

ENVIRONMENT

The Living Classroom

Trek through Lower Peirce forest on an 800-m boardwalk and learn about Singapore's greening efforts. PAGE 40



CONVENTION

Islamic Core Values

Values will remain central to the Malay-Muslim community despite the KBE push, says minister. PAGE 41



HERITAGE

Historic Sikh Temple

The Silat Road temple at Jalan Bukit Merah has been marked as a historic site by the National Heritage Board. PAGE 42



Water safety 'needs to be stressed'

Lifeguards and nationwide programme to respect dangers of water may be answer to preventing more drownings

By ZACKARIA
ABDUL RAHIM

CONDUCT a nationwide water-safety programme to remind people that danger lurks even at public swimming pools with lots of people around.

A former national swimmer made this suggestion in the wake of two recent incidents — the drowning of schoolboy Hugene Heng in the Keppel Club pool and the near-drowning of eight-year-old schoolgirl Mandy Eng in a public pool.

Mr Ang Peng Siong, now the managing director of APS swimming school, was one of those interviewed following public concern over the drowning of nine-year-old Hugene.

The schoolboy is believed to have been practising underwater swimming after the end of his advanced swimming class at the Keppel Club on Nov 7.

Straits Times reader Edmund Lee, in his letter to the Forum Page last Thursday, had asked if George Lee could have saved.

"Definitely," said Mr George Lee, 44, a lifeguard and swimming instructor for more than 20 years.

But only if the boy's struggles underwater had been discovered in time and first aid given immediately.

A drowning victim has

The first occurs when breathing and blood circulation stop, while biological death follows when the brain suffers irreversible damage.

Applying cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) is the life saver.

In the case of schoolgirl Mandy Eng, she was saved after a man pulled her out of the Toa Payoh Swimming Complex pool last Wednesday and a lifeguard acted quickly to give her CPR.

This raises the second question of why no one had performed CPR immediately on Hugene.

Said Mr Roland Poh, the chief instructor of the Roland Swimming School, which had conducted the advanced swimming class at Keppel Club that day: "You cannot just pull out an unconscious person from the pool and straightaway do CPR.

"First, you have to make sure that any water in his mouth is removed. You must also make sure that there is nothing blocking the airway."

Mr Ang said that although most swimming instructors would know how to give CPR, some might not be comfortable applying it, as they do not go through regular CPR training. But a lifeguard should be able to do it, he added.



To prevent drownings, lifeguard George Lee, 44, said that a swimmer's struggles must be discovered early and CPR applied immediately.

Said Mr Lye Weng Hon, Singapore Lifesaving Society's honorary general-secretary: "Definitely. Every swimming pool should have lifeguards."

But he added: "We shouldn't be too reliant on the lifeguard on duty."

"Sometimes, they may miss a spot. Everyone has to play a part."

Mr Ang, who agreed with

pools or elsewhere. And this has to be a continuous affair, he added, as people have short memories.

"We have to respect the dangers of water."

"Only then can we appreciate it," he said.

Parents should also take the trouble to find out more about the background and qualifications of their chil-

Unqualified, but she gave lessons

SHE was told to teach a group of women how to swim at a private club, even though she was not a qualified instructor.

National University of Singapore student Angela Lo answered a newspaper advertisement in 1996 offering

give swimming lessons at the club right away.

She accepted the assignment, looking on it as "on-the-job training". For a year, she gave lessons for two hours each week, for \$25 an hour.

She said: "That's \$200 a month. For an undergrad,

"But I conducted the lessons at the shallow end of the pool and told my students not to go to the deep end when I was not around."

She usually had four to five women per class, said Miss Lo, 23, now a second-year physical education stu-

her students asked her to continue teaching her as well as her son and sister-in-law, at their condominium pool.

That their instructor was not qualified to do so did not seem to bother them.

But those lessons stopped last year when Miss Lo en-