

## Giant to absorb GST increase for three months

GIANT has joined four other supermarkets in absorbing the 2-percentage-point Goods and Services Tax (GST) hike which kicks in on Sunday.

The hypermarket's six stores will absorb the increase for the next three months, on 168 brands covering 800 essential items such as rice, cooking oil, laundry detergent, baby diapers and milk powder.

Said Mr Alan Nementzik, chief

executive officer of Giant Singapore: "We selected these particular product groups as we wanted to help ease the burden for consumers and young families when the GST increase takes effect.

"The GST absorption on these products will result in substantial savings for our shoppers as they are among the top-volume and high-value purchases that are popular among them."

The Giant stores are located at Tampines Retail Park, VivoCity at Harbourfront, Parkway Parade in Marine Parade, Turf City in Bukit Timah, Pioneer Mall and IMM in Jurong.

Earlier, four supermarket chains had pledged to also absorb the GST increase: Cold Storage, Shop N Save and NTUC FairPrice for six months, and Sheng Siong for at least a month.



## SINGAPORE SNIPPETS

### DURAI BACK IN COURT ON DECEPTION CHARGE

Former National Kidney Foundation (NKF) chief TT Durai was back in court yesterday for a pre-trial conference on a new charge of deceiving the organisation. Durai had allegedly misled the NKF into paying \$5,000 to a company, Decision One International, in 2003. The money was supposed to be payment for its role in helping the NKF look for a suitable candidate for a senior manager position. But investigations revealed no such service was rendered to the NKF. If convicted, Durai, 58, can be jailed up to five years and fined up to \$100,000. Last Thursday, he was sentenced to three months' jail for falsifying documents to use NKF funds. He is out on bail pending appeal. — CHANNEL NEWSASIA

### MORE THAN 300 TO GO BALD FOR CANCER CHILDREN

With less than five days to its Hair for Hope event, the Children's Cancer Foundation has already received more than \$100,000 in online donation pledges. It hopes to raise at least \$250,000. The event will see more than 300 volunteers parting with their locks in solidarity with children who have cancer. The event will be held on Sunday from noon to 7pm at Velocity@Novena Square.

### MILITARY AWARDS TO HONOUR SAF'S BEST TEAMS

The First Commando Battalion has been named Best Combat Unit in the Singapore Armed Forces for the fourth straight year. The navy's *RSS Vengeance* won the Best Ship award while the RSAF's 140 Squadron clinched the Best Fighter Squadron title. President SR Nathan and Defence Minister Teo Chee Hean will present the awards at the SAF Day Parade on Sunday. — CHANNEL NEWSASIA

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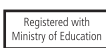
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## Tears over a \$10.7m cheque

Mrs Zage breaks down when questioned why she had left money with Rasif

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THE woman who apparently handed \$10.7 million to lawyer David Rasif broke down in court yesterday, after she was questioned repeatedly over her wisdom in leaving money in trust for a property deal. Mrs Kaori Zage (picture) and her businessman husband, George Raymond Zage III, are suing the fugitive lawyer and six others for the return of part of that sum.

Lawyer Hri Kumar — acting for Jewels DeFred and its owner Ho Chi Kwong — asked Mrs Zage why she had left the money for the purchase of a Belmont Road bungalow with Rasif, even though the lawyer had failed to show documentation of his correspondence with the sellers.

In reply, Mrs Zage said Rasif had told them he was "in constant communication" with the sellers.

But Mr Kumar pressed the American housewife further: First, on whether leaving \$10.7 million with Rasif "was necessarily the best option", and second, on why Rasif's legal associate had to reassure her that it was "common for clients to leave cash with their lawyers".

Mrs Zage retorted: "Mr Kumar, have you ever written a \$10-million cheque?"

The lawyer tried to respond but Mrs Zage continued: "If the wording was so important ... We would have gone back and given you more information but you are bringing this up in trial and I'm trying to explain it to you that a legal assistant would not sway me to write a \$10-million cheque."

Mrs Zage then broke down in tears, causing Justice Woo Bih Li to adjourn proceedings.

After a 20-minute adjournment and an apology from Mr Kumar, Mrs Zage told the court she "felt comfortable placing the cheque with Rasif" and trusted



TREVOR TAN

the law firm, David Rasif & Partners, to close the transaction on her behalf.

Mrs Zage, who has an accountancy degree, said she had not encountered any problems when she dealt with the firm in three previous property transactions.

In 2005, she met Rasif during the conveyancing of a private property. They chatted briefly.

A year later, Rasif called Mrs Zage to say that he was taking over in the conveyancing of the Belmont Road bungalow purchase. In mid-May last year, the American couple began to worry that they would not get the necessary approval from the authorities.

As the couple was heading to the United States, and would not be back until the following month, they had two options — put \$10.7 million in trust with Rasif to complete the deal or issue Cashier's Orders to various parties entitled to their share in the bungalow's mortgage.

They decided on the first option. Mrs Zage said: "It was not the best option but the most practical one."

After handing over the money on the morning of May 23, Mrs Zage persisted in obtaining more information about the bungalow's mortgage.

However, time was not on her side as she had to catch a flight the next day.

"David Rasif conducted himself professionally and competently," said Mrs Zage. "We had no suspicions prior to his stealing the money."

Re-examined by Senior Counsel Harry Elias, Mrs Zage said the couple eventually bought the bungalow, a month after Rasif apparently ran away with their money.

Again, they left their money in trust with their lawyers to complete the transaction.

Mr Elias asked: "Did you have any qualms about leaving your money in trust, having been bitten once?"

"No," she replied. "My lawyers told me it's normal and part of the process."

The hearing continues today.

## A tribute in pink at triathlete Thaddeus' funeral

HUNDREDS of mourners, including schoolmates, teachers, relatives and members of the local triathlon community, turned up at the Church of St Francis Xavier in Serangoon Gardens for the funeral of national triathlete Thaddeus Cheong yesterday.

Many wore pink or sported pink ribbons on their wrists. It was the first-year Raffles Junior College student's favourite colour.

Wearing a pink T-shirt that Thaddeus, 17, had bought in Subic Bay in the Philippines but never

got to wear, his father George thanked them all. In his eulogy to Thaddeus, he said: "It was only when I read the many condolences that I realised you were so popular and well liked. I am proud of you for what you've done and achieved."

Thaddeus collapsed on Sunday after finishing a South-east Asian Games triathlon time trial in third place and within the qualifying time.

He was rushed to Changi General Hospital and pronounced dead two hours later. — DARREN LAI



WEE TECK HIAN

FAREWELL: Thaddeus' favourite colour was seen everywhere at his funeral.