Highlights *links work only for Outlook users
3 Tips to be a Savvy Consumer

Looking to engage a property agent to help you to buy, sell, or rent a property? Read on to learn CEA’s three quick tips on how you can start your relationship with your agent on the right foot!

AVA Appoints Cat Welfare Society as Mediator for Cat-Related Issues

AVA has appointed the Cat Welfare Society (CWS) as its third-party mediator for cat-related issues. This appointment formalises the existing partnership between AVA and CWS, and will last for one year. Find out more.

Brick by Brick – HDB Fund Inspires Lego Art Project at Taman Jurong

Learn more about HDB’s Friendly Faces, Lively Places (FFLP) Fund, launched in 2016 to encourage residents to initiate and implement projects that contribute to the building of active and cohesive communities.

Be Fascinated by Singapore’s Flora & Fauna

Two recent events by NParks enabled the public to discover the beauty and diversity of orchids as well as gain a better appreciation for Singapore’s wildlife. Find out what went on!
Designing Bridges to Spur Interest in the Built Environment

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**Municipal Services Dashboard**

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**3 Tips to Be a Savvy Consumer**

Looking to engage a property agent to help you to buy, sell, or rent a property?

Watch the Council for Estate Agencies (CEA)’s latest [consumer educational video](#) for three quick tips on how you can start your relationship with your agent on the right foot!
Here’s a recap of the three tips.

1. **Check if your agent is registered with CEA via the Public Register.**

   Picture this: You engage an agent to help you rent a room in a HDB flat. He facilitates the transaction and even offers to help you pass the rental deposit to the landlord (which is illegal by the way). A few days later, you contact the landlord only to find out that he did not receive your payment. You call your agent, but the number is no longer in use. You then check CEA’s Public Register and to your horror, you discover that your so-called “agent” is bogus!

   Always check CEA’s [Public Register](#) to confirm if the property agent is registered before you engage them to help you with your property transaction. An unregistered agent could mishandle your transaction, delaying its completion or worse, giving you financial losses.

2. **Negotiate your agent’s commission before he starts work.**

   Commission rates are not fixed. There is no minimum or maximum percentage, nor is there a “standard market rate”.

   Compare the services offered by different agents, and negotiate the commission amount as well as components of the fees and expenses accordingly before the agent starts work. Also, remember to confirm if GST is included.

   After your transaction has been completed, pay the commission to the property agency, and not to the agent.

3. **Handle your own money for your property transaction.**
It is best for you to handle the money related to your property transaction yourself (e.g. conveyancing fees for sale and purchase of properties, rental deposits, and monthly rental for lease of HDB properties).

Asking your agent to help pass payments to the payees could be convenient, but you could be landing him in hot soup as it is actually illegal for agents to handle certain monies.

Remember to pay the payee directly using verifiable payment modes such as crossed cheques and bank transfers. If you are paying cash, ask for a receipt from the recipient.

Visit CEA’s happy consumer webpage to find out more!

AVA Appoints Cat Welfare Society as Mediator for Cat-Related Issues

The Agri-Food & Veterinary Authority of Singapore (AVA) has appointed the Cat Welfare Society (CWS) as its third-party mediator for cat-related issues. This appointment formalises the existing partnership between AVA and CWS, and will last for one year. A review will be carried out after the one-year mark to assess the effectiveness of and the need for such services.

AVA is Singapore’s first responder for animal-related issues. As such issues are often complex, AVA adopts a multi-stakeholder and multi-pronged approach to manage them, working together with Town Councils, other government agencies, and stakeholders such as animal welfare groups and academics.

Since 2015, AVA has worked closely with CWS to manage cat-related feedback. CWS helps to mediate cat-related disputes, bringing affected parties together to effectively bring about amicable solutions. It also advises community cat feeders and cat owners to practise responsible cat feeding and responsible pet ownership.

“CWS is a valued partner in our efforts to promote animal welfare and responsible pet ownership. They play an active role in supporting us to manage cat-related issues on the ground. Given their track record in the use of mediation to mitigate cat-related issues, we are happy to extend our partnership with them. We look forward to continuing our successful partnership with CWS,” said Ms Jessica Kwok, Group Director, Animal Management Group, AVA.

“We welcome this opportunity to partner AVA and support them in their response to cat-related issues and feedback in Singapore. As a non-profit organisation that has always stood at the forefront of advocating the humane management of cats, this partnership is acknowledgment of the work that we do and reaffirms the Government’s support of mediation as a preferred means to resolve cat-related disputes in the community. We expect that there will be increased costs in sterilisation as well as community engagement and outreach from this scope of work so we hope that the public will continue to support us in this ground breaking endeavour. Together we believe that we can achieve the twin goals of humane management of the community cat population and responsible cat ownership,” said Ms Laura Ann Meranda, Executive Director, CWS.
From left: Jessie Soh, Yip Su Jun, Sebastian Tan, and Samuel Quek from AVA, together with Laura Ann Meranda and Michelle Siau from CWS.

Brick by Brick – HDB Fund Inspires Lego Art Project at Taman Jurong
For Taman Jurong resident Mr Lee Aik Lam, the possibilities for creation are endless with Lego bricks. “Ultimately it’s up to you to imagine what it is. I want to inspire kids to imagine and create,” he said.

And so he has. Since March this year, the 56-year-old, who has been conducting Lego robotics lessons in schools, has transformed the void deck at Block 336 Tah Ching Road into a flexible workshop space with Lego-inspired furniture designed by the residents themselves. Here, residents can unleash their creativity through brick art and get to know their neighbours.

To date, Mr Lee’s workshops have drawn more than 200 young participants in the neighbourhood. Ten parent volunteers have also come onboard to help out with this meaningful activity. Mr Lee even led a team of young residents who emerged as champions in a Lego competition recently.

These regular brick art workshops have also provided an opportunity for friendships to blossom between families in the housing estate, said Mr Lee.
Regular Brickart sessions are held at the void deck of Block 336 Tah Ching Road.

Photo credit: Mr Lee Aik Lam

When not in use, the colourful tables fold into specially made displays which house more than 100 creations by participants.

Photo credit: Mr Lee Aik Lam

Mr Lee’s project is just one of 38 projects that have been completed under the HDB Friendly Faces, Lively Places (FFLP) Fund launched in 2016. The initiative encourages residents to initiate and implement projects that contribute to the building of active and cohesive communities. These include physical projects such as converting an under-utilised grass patch into a community garden for budding gardeners in the neighbourhood, as well as community events like handicraft workshops and fruit parties.

To encourage residents to initiate more impactful community projects, the FFLP was enhanced this year to provide more funding for residents. Residents can now apply for a grant of up to $20,000 for their projects, up from $10,000 previously. The fund has also been extended to local shopkeepers and businesses, who play an important role in enlivening the HDB spaces near their businesses.

The enhancements to the FFLP Fund were announced in May by Minister Lawrence Wong at HDB Community Week 2018, an annual event which promotes and deepens community-building and bonding among HDB residents.
Visit the [HDB InfoWEB](#) to find out more about the FFLP Fund and start your very own community bonding project. Help spread the word about the Fund today so that many more can come onboard to liven up their communities!

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### Be Fascinated by Singapore’s Flora and Fauna

Two recent events enabled the public to discover the beauty and diversity of orchids as well as gain a better appreciation for Singapore’s wildlife.

**SGF Orchid Show**

The inaugural Singapore Garden Festival (SGF) Orchid Show took place at the National Orchid Garden and other parts of the Singapore Botanic Gardens from 21 to 29 April. The Orchid Show featured over 100 varieties of award-winning and heritage orchids.

The SGF Orchid Show was officially launched at a ceremony graced by Madam Halimah Yacob, President of the Republic of Singapore. She was hosted by Mr Lawrence Wong, Minister for National Development and Second Minister for Finance. The National Parks Board (NParks) and the Orchid Society of South East Asia (OSSEA) co-organised this event, which was an offshoot of the flagship SGF.

![NParks CEO Mr Kenneth Er and Minister Lawrence Wong look on as President Halimah Yacob admires one of the award-winning entries at the SGF Orchid Show 2018.](image)

Visitors were treated to 17 landscape displays at the Orchid Plaza, 13 of which were competitive displays created by local orchid growers and others from Asia-Pacific countries. Non-competitive showcases included “Celebrations!”, which marks Singapore’s chairmanship of ASEAN this year. The showcase was made up of the most beautiful and robust orchids native to ASEAN countries, as well as the commemorative Renanthera ASEAN 2018 orchid.
More than 700 of the region’s best orchid plants, competing for 38 heritage trophies, were showcased at the National Orchid Garden. The finest orchid plants were displayed at Burkill Hall, including the winner of the President’s Challenge Cup which is awarded to the best plant in the show.

Missed this? Fret not, as there will be more splendid blooms and horticultural displays at the Singapore Garden Festival happening at Gardens by the Bay from 21 July to 3 August 2018! For more information, visit www.singaporegardenfestival.com.

Festival of Biodiversity

The Festival of Biodiversity is an annual celebration of the community’s efforts to conserve Singapore’s natural heritage. Now in its seventh year, the festival was held on 2 and 3 June at the open space next to Tampines MRT station. Apart from interactive booths, exhibitions, and arts and crafts workshops, it also had biodiversity-themed Escape Rooms created by youths from the Youth Corps Singapore Leaders Programme.
This year’s festival celebrates 25 years of community stewardship in nature conservation, in line with the theme for this year’s International Day of Biological Diversity “25 years of action for biodiversity”. At the launch, guest-of-honour Mr Tan Chuan-Jin, Speaker of Parliament, announced new initiatives for the community to get involved in the conservation of our native biodiversity, including new guidelines derived from biophilic practices such as bird-friendly building designs. Minister for Social and Family Development and Second Minister for National Development Mr Desmond Lee also attended the launch.

At the festival, NParks announced a new targeted conservation approach for native birds, butterflies, bees, and bats which will be carried out over the next five years across Singapore in collaboration with various partners. This consists of projects that look into research, conservation, and outreach concerning these pollinators and seed dispersers. If you are keen to learn how you can do your part to conserve Singapore’s natural heritage, check out Community in Nature’s programmes!

The festival also saw the launch of the third edition of the Singapore Garden Photographer of the Year (SGPY) competition, which features a new Youth category to encourage more youths to explore, capture, and share the beauty of Singapore’s green spaces and biodiversity. The competition is supported through the Garden City Fund, NParks’ registered charity and Institution of a Public Character (IPC), and its partners Nikon and the Photographic Society of Singapore. SGPY is open to all, so if you would like to share your love for Singapore’s green spaces through photos, do visit the website and send in your entries!

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**Designing Bridges to Spur Interest in the Built Environment**

Fifteen teams of future engineers pitted their skills against each other in a battle of technical ability, creativity, and craftsmanship at the 5th NTU Bridge Design Competition. Organised by the Nanyang Technological University (NTU)’s Civil and Environmental Engineering Club and supported by the Building and Construction Authority, the event was held on 10 and 11 March 2018 at NTU. A total of 26 polytechnic and 25 university student teams went head to head to vie for the top five places. The students came from disciplines such as Construction Engineering, Quantity Surveying, and Digital Engineering.
Participants, in teams of two, were tasked to analyse, design and fabricate 3D physical prototypes of bridges. Teams were assessed on their model bridges’ structural efficiency, sustainability, aesthetic appeal, and how well they presented and defended their solutions.

Here are some snippets from the two-day competition:

Day 1 – Design and Build: Teams were given a total of five and a half hours to design, analyse, and fabricate 3D physical prototypes using the provided material resources such as balsa wood, bass wood and cyanoacrylate adhesive. Each model bridge had to weigh below 30g.

Day 2 – Judging: Teams presented their designs and tested how much weight their bridges were able to withstand. The judging criteria are listed below, with the load testing assessment criteria making up half the weightage:

- Presentation (20%)
- Aesthetic Assessment (15%)
- Economical and Sustainability Assessment (15%)
- Load Testing Assessment (50%)

Two BCA Academy teams bagged two of the top five spots in the Polytechnic Category.

1st Prize: Vuong Duy Anh and Tran Huu Duc
Team Name: P06 Duc
Prize: Certificate + $600

Weighing 21.1g, this duo’s model bridge sustained an impressive load of 26kg.
5th Prize: Wu Wen Xuan & Hao Pengfei
Team Name: P25 Well-Played
Prize: Certificate + $100

This team’s 24g model bridge took on a load of 19kg.

Most Favourite Design Award: Long Yilin and Irfan Enkisra

Team Champion Duck! garnered 4.8k likes on Facebook. The team received a certificate and a $50 cash prize.
Making Better Use of Our Underground Space

How do we free up more land for living and community activities? Can more underground space be unlocked? URA’s latest exhibition, “Underground: Singapore’s Next Frontier”, unveils innovative ideas for the planning and development of underground space, while also showcasing key milestones in Singapore’s underground journey.

Launched by Minister for National Development and Second Minister for Finance Mr Lawrence Wong on 30 May 2018, the exhibition highlights key underground projects that have made innovative use of technology, examining how Singapore can learn from best practices in other cities for underground development. The exhibition aims to generate more discussions between government, industry, and other stakeholders on using underground space, thus helping to spark ideas on new ways to apply technology to future developments.
Minister Lawrence Wong given an overview of how the Rectangular Tunnel Boring Machine was used for the Construction of the underpasses at the Havelock and Stevens Thomson-East Coast Line stations. The machine allowed construction at a shallower depth with minimal road disruptions.

Members of the public who visited the exhibition were offered free guided tours conducted by the URA volunteers. The tours provided the community with a deeper understanding and appreciation of URA’s role in shaping Singapore, as well as how innovations in planning contribute to shaping a more liveable and distinctive city for our future generations.

Cities around the world face an increasing need for land as they grow. The pressure to expand a city’s space is especially acute for a city-state like Singapore, which has to provide for the needs of both a city and a country.

Industry partners, collaborators, and visitors explore different sections of the exhibition.

Singapore has been using different methods to expand our land area and to free up more space, including co-locating developments, reclamation, and using underground space. Going underground makes better use of land and space, improving the quality of our environment by freeing up surface land for more liveable uses such as housing, parks, and community activities.

“Underground: Singapore’s Next Frontier” is organised by URA in collaboration with agencies and industry partners. It is the latest in the Urban Lab series of exhibitions, which aims to bring research out of the labs and into the community.
Visit [https://ura.sg/underground](https://ura.sg/underground) for more information on unlocking the potential of underground space and stay informed of other URA initiatives at [https://ura.sg/subscribe](https://ura.sg/subscribe).

**MSDB: A Breakthrough Information-sharing Platform for Municipal Issues**

The Municipal Services Dashboard (MSDB) is an internal planning tool that the Municipal Services Office (MSO) and its partner agencies — both Government agencies and Town Councils (TCs) — have used since the end of 2016. This first-ever integrated visualisation tool pools feedback data from Government agencies and TCs, enabling MSO and its partners to gain awareness of municipal issues under their purview, share insights, and initiate collaboration to improve upstream planning and joint operations.

Prior to this, there was no integrated platform for the systematic sharing of information regarding municipal issues across different agencies. Government agencies and TCs worked independently to resolve issues under their respective purview, leading to untapped synergies and duplication of work.

With the MSDB, users can easily identify the top municipal issues, geographical hot spots, and time trends within a locality. This in turn benefits citizens by making possible more targeted and effective interventions to address municipal issues. It also enables more responsive citizen engagement by People’s Association officers, as they are now able to explain issues and measures taken more accurately.

The innovation and convenience it brings won MSDB the Distinguished ExCEL Innovation Award at this year’s Public Sector Transformation Awards.
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