

Talk of the Town

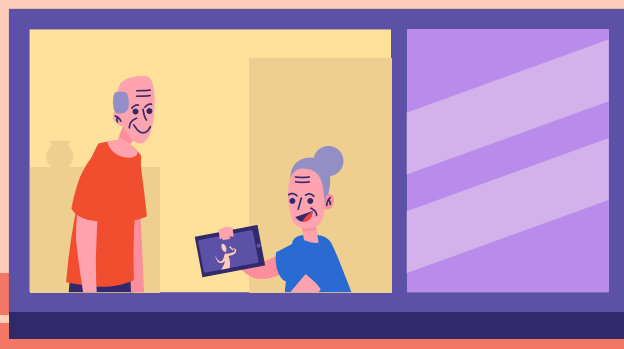


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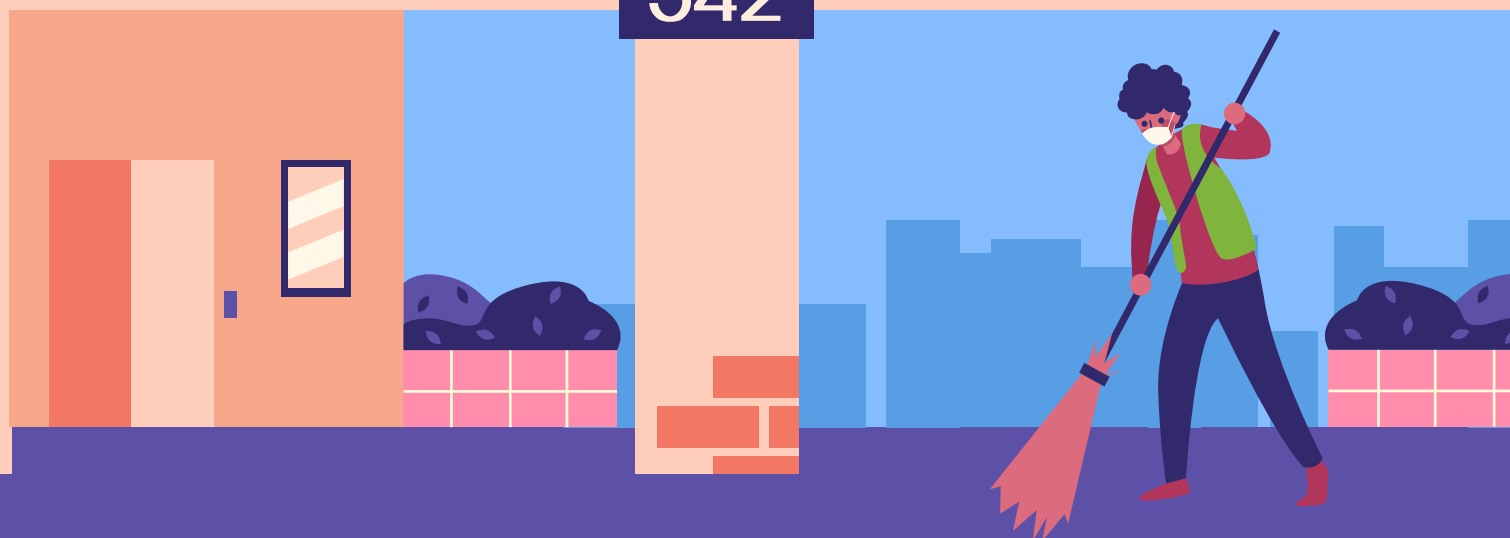
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Find out how your Neighbours

have been coping during the Circuit Breaker period!



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MASKS SEWN WITH LOVE

While COVID-19 has brought a lot of uncertainty into our lives, Singaporeans have remained resilient and united in the fight against the outbreak. When Masks Sewn With Love (MSWL), a People's Association-led initiative that aims to sew 50,000 reusable cloth masks for those in need was announced, people from all walks of life streamed forward to offer their help.

Representing Holland-Bukit Timah's and Bukit Panjang's contributions to this nationwide effort were volunteers and residents of Bukit Timah division, whose collective efforts have led to some 1,500 hand-sewn cloth masks for adults and children. Overseeing this initiative was Mdm Ong Yuk Hong, PBM, Chairman of the Bukit Timah Community Club Women's Executive Committee. She coordinated the delivery of materials, sourced for materials, set project targets, monitored the quality of the completed masks, and even sewed the masks herself!

This mammoth task was not undertaken alone, as Mdm Ong had the help of fellow volunteers like Mr Jason Lee to handle other aspects of the project. Mr Lee, Chairman of Dunearn Neighbourhood Committee and member of the Bukit Timah Citizen's Consultative Committee, coordinated the orders and distribution of masks to more than 650 households in May.

Both Mdm Ong and Mr Lee also shared how Ms Sim Ann had supported them throughout the project. "Through the various social media channels, Ms Sim Ann helped spread the message about the masks and how they could be ordered through our online platform. She reached out to residents in Bukit Timah and let them know home-sewn masks were available free for their children. She even helped with the sewing of some of these masks."

"Our friends and volunteers are proud to help and even asked if they could sew more. Through this project, we got to know more friends who love craft and also used this opportunity to learn different sewing skills from each other. We also plan to meet each other after the circuit breaker ends."

-Mdm Ong Yuk Hong

The masks for children were especially well received, as many residents shared that regular-sized masks are ill-fitting and potentially ineffective against protecting their kids against the virus.

"They were overjoyed to get hold of these masks," expressed Mr Lee. "Many residents have been very grateful for this small but generous gesture and some have even offered to make a donation to the cause."

Mdm Ong added, "The children were all excited to try them on as the masks came in various colours and cartoon prints. Most of the children thought masks came only in black, white, or mono colours."

Painstakingly stitching the masks up thread by thread was no easy task, but for the volunteers, each finished mask gave them pride in knowing that they have contributed to society.

"Hand sewing the masks sometimes made our eyes and fingers tired, but after completion, we felt a sense of achievement. Great job to our team!" said Mdm Ong.



WORKING FROM HOME

Ho Guo Liang, Bukit Timah resident

Hi Ho Guo Liang, what is your occupation?

I'm an Assistant Port Officer at an Offshore Marine Centre/ Project Logistics Hub that supports the Oil & Gas Industry. Our industry is considered an 'essential service' and continues to operate throughout the circuit breaker period.

Has working from home (WFH) been in any way inconvenient?

It's a yes and no. No it hasn't been inconvenient because pre-operational arrangements can be done via teleconferencing and emails. It's akin to moving your office desk to your home. Only when I'm required to be on site, then I'll be physically on ground to oversee and handle operational matters.

WFH comes with challenges too. Since meetings are all virtual, communication is not as straightforward because we can't see body language or facial expressions. People tend to interrupt each other and connection problems also do occur. At home, you will spend more on electricity and phone usage, you might not have printers and scanners, so things may get a little inconvenient.



What do you enjoy most about WFH?

I finally have more time to be with my wife, spend quality time with her and cook for her. It's good to be at home and enjoy my home fully - not like last time where it's more like a place to just bathe, eat and sleep before going to work again.

Would you choose to continue WFH if possible?

Yes it'd be good to continue, but for added flexibility, the option of being able to go back to office when needed will help a lot.



Neo Guat Keng, Bukit Panjang resident

Hi Guat Keng, how was working from home (WFH) like for you?

I'm a principal at a kindergarten, so not being allowed to go to school has definitely made me and my teachers miss the kids a lot.

Can you share how coordinating a preschool from home was like?

Learning still has to continue, so what we did was to plan out activities and homework and upload them onto a platform called 'LittleLives' that is accessible by parents who can use the materials to guide their children along. Every week, we made it a point to check in with the parents with regards to their child's learning and welfare.

We also conducted activities like storytelling over Zoom! The kids were so excited to see their friends over the internet! We wanted to show our support to

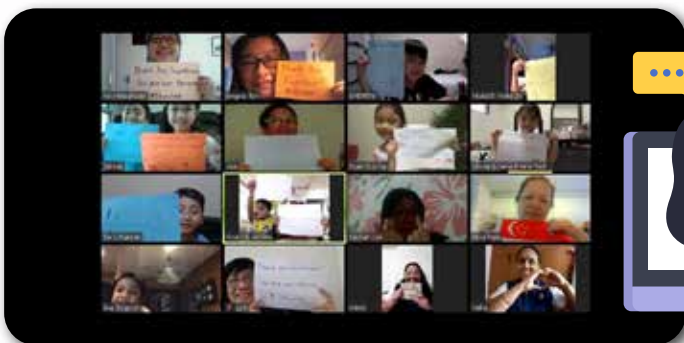
the front-line workers, so we also recorded 'thank you' video of our staff and students showing their appreciation as part of #SGUnited.

How did you feel about this whole new experience?

On a more positive side, I had more time with my teachers because we would schedule telemeetings every week. Back in school, it's hard to have meetings due to our schedules, so during this circuit breaker period, we had the chance to share more about our own lives and there was more bonding in general.

What did you enjoy most about WFH?

I got to call my family more. My siblings, parents and I would video call each other during lunch to catch up and show each other what we were eating all in good fun.



Making of the #SGUnited appreciation video

KEEPING HEALTHY AND FIT

Chen Yong Hua
Ulu Pandan resident

How did you keep fit at home during the circuit breaker period?

I would go to bed early and wake up early. I did yoga indoors, and each exercise session would last at least 20 minutes. It's also important to stay hydrated so I made sure to drink plenty of water.

For those who are going to continue working from home, what are your tips for them to stay active and healthy?

Prevent sitting down for too long and reduce periods of inactivity. Even if you can't go out to exercise, you can also do suitable cardio exercises, such as yoga, skipping or Zumba by following YouTube videos. Diet wise - drink enough water, and follow the healthy plate ratio to select fresh and healthy ingredients to ensure your body receives



balanced nutrients. Also remember to sleep early, wake up early and maintain a positive, happy mindset.



Farheen Begam
Ulu Pandan resident

Are you someone who regularly exercises to keep fit?

No I wasn't someone who exercised regularly, but I picked it up during the circuit breaker (CB) period!

What motivated you to begin exercising at home?

I realised my lifestyle wasn't very healthy because working from home was making me sit all day. Usually lunch breaks at office grant me a bit of movement because we need to walk out to get food, but now that we're eating at home too, I don't get to exercise at all.

What was your routine like?

I begun following workout videos on YouTube. Even those short 15 minute exercises can really work up a sweat. I did it on a daily basis, and it's a stress reliever for me because it got my mind off work.

Will you continue with the exercising once the CB is over?

Yes, because it's a habit that I've adopted. It's stuck with me and definitely something I'll continue doing regularly in the future.



Raymond Liow
Cashew resident



How did you stay fit at home during the circuit breaker (CB) period? Did you get your children involved as well?

While the CB dictated that we really must stay at home, that was no reason to neglect exercise. My daily physical activity, while just only 20 to 30 minutes long, was enough for me to work up a sweat and cultivate healthy exercise habits.

I also encouraged my children to be physically active and helped them stay at a healthy weight. Besides, since everybody is always looking at their mobile phones, having them be active allows them to learn something new, and it also uplifts the spirits of all of us at home.



LEARNING WITH THE KIDS

Lim Leng Wee, Zhenghua resident



How did you keep your kids creatively occupied during the circuit breaker period?

We had lots of fun while staying at home. We set up tent and the kids felt like they were having a camping experience with snacks and movies. We encouraged our kids to bake and make their favourite treats by themselves. They also enjoyed helping out with simple house chores. As for myself, I tried cooking different cuisines which I never thought I could do. I enjoyed the family bonding and the quality time which I never had the luxury of having before.



What are your aspirations for the town?

I hope the virus can be cleared as soon as possible so that our lives can go back to normal. The kids miss being able to play in the park; we also miss the fresh air and even the crowded coffee shops. That being said, our front-line workers have sacrificed their own safety to help save lives. I sincerely appreciate their dedication to our nation. Hence, I hope we can all play our part to stay home and cut the virus transmission so we will be able to go back to our normal lives soonest.

Seah Shuyi, Cashew resident

Hi Shuyi, how old are your children? Did they start to feel restless being stuck indoors all the time?

My kids are 2 and 4 years old. Actually I don't think my children felt restless during the circuit breaker (CB) period. They were happy for the special "extended holidays". They've enjoyed themselves at their grandparents' place.

What were some fun activities you guys did together as a family?

We introduced and brought back games like hopscotch, zero point and five stones. Each game could keep the children occupied for at least few days. The children also enjoyed board games like snakes and ladder! We also did simple cookery sessions like pizza making, sushi making and milkshakes. It was an opportunity for them to learn new skills like cycling (inside the house of course! - we're lucky that the house is spacious). We had quiet times like story telling and building LEGO pieces too. There was a lot of learning that took place, even for myself.

Do you think the CB period gave you more time to do the things you like?

It felt good to learn and have quality bonding time with the children, especially at this stage when they grow really fast.



CELEBRATION OF FESTIVITIES

Nythiya Jayamanee, Zhenghua resident

Puthandu

Hi Nythiya, can you share with us a little about Puthandu and how do you normally celebrate it? What are the traditions or rituals associated with this festival?

Puthandu is known as "Puthuvarusham" or "Tamil New Year". It is the first day of the year on the Tamil calendar and is traditionally celebrated as a festival. The festival date is set with the solar cycle of the lunisolar Hindu Calendar, as the first day of the Tamil month Chithirai. It therefore falls on or around the 14th April every year.

On this day, Tamil people greet each other by saying "*Puthāandu vāazhthugal!*" or "*Iniya puthaandu naivāazhthugal!*", which is equivalent to "Happy New Year". Households clean up the house, prepare a tray with fruits, flowers and auspicious items, light up the family prayer altar and visit their local temples. People wear new clothes and children go to elders to pay their respects and seek their blessings. Plus a vegetarian feast is usually whipped up.

This year with Puthandu occurring during the circuit breaker (CB) period, did that throw a wrench into the celebrations?

This year Puthandu was exceptionally different as we were not able to purchase most of the prayer items like flowers, betel leaves, mango leaves, neem leaves, incenses and some items like red sugar and ghee to prepare the common food for prayers known as Sakkarai Satham (sweet rice). So instead of Sakkarai Satham, we



served fruits instead. The platter included banana, apples, oranges, grapes and mangoes.

Did you get your relatives or friends involved in the celebration as well?

Every year, prayers will be done individually in our houses and we will all gather at my parents' place to seek their blessings and thereafter enjoy a sumptuous vegetarian lunch cooked by my mother.

This year however we did prayers and gathered through a Zoom meeting and received blessings virtually. The kids said they felt like they were overseas! We also cooked our own meals. I cooked vegetarian dishes to the best of my ability and fried some papadams. We answered many of the questions the kids had pertaining to Puthandu. We did a kolam (drawing with rice flour at the house entrance) together. We explained that the rice flour will feed many small insects and believe that they will, in return, bless the household.

What were your Tamil New Year wishes this year?

We wished for perfect health and peace for everyone around the world; may they all be blessed with happiness and love. We prayed that the virus that is going around harming many lives be eradicated soonest. We also thanked the almighty for the togetherness as a family we got to experience during this CB period. It sure has made families bond better.



Jason Salim, Ulu Pandan resident

Good Friday & Easter

How did the observations of Good Friday & Easter change since it occurred during the circuit breaker (CB) period?

Throughout the CB period, my family had to attend our weekly masses through YouTube and Facebook livestreams. It was particularly difficult because it overlapped with the season of Lent, which happens to be a significant period of reflection in the Catholic Church's calendar. Sunday masses usually give us the precious opportunity to bond and go out on outings after.

However, as a family we have had the chance to come closer together and spend more time with one another while we attended mass in our living room - opportunities that we would not normally have if we were not in circuit breaker. Even though our Easter celebration was muted, mass and the simple family lunch after were meaningful in their own ways as we gave thanks for the little things - family, friends and health.



Hari Raya Puasa

Hi Norliyana, with everybody stuck at home during the circuit breaker (CB) period, was the mood to celebrate Hari Raya still there?

We wouldn't let the CB dampen our Raya spirits! We still looked forward to the joyous occasion! We did our prayers at home instead of at the mosque. We made sure we donned our new traditional outfits (even though we were staying home!) and had many Raya goodies and kuehs prepared for the special day. The only difference was that instead of purchasing them at the physical store, we did it all online! We also had the amazing Raya spread of ketupat, lemak lodeh, sambal tumis and such laid out on the dining table. It was a huge spread!

Did you get your relatives and friends involved in the celebration?

Of course! Instead of being physically around with our relatives, we did it all

through Zoom meetings. It was different but really lots of fun! We sought forgiveness, did funny videos and performances, ate our kuih raya, and sent our wishes all through video conferencing.

To all Muslims celebrating Hari Raya, you would like to say...

Selamat Hari Raya! As we adapt to the new normal, let's not forget to continue to stay safe and stay healthy during this difficult period. Let our Eid spirits not be dampened and continue to bask in the celebratory mood. Soon, we will get to be with our big families and let's look forward to that.



Lam Chai Nyuk, Bukit Timah resident

Vesak Day

How did you celebrate Vesak Day during the circuit breaker (CB) period?

Normally during Vesak Day, my family and I will head to Beeh Low See Temple at Toh Yi Drive for prayers and chanting. We would listen to the abbot share about the history of Vesak day amongst other things, and later witness the sacred "Bathing the Buddha" ritual before ending the celebration with lunch together with fellow devotees. Every year, Beeh Low See Temple also invites vulnerable seniors to celebrate with us during festivals like Vesak Day and Mid-Autumn; there will be entertainment, vegetarian food, and even red packets for them. However due to COVID-19, we could not organise it this year.

This year, due to the circuit breaker, we had to celebrate Vesak Day at home. We went online to pray and chant with the other devotees. The monk also guided us through the session and there were even subtitles on the screen for us to follow. This was our first experience with online prayers. While it was convenient, I still prefer praying in the temple because the atmosphere is entirely different when you are physically present.

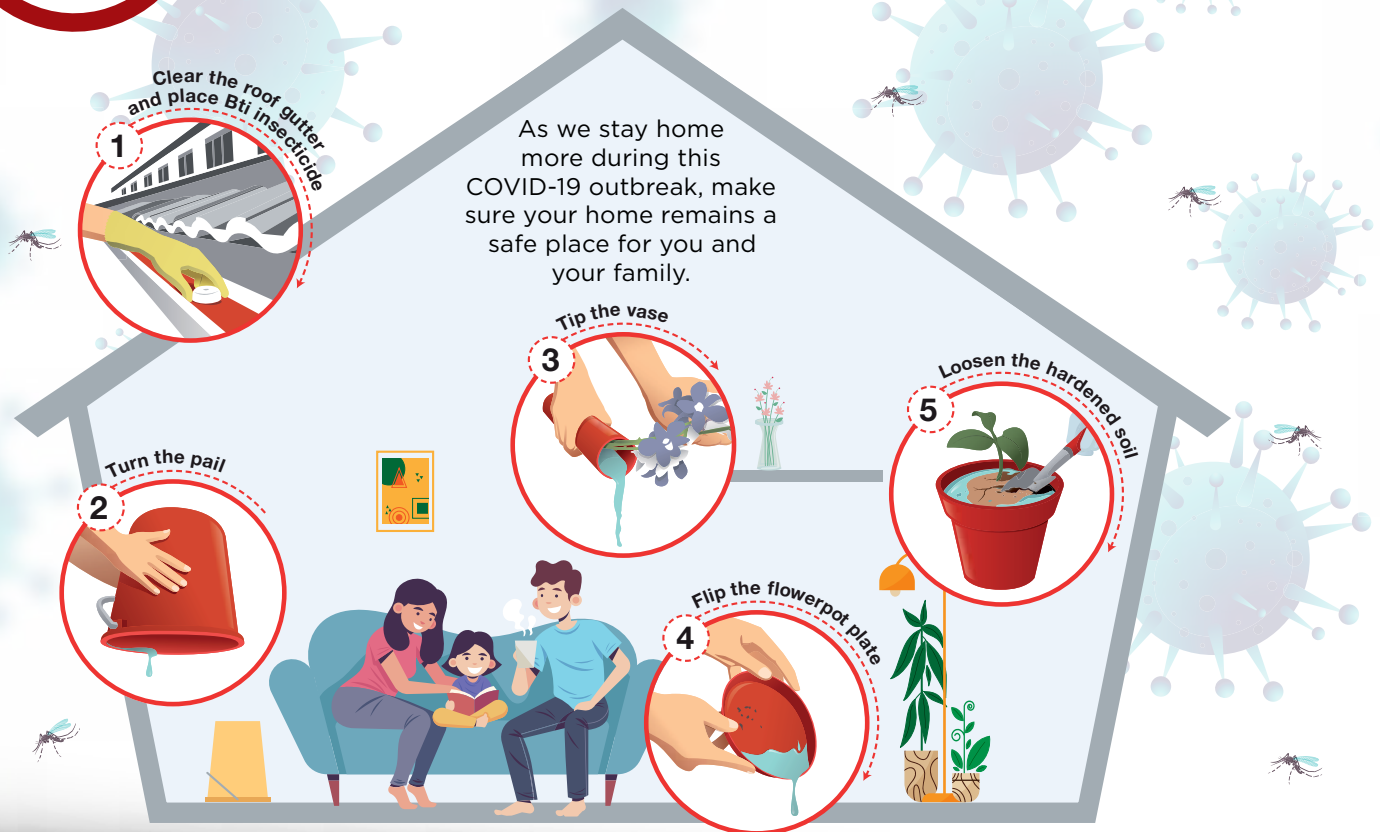


My granddaughter
'bathing' the Little Buddha

2019 Vesak day @ Beeh Low See temple

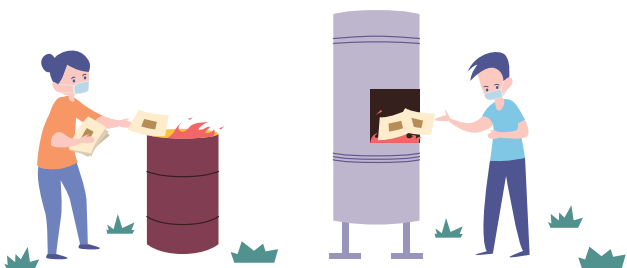


COVID-19 IS NOT THE ONLY DANGER IN TOWN



USE THE INCENSE BURNERS — KEEP THE ESTATE CLEAN! —

Use designated incense burners



Be alert when burning joss papers



Keep all burning within the incense burners

- Do not burn on grass patches
- Do not burn on the ground



Do not dispose of flammable objects into the burner

