Eldercare focus of new degree

BY Gwendolyn Ng

SINGAPORE is too reliant on foreign domestic help for elderly care as its population ages, and more skilled labour here is needed to address that need, said Singapore’s in the Prime Minister’s Office Lim Boon Heng yesterday.

He said: “We rely a lot on foreign domestic workers for the care of the elderly and I think the situation is not entirely satisfactory.”

He was speaking at the launch of the SIM University (UniSIM) Master of Gerontology programme, held at the National Library Building.

There is an estimated 196,000 maids here, with the majority hailing from Indonesia and the Philippines.

From his observations on care for the elderly, he said that it is mostly carried out by “learning as you do it”. This has resulted in a “lack of depth in knowledge” to plan and provide adequate services.

“The consequences of the dramatic change as the population ages will be felt across various facets of society,” Mr Lim said.

This is especially because Singapore is one of the most rapidly ageing countries in the world, and it has to be quickly prepared for this transformation, he added.

It is projected that one in every five residents will be above the age of 65 in 2030.

The university is the first here to offer a master’s programme dedicated to the study of the aged, with which it aims to fill the gap in elderly professionals.

The course will begin in July and take in a cohort of about 30 students annually.

Said Professor Cheong Hock Kee, president of UniSIM: “Through the programme, we hope to produce leaders who will be able to chart the future of the silver sector.”

Graduates will be able to assume roles in the field of eldercare, such as policy planning in voluntary welfare organisations or government bodies.

Those currently in eldercare-related professions – such as social work, counselling and nursing – can also upgrade their skills and knowledge through the programme.

One practitioner who signed up for the course is Ms Lim Ai May, 34, who has nine years of experience in eldercare.

She currently works as an eld-erly-services manager, specialising in dementia, at the Yong-Eng Care Centre in Smith Street.

Ms Lim, who has a degree in nursing, said: “It can be hard for family members to understand that dementia patients behave differently from before. They can even become aggressive.”

She added: “I was looking to further my studies and I’m glad that UniSIM does it in Singapore.”

The course is open to anyone with a bachelor’s degree in any discipline. Registration ends on March 31.

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HELPDESK

Reliant: 依赖的 yí liăn de

Gerontology: 老年医学 lǎo nián yī xué

Silver sector: 银发市场 yín fā shì chǎng

Dementia: 溶呆症 chī dàí zhēng

IT megastore now open 24 hours to cater to late shoppers

BY CHRISTINA NG

TKH geeks will now be able to satisfy their hardware and software needs at any time.

Challenger, one of Singapore’s information-technology retailers, will begin opening 24 hours a day at its Funan DigitalLife Mall outlet, located near the City Hall area, from today.

Shoppers will be able to browse through aisles of IT hardware and software products at the 4,830-sq-m megastore, which boasts over 40 major product categories.

Challenger’s director of marketing and e-commerce, Ms Loo Pei Fein, said: “More Singaporeans are moving towards that lifestyle trend of shopping at late hours – so we decided to go 24/7 to create more accessibility and convenience for our customers.”

That definitely holds true for IT fan and corporate-communications manager Tan Weizhen, 29.

She said: “If my MP3 player stops working in the middle of the night, I know where I can go.”

She added that the option of being able to shop at any time would give her a source of entertainment when she is bored.

As for security issues – the mall closes at 10pm and 6am daily – it will operate throughout the night.

Mr Chua hopes that Challenger’s 24-hour operations will encourage other retailers to do so, in order to cater to the crowds in the City Hall area late at night and early in the morning.

Capitaland, which manages the mall, will extend free parking to all shoppers at the mall between 10pm and 6am daily from today.

Challenger will celebrate its new 24-hour operations by hosting various contests and games for its shoppers. One of them involves 12 pairs of participants racing through the store, collecting items listed on a checklist. The winning pair will win all 24 items listed, as well as a Kinect for Xbox 360 video-game platform.

Megastores which operate round the clock include Mustafa Centre and FairPrice at Serangoon’s Nex mall.

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