetha Ganesh, a preschool teacher who works in Jurong East, was heading home to Choa Chu Kang when she was caught in the train delay and heard the announcement that bus services to Woodlands were available for commuters.

"But when I went down, there was no one to direct the crowd and no one knew where the buses were.

"So I called my husband to pick me up," said the 36-year-old, adding that she had to cancel her



Commuters waiting at Jurong East MRT Station at 7pm yesterday after a train fault on the North-South Line. Rail operator SMRT offered free regular bus services between Woodlands and Jurong East but some people said they struggled to find the buses. ST PHOTO: ADITI BHARADE

wax treatment appointment because of the train fault.

Mr Kynan Yau, a polytechnic student who was on his way home to Woodlands from his internship in Dover, said he walked around the bus pickup location for about 30 minutes because he could not find the buses.

He said he had to cancel dinner plans with his parents because of the train fault. "I'll just wait it out, see how else I can reach home," said Mr Yau, 19.

The bus services were halted after the fault was cleared, SMRT's tweet at 7.04pm said.

In a Facebook post, SMRT ex-

plained that three cars in the faulty train had no lights.

After commuters disembarked at Choa Chu Kang station, the train then went to the depot, where investigations into the fault were conducted.

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Ahmad Danial Mohamed Rafa'ee leaving the State Courts on Wednesday.

Lawyers of man accused of killing Felicia Teo file appeal for full acquittal

Shaffiq Alkhatib
Court Correspondent

Lawyers of a man accused of killing Ms Felicia Teo in 2007 filed an appeal yesterday for him to be fully acquitted of his murder charge.

If granted, Ahmad Danial Mohamed Rafa'ee cannot be charged again with the same offence.

The 37-year-old is represented by lawyers Shashi Nathan, Tania Chin and Laura Yeo from Withers Khattar Wong. He was charged in December 2020 with murdering Ms Teo in a Marine Terrace flat on June 30, 2007. She was 19 and a student of Lasalle College of the Arts.

Ahmad, who is out on \$20,000 bail, was said to have murdered Ms Teo with an Indonesian man identi-

fied as Ragil Putra Setia Sukmarahjana, then 18. Both men are said to be Ms Teo's former schoolmates.

This is the second attempt by Ahmad's legal team to have his murder charge dropped. Mr Nathan had urged the court last month to grant Ahmad a full acquittal but the court disagreed, granting a discharge not amounting to an acquittal.

This means Ahmad can be charged with murder later if further evidence emerges.

Ragil is still at large but Indonesian authorities are trying to trace his whereabouts.

Ahmad currently faces six charges and Ragil is named in all of them. The pair are accused of unlawfully dumping Ms Teo's body in Punggol Track 24 on or around June 30, 2007. The authorities later

found a skull fragment at the scene.

The two men are also accused of misappropriating some of her belongings like her mobile phone. They are said to have also intentionally omitted furnishing information about Ms Teo's sudden or unnatural death to the authorities even though they were legally bound to do so.

Another charge involves fabricating evidence. They had allegedly placed her mobile phone at East Coast Park to create the false impression that they believed she was alive even though they knew she had already died.

The men also purportedly gave false information to two police officers by claiming they did not know what had happened to Ms Teo after she left the Marine Terrace flat, where she was last seen alive.

Court documents did not disclose how she died and who was responsible for her death.

Ahmad was expected to plead guilty on July 6 to a number of charges but the matter was adjourned for a pre-trial conference on Aug 5. Mr Nathan told reporters then that facts, sentencing and documentation related to the case had yet to be resolved.

Ms Teo's family last saw her on June 29, 2007, when she left her home in Bras Basah. Closed-circuit television footage later showed her entering a lift in a Marine Terrace housing block with two men.

In 2007, the police classified the case as a missing persons incident as they had nothing to link the two men to Ms Teo's disappearance.

In 2020, the case was referred to the Criminal Investigation Department. A breakthrough came after the CID found belongings believed to have been with Ms Teo when she was reported missing. Ahmad was then arrested and charged with murder.

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