

Desired dates, cost and convenience see more couples tying the knot at community clubs

BY ANG YIYING

ENGINEER Kevins Antony, 24, and nurse Anumol Joseph, 22, recited their marital vows in the Yew Tee Community Club (CC) yesterday.

Their special moment took place in what used to be the CC's VIP lounge, complete with maroon walls, artificial flowers and white curtains.

The newlyweds are among a growing number of people solemnising their marriages in CCs. Last year, more than 1,000 couples did so in specially renovated rooms in eight CCs, up from 600 in 2008 and 350 in 2007.

Couples interviewed say they picked a CC so that they could get married on the date they wanted.

The Registry of Marriages (ROM) has a daily quota for the number of unions it solemnises at its premises, so couples cannot always get their preferred date if the ceremony takes place there, especially on popular dates.

Couples are also going for CCs because these are near their homes. And it costs less than using other venues outside the ROM – between \$50 and \$100 an hour. For this rate, most CCs throw in the services of a solemniser, decorations and drinks for guests of the bridal couple.

Civil ceremonies at locations outside the ROM can cost much more if one factors in the use of a venue, decorations and catering.

However, all those getting married – whether at the ROM, CCs or other venues – still need to register their intent with the ROM and pay a marriage fee. It is \$26 if either party is a Singaporean or permanent resident, and ranges between \$128 and \$298 for foreigners, depending on whether it is on a weekend, a public holiday or a popular date.

The eight CCs with solemnisation rooms set them up when grassroots solemnisers sensed a demand for them.

# 'I do' makes for happy refrain at CCs

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Ms Janny Tang and Mr Yong Foo Loi sealing their marriage with a kiss in front of family and friends at the Jurong Spring CC last Friday. ST PHOTO: SAMUEL HE

## Where to go

THE following community clubs (CCs) have solemnisation rooms:

■ Buona Vista Community Club, Tel: 6778-5163/6777-4169

■ Jurong Green Community Club, Tel: 6567-1374

■ Jurong Spring Community Club, Tel: 6562-4066/6569-0484

■ The Serangoon, Tel: 6285-6264

■ Tampines North Community Club, Tel: 67832-900/6783-2254

■ West Coast Community Centre, Tel: 6779-1098/6776-4094

■ Yew Tee Community Club, Tel: 6769-3672

■ Yio Chu Kang Community Club, Tel: 6457-0414/6456-1324

Those who book the CCs' facilities still have to file a notice of marriage with the Registry of Marriages (ROM); a 21-day notice period is required for solemnisations held outside the ROM. For ROM filing procedures, visit [www.rom.gov.sg](http://www.rom.gov.sg)

Jurong Spring CC was the first to have one in 2004. It was in late 2006 that the trend caught on.

The People's Association (PA), which oversees all the community clubs, said these rooms were set up to build a "marriage-friendly environment".

Said its chief executive Tan Boon Huat: "As more solemnisations are carried out at the CCs, we expect more requests for CCs to set up such rooms."

Providing a venue for formalising unions also complements the PA's pool of 184 grassroots leaders authorised to carry out solemnisations. These leaders presided over a third of all civil unions last year, up from a quarter in 2006, said PA.

ROM statistics show the number of solemnisations at external venues has been on the rise – from 73 per cent in 2006 to 76 per cent last year. The external solemnisation rate among Muslims has also jumped – from 63 per cent in 2006 to 93 per cent last year.

The majority of those who use CCs are Singaporeans of all races. Less than a third are foreigners and permanent residents, the PA said.

Mr Yong Foo Loi, a 30-something production manager, wed Ms Janny Tang, 23, last Friday at the Jurong Spring CC. They could not get the date they wanted at the ROM.

Mr Yong said: "I live in the west, so it's easier for us." He added that he liked the laid-back vibe of the place: "It's free and easy – no rush and a free flow of coffee and tea. My guests enjoyed it."

Sri Lankan Kotte Hewawasan Bhasitha de Silva, 25, and Chinese national Chen Qing, 29, will have their solemnisation next week at Yio Chu Kang CC, near where they both live. They, too, could not get their preferred date at the ROM.

Still, some are not keen on sealing their marriage in a CC. Shipping executive Sng Juncheng, 28, who will tie the knot with his fiancée this year, said: "I would prefer to do it at a nicely done-up hotel ballroom, which I feel will be a nicer environment."

But marketing assistant Cai Hui Jie, 27, and army regular Alson Tan, 28, are standing by their choice to get wed in Yio Chu Kang CC next month.

She said: "I think it's a very personal choice. It doesn't matter to us."

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