

Staging the show

DSTA senior engineer Evan Heng plays a big part in getting things ready for the National Day Parade this year

by teo kuan yee

MR EVAN Heng Mok Kwee, 29, is thrilled to be involved in this year's National Day Parade (NDP).

He is part of the team that delivered this year's NDP stage and the 38.5m-high steel backdrop at the Floating Platform, as well as the bridging platform that connects it with the Promenade.

Mr Heng, a senior engineer with the Defence Science and Technology Agency (DSTA) at the Building and Infrastructure Programme Centre, is the co-chairman of the Infrastructure and Decoration Committee of this year's NDP.

"Being involved in such a large-scale, national event is an exciting and refreshing experience for me. I am grateful for the excellent opportunity to be part of the DSTA team that supports NDP 2012 to make it come alive with the stage, sights and sound," he says.

Mr Heng's team designed a bridging platform to



provide a seamless walkway that brings the performance nearer to the spectators. "It has been tested to be more robust and capable of adapting to the up and down movements of the floating platform due to changing water levels," he explains.

He also gave technical advice to the committee on civil and structural engineering issues, such as the instalment of safety railings and the introduction of safety features on stage.

Mr Heng graduated with a Bachelor in Civil and Structural Engineering in 2006 and joined DSTA for a career in defence engineering because he is "thrilled by the challenge of using technology and knowledge to create tangible outcomes that benefit others".

He says: "Engineering is about innovation and resourcefulness. Working in DSTA's Building and Infrastructure Programme Centre allows me to deliver newer and better-designed structures for our soldiers.

"I get to tackle projects involving permanent structures and buildings and I like the fact that my efforts will probably outlive me."

He adds: "DSTA's work culture gives us the au-



Mr Heng enjoys having the autonomy to come up with creative technical solutions. PHOTO: CHONG JUN LIANG

tonomy to come up with creative technical solutions. My superiors are always willing to guide us and offer practical advice."

Mr Heng credits his father, who also worked in the defence industry, for his interest in engineering. "We had family trips to air shows. When I climbed on board fighter jets and saw the intricate systems behind these engineering feats, those technologically advanced weapons and systems fascinated me."

On a typical day, Mr Heng may be chairing or attending project meetings, visiting military camps and facilities, or carrying out tests and inspections – which allow him to gain valuable hands-on knowledge and experience at the same time.

"For most projects, my role focuses on building design and master planning to ensure optimal land use. When developing a facility, I work with my team to ensure that it not only fits in well with the surrounding buildings, but that the land allocated to its development is used in the most efficient way."

Mr Heng started out doing soil and slope improvement works during the La Nina period in 2006 to enhance slopes in military facilities for safety reasons, and undertook engineering enhancements to strengthen the structure and functions of SAF camps.

In 2007, he was involved in the master planning, designing and construction of new facilities to house the SAF's Leopard 2A4 Main Battle Tanks (MBT).

"We considered the specific requirements of the newly acquired Leopard 2A4 MBTs. Every detailed specification was studied, including the amount of parking space needed to cater for the tank's turning radius," he says.

Mr Heng balances his hard work in the office with quality time with his family after that – it could be a planned outing or just a simple walk in the park. He says: "This is particularly important to me now that I am the father of a one-year-old boy."

To people who are considering taking his path, his advice is that they appreciate the importance of national defence, and what they can do to contribute to it.

"This includes sometimes having to work extra hours and extra hard, and being committed to delivering the best possible technological and engineering solutions for Singapore's defence and security. It may not be easy, but there is purpose, fulfilment and enjoyment in our work," he says.